

HOW TO HIRE A CONTRACTOR

without contracting an ulcer!

ESSENTIAL TOOLS YOU'LL NEED PRIOR TO WORKING
WITH A KITCHEN OR BATH REMODELER



ALL YOUR REMODELING SOLUTIONS UNDER ONE ROOF





Thank you for downloading

“How to Hire a Contractor Without Contracting an Ulcer.”

This Remodel Guide contains the essential tools to get your remodel started on the path to success. For more than 20 years, we at Southernland Construction & Renovation, LLC, have listened to local homeowner’s questions and concerns prior to starting their project. We want to eliminate the headaches, frustrations, and problems that are all too common in the home remodeling industry. We hope it provides you benefit. If you have any additional questions, please contact us at info@southerlandconst.com or (423) 384-4727.

Table of Contents

- Page 4:** About SC&R,LLC
- Page 5:** Assessing Your Current Space & Needs
- Page 11:** Conveying Your Style
- Page 13:** Choosing a Contractor -
Traditional vs. Design Build
- Page 16:** Discussing the 3 Bid Myth
- Page 18:** 10 Question's to Ask Every Contractor
- Page 19:** Checking References
- Page 20:** Project Development/Design Phase
- Page 22:** The Contract



About Us

Founded in 1999 out of a desire to create a company to better serve clients in the Tri-Cities, TN region, SC&R has a passion for residential and commercial remodeling. We have completed numerous new construction and renovation projects over the years. Our clients have truly appreciated our carpentry skills, attention to detail, and ability to seamlessly blend new rooms to the existing house. In addition to our craftsmanship, they have appreciated the high level of communication and comfort they feel when collaborating with us throughout their renovation.

Today we are proud to say that we are still serving many of our first initial clients. We look forward to the next 10 years and beyond as well as all of the new homes we will be invited into along the way.



Assessing Your Current Space

Your Needs, What Works?

What's Gotta Go?

Kitchen **Design** Questionnaire

About Your Project

How old is your kitchen? _____

What year was the home built? _____

Approximate size of current kitchen? _____ feet x _____ feet

Are you thinking about expanding your kitchen within the existing home's footprint? Adding on? Relocating the kitchen?

Functionality

How do you use your kitchen

How often do you entertain? Large or small groups? Does the party tend to congregate in or around the kitchen?

Is the kitchen used for dining? Formally/informally?

How many cooks use the kitchen at the same time? _____

What other uses does the kitchen often serve? Kids homework? Charging station? Impromptu office?

Do you have enough storage? Is it functional?

Assessing Your Current Space

Your Needs- What Works?

What Needs To Go?



Features You Would Like

- | | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| Y | N | Eating Area (Built-In or Furniture) |
| Y | N | Island (Seating, Food Prep, Storage) |
| Y | N | Raised Bar Seating |
| Y | N | Separate Pantry |
| Y | N | Built-in Pantry |
| Y | N | TV/Entertainment Area |
| Y | N | Recycling/ Garbage Area |
| Y | N | Wine Storage (Separate Fridge, Custom Rack) |
| Y | N | Pull Out Shelving |
| Y | N | Decorative Vent Hood |
| Y | N | Built-in Wall Oven or Microwave |
| Y | N | Hidden Charging Station or Outlets |

Assessing Your Current Space

Your Needs, What Works?

What's Gotta Go?



Goals

- Y N** Update the look of the room?
- Y N** Update the kitchen for the resale of your home?
- Y N** Add more space?
- Y N** Open up the kitchen to another room?
- Y N** Upgrade with the latest and greatest appliances?
- Y N** Improve the function of the room?
- Y N** Improve the storage?

Top three things you want most in your new kitchen:

Top three things you most dislike about your current kitchen:



Assessing Your Current Space

Your Needs, What Works?

What's Gotta Go?

