

# Selecting A Contractor

*When you choose to remodel your home, you want to make sure you ask the right questions before you choose a remodeler or contractor to make your renovations.*

When you choose a contractor, you're committing to live and work with them for the foreseeable future. Begin the conversation with a contractor by discussing these questions.

## **WHAT ARE YOUR CREDENTIALS & RATINGS?**

The construction industry is one of the highest complaint industries so this is a very important step. You can usually find a contractor's industry certifications and credentials by visiting their website or the Maryland Home Improvement Contractor's Licensing website. Any reputable contractor should have federal, state, and community licenses in good standing. Ask what industry associations they belong to? Contractors who are part of industry associations agree to abide by best practices and a code of ethics. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) tracks consumer complaints and rates businesses accordingly. Make sure you check the BBB rating for each contractor you interview.

## **HOW MANY REMODELS HAVE YOU COMPLETED?**

You may find a perfectly reputable contractor, but they may not have experience with the type of remodeling project you're planning. For example, if you're knocking down or moving walls, you'll want to make sure your contractor has structural and mechanical experience.

## **HOW MANY TESTIMONIALS DO YOU HAVE?**

Ideally, you want your contractor to have a diverse client base with lots of testimonials and references for projects like yours. Make sure they provide email and phone numbers for references so you can communicate directly and ask appropriate questions.

## **DO YOU SUPPORT MY PROJECT?**

One of the best things a contractor can do is listen to his or her clients – and one of the worst things a contractor can do is try to convince you to change your vision or offer unsolicited advice. Make sure the contractor you choose is willing to listen to your plans and implement them as well as provide sound guidance..

## **TELL ME ABOUT YOUR COMPANY PHILOSOPHY.**

When searching for contractors, you will need to ask about company philosophies, policies, processes, and other factors to ensure you're choosing someone that is aligned with your core values.

## **HOW ARE YOU INSURED?**

Accidents can and do happen on the job, so ask about insurance coverage and get a certificate of insurance before any work commences.

## **MAY I SEE YOUR CONTRACT?**

Ask to see the contract before signing it. A well written contract will protect both parties in the event of a disagreement and provide fair resolutions, in the state where the work is being done, through arbitration or other means.

## **CAN YOU WORK WITHIN MY BUDGET?**

Be sure the contractor understands your budget constraints. Be prepared to have a 5-10% contingency for any unforeseen issues that typically arise, behind the walls, during a remodel.

## **YOUR RELATIONSHIP IS JUST BEGINNING**

Choose a contractor who will respect your home and with whom you can build a good rapport. You will

be working with this company for weeks or months, so a good relationship, built on trust and integrity, is crucial.

#### **WHAT BUSINESS MODEL DOES YOUR CONTRACTOR USE?**

This is the million dollar question and unfortunately one that many homeowners fail to consider! First, you want to understand how long the contractor has been in business and how they run their business - the contractor's process for estimating your project, quality of construction materials used, and how they will manage the project. Next, you want to understand how they are going to keep your project on-time and on-budget. Far too many contractors bid low, to get the job, with the anticipation that vague specifications or 'unknowns' will allow them to 'make up the difference' along the way. The homeowner often ends up with a project that falls way behind schedule and may cost significantly more. We believe this is an area where many homeowners are taken advantage of.

We devote significant discussion to the two main business models (Bid-Build & Design-Build) in our next chapter, so that you can understand how your

contractor operates their business and the pros/cons of each model.

#### **IS YOUR CONTRACTOR A 'CLEAN' REMODELER?**

Dust in the home can subject you and your family to irritants that can trigger allergies, asthma or other issues. Remodeling your home will definitely stir up these irritants. So, be sure that your contractor will take extra steps to minimize the disruption and the associated dust. New innovative equipment can dramatically reduce the dust in your home, during your remodeling project. Be sure the contractor you select has invested in such equipment and can provide you the cleanest experience possible.

#### **WILL YOUR CONTRACTOR TAKE FULL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE PROJECT BEING ON-TIME AND ON-BUDGET?**

Finger pointing and lack of accountability is one of the biggest complaints about remodeling. We believe this issue can be easily resolved with the Design-Bid business model approach we discuss later. Ultimately, you want to make sure your contractor is willing to take on this responsibility and be sure their past clients attest to this fact too!

