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building design



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Cost Effective Home Renovations or How to Save Money, and get the best value, when Planning your Home Renovation

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Listed below are some time proven methods for reducing the cost and getting the most out of your renovation dollar. This list is based on knowledge accumulated over 35 years in the building industry and from being involved in doing a variety of home renovation and addition projects. It is not always possible to follow each point due to the unique nature of your property, your existing home or your particular individual requirements. Each home renovation is very unique. Use this list as a guide to see how many items your home renovation can achieve to save you money.

1 Floor area matters

The larger the floor area that you are renovating or adding on as an addition, the larger your costs are going to be. Whether it is new floor area you are adding or an existing area being altered. Be as efficient as possible space wise. When adding a new floor area spend the time to make your renovation space 'not too big' and 'not too small'. Evaluate your existing floor space very carefully to see what impact any alterations would have on the existing spaces. It does not make economic sense to do a big addition and the existing rooms and spaces turn in the hallways and travel paths to the new addition. *Don't waste space- new or old.*

2 Keep under your existing roof line, if possible

Keeping under your existing roof is the most economical way to do a renovation, as it saves building a new roof and floor.

- i. Extend into an existing attached garage or verandah, if possible. It is more economical to add on an open Carport than finished 'habitable' rooms.
- ii. An economical small addition is to 'bump-out' under an existing overhang, usually about 600mm, if you need only need a little bit of space to make things work inside.
- iii. Do as few changes to the existing exterior walls as possible, such as moving existing exterior doors and windows.
- iv. If you do add an addition which requires a new section of roof, think about keeping it simple when tying into your existing roof line.

But sometimes this is not always possible

3 Keep, to one floor level

If you have enough space on your block and are not trying to capture a view by building up, keep to one floor level. It costs more to go up than keeping to one floor level, due to the extra cost for:

- i. Stairs, both the cost of the stairs and the floor area they take up.
- ii. Destroying existing ground floor wall linings to install structural bracing and tie down rods.
- iii. Destroying an existing roofing and roof framing.

But sometimes this is not always possible.

4 If adding an addition, the most cost effective way is to add on one larger addition to one side of your home, instead of 2 smaller but equal additions in different areas.

It would cost more to add on 2 or 3 smaller additions even if they totaled the same floor area as the single section above. *But sometimes this is not always possible.*

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5 **Don't move or alter your existing kitchen, bathroom or laundry if possible**

As soon as you alter your kitchen you involve additional costs: Cabinet costs, Plumbing costs, electrical costs, Flooring costs, Wall lining costs, tiles, plasterboard & painting costs and possible windows and exterior door changes.

But sometimes new kitchens and bathrooms are the reason why we renovate. Getting a new modern kitchen or bigger or extra bathroom is in the majority of home renovations. When you install a new kitchen or bathroom, be aware of the existing underslab and external waste piping runs. If you don't put the kitchen or bathroom in same location, put it near the existing waste piping or near or on an exterior wall to reduce the cutting of the existing concrete slab and the length of new plumbing to tie into the existing piping.

But sometimes this is not always possible

6 **Evaluate carefully what you decide to destroy**

Try to destroy as little as possible of your existing house; Roof, exterior walls and floor. (Interior walls are relatively cheap to demolish and build new.) But on the other hand don't save things not worth savings. It is also more economical to do all your demolition work, at one time, at the beginning of your renovation.

(The exception to this rule would be to leave an exterior wall in place, to keep the existing home weather tight, while building an addition. When the new addition is weather tight the old exterior joining wall would be demolished.)

7 **The most economical rooms to alter are existing Bedrooms, Enclosed Garages and any large empty spaces**

Due to the fact that there is no plumbing and little electrical or cabinet alterations involved in this work.

8 **Don't put in a pool unless if you are going to use it**

Make sure you appreciate all of the costs associated with having a pool, pool surround such as paving & landscaping, fencing and running costs.

9 **Simplify, simplify and simplify some more**

- i. Simplify your layout design.
- ii. Simplify the construction.
- iii. Simplify your choice of materials. Stick to standard construction products & materials, not specialty products supplied by only one supplier unless you are willing to pay a premium for that product. Try to use locally supplied products, local suppliers and local labour. But appreciate that if you choose a 'special' product or a 'special' material it will cost you more, sometimes a lot more, than using the standard products.
- iv. Choosing the cheapest products may not necessarily save you money in the long run. Be careful about using discounted, discontinued, seconds or used products. The material savings may be eaten up by increased labour costs installing your special buy.
- v. Walls, stairs, windows, cabinets, deck and railings angles other than 90 degrees will cost a little more.
- vi. Walls, stairs, windows, cabinets, deck and railings curves will costs a lot more.

10 **Look at the whole picture**

Don't get bogged down in individual costs. Sometimes a more expensive individual solution may have a cost savings elsewhere or provide a higher value solution. Look for what is value to you.

11 **Try to do all the work in one go.**

If you leave off work thinking that something can be added on later, it will cost you more money eventually; than doing it all at time.

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When planning your renovation following all of these points will save you money in renovation costs. Of course the money that you save could be put in the bank or spent on something else. Something like a kitchen granite island bench top, a very big bi-folding door to your outdoor living area or a very fancy ensuite or just simply another room.

Hire a building designer specialising in renovations to get the best out your home renovation. If you have any questions or would like to discuss specific aspects of your renovation vision give me a call. I am available for a in home consultation where we can review your renovation vision, discuss various alternative solutions and give an indication of the construction costs involved.



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