

Humboldt Redwood's Contractor and Home Renovation Guide

Congratulations! You have decided on a new renovation project for your home. Making the decision to update or add new features to your residence is an exciting one, and we'd like to help along the way. Home renovations, especially if it is your first, can increase the value of your home, provide additional living space, and increase the resale value. Have you decided on your project, but still deciding on what materials to use? We invite you to [choose redwood](#): its warmth and beauty adds a wow factor to your home, while standing up to the elements. Redwood naturally resists warping and splitting and is naturally resistant to insects and decay. Check out our [redwood inspiration](#) page to get ideas.

Getting started:

The first step to jumpstarting your renovation project is to find a trusted person or business to assist you with the task. Below we have compiled a short, printable guide to help you with the navigation process of working with a contractor and/or builder for your project.

The hiring and vetting process:

Hiring a contractor or builder for a project is similar to hiring an employee for a business. When looking for someone for your home renovation, it is important to work with someone who you can trust. We recommend first starting by asking your friends and family – asking for referrals from those you already have a relationship with is a great place to start. Shop around to understand your options. Then, once you've made a decision, ask yourself the following questions to jumpstart your success in the process:

- Do I know my budget? What is the maximum I am willing or able to spend? Do I have room in my budget to increase it if needed?
- Do I know the timing I would like this project to begin and finish?
- Are my expectations realistic?

Contractor, Builder, Sub-contractor...Are they the same thing?

A **Contractor, also known as a General Contractor**, is a person or a company that seeks to do business by obtaining contracts and carrying them out. A contractor will oversee and organize a construction project, and all its stages from start to end. The contractor will get the job done by hiring subtrades to perform every single project step.

A **Subcontractor** is a type of contractor. Subcontractors also work on a contractual basis, and they also offer a particular set of skills which they perform for customers. The key point about subcontractors is that they form agreements with the contractor, not with the customer. Subcontractors often specialize in one specific area of construction and try to network with contractors who negotiate for larger jobs that include this area of specialty.

A **Builder** is a company or a person that will bring in crew that will work on the entire building project. The crew is usually trained to complete all construction aspects from the foundation building to adding tiles on the roof.

Permits: Permit rules vary by city – as a homeowner, it is important to understand the requirements for a permit when renovating your home. Permits exist for construction and home remodeling projects in

efforts to make sure that homes comply with existing zoning laws and the required safety standards. Before beginning your project, please check with your local permit office to understand if your project requires one.

Itemized Bid vs Estimate: An **itemized bid** breaks down the cost of a project into detailed line items (i.e. plumbing, painting, carpentry, etc.) and will make it much easier to compare contractors as well as see what parts of your project cost the most. Having an itemized bid allows you to make informed decisions according to your needs and budget. **An estimate** is an approximation of what the project will cost. An estimate will provide a high-level overview of timelines for completions, the project scope, and assist you in determining costs. These are usually created as a high-level understanding of the project and can be subject to change if the project requirements change.

Contract: Any project will include a contract. It is likely that your contract with your contractor or builder will be a collection of several individual documents, with each document detailing a different aspect of the project. These can be complex, and several pages long. Be sure that you keep a hard copy of this on hand, with a secondary copy as a backup. Most importantly, be sure that you have a full understanding and agreement to everything before it is signed.

Lien Release, or Lien Waivers: These are very important. Lien waivers are connected to nearly every payment in construction – and because they are tied so closely to payment, it is important to understand how they work. A lien waiver is a document exchanged among all parties in the construction industry as part of the payment process. For parties on both sides of lien waiver exchanges, it is best practice to always exchange conditional waivers. [There are 12 states that have very specific lien waiver forms](#); we recommend knowing your state laws. When handling liens, be sure to ask direct questions about releases and waivers when discussing your renovation project with your contractor.

HOA Guidelines: If you would like to begin a home improvement project but also belong to a Homeowners Association, it is important to remember that your HOA is likely to have guidelines outlining what is allowed and expected of that project. You need to figure out which HOA rules apply to your project and then make a plan. If you're hiring professionals to do the remodel or renovation, it's crucial that these people also understand and follow them as well. The guidelines can be found in your HOA's Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). Some HOAs also have Architectural Control Guidelines and Rules and Regulations. If you don't already have these documents, ask a member of your HOA board for copies.

Home Insurance: Your home insurance should cover your home during a remodel. Be sure to check our coverage limits and limitations before your project. And, once your home renovation is complete, be sure to contact your insurance to update your policy! Doing this will protect the full value of your home, as you will have most likely increased its value.

Final thoughts

Be sure to do a background check, and to confirm your contractor's licenses and insurance – not doing so could be a very costly mistake! And finally, should you plan to remain in your home during the renovation process, be sure to designate a "project-free" zone where you and your family can gather, dust-free. Items like televisions, microwaves, and comfortable seating all make for good options.