Bathroom Design Questionnaire

About Your Project

How old is your bathroom? _____

What year was the home built? _____

Approximate size of current bathroom? _____ feet x _____ feet

Is it a master bathroom/hall bath/ powder room? _____

Are you thinking about expanding your bathroom within the existing house footprint? Adding on? _____

Functionality

Who typically uses this bathroom? Adults, Children, Guests?

Does more than one person access this bathroom at one time?

What functions/activities are performed in this bathroom?

How many other bathrooms are in your home? _____

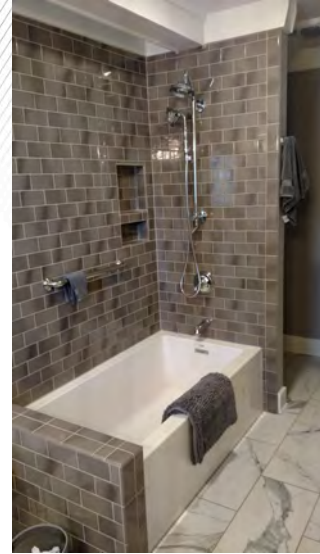
Do you have enough storage? Is it functional? _____

Is there enough lighting? Ventilation? _____

Assessing Your Current Space

Your Needs, What Works?

What's Gotta Go?



Goals

- Y N** Update the look of the room?
- Y N** Update the bathroom for the resale of your home?
- Y N** Add more space?
- Y N** Create a master suite for relaxation?
- Y N** Create a bath for the kids or guest to use?
- Y N** Improve the function of the room?
- Y N** Improve the storage?

Top three things you want most in your new bathroom: _____

Top three things you most dislike about your current bathroom:

Assessing Your Current Space

Your Needs, What Works?

What's Gotta Go?



Features You Would Like

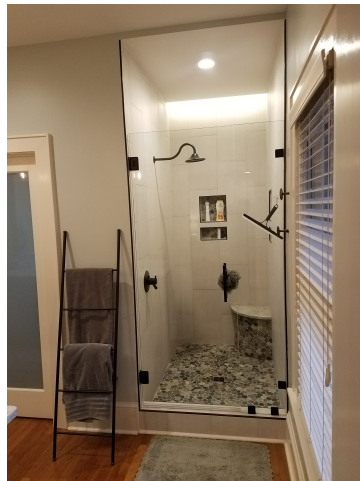
- Y N** Whirlpool tub
- Y N** Larger Walk in Shower (with or w/o bench)
- Y N** Body Sprays or Rain Shower Head
- Y N** Heated Floors
- Y N** Towel Warmer
- Y N** Vanity with sit down makeup table
- Y N** TV/ Speakers
- Y N** Refrigerator, Coffee Maker
- Y N** Fog Resistant Mirrors

Other: _____

What's Your Style?

Here's Some Questions to Ask:

- What type of House Décor do you prefer?
Colonial? Modern? Craftsman? Victorian, Country?
- What is your lifestyle? How does the new space need to fit those needs?
- Who else lives in the home? Now & In the future?
- Regardless of price, what are some things you've always wanted to have in your home? Create a Wish List!
- How long do you plan to live here? What's the goal of the Remodel?
- There are endless resources available in print and on the web to gather ideas for your upcoming project. Houzz, Pinterest, & Instagram are great websites where you can view thousands of project photos. You can even search based on specific items, styles, project type, etc.



What's Your Style?

Here's Some Questions to Ask:



As you're reviewing contractors visit the [Portfolio](#) page of their website. A good portfolio will have plenty of photos to view and will give you an idea of the quality work each contractor produces. If you're seeking a company to handle your bathroom remodel you'll want to make sure they have a handful of bathroom projects in their gallery that match your expectations.

Once you start browsing you will want to create a Digital Scrapbook to save the photos that speak to you. Additionally you will want to make notes on what you like and dislike about each photo. Is it the particular tile, fixture, cabinet that stands out or just the overall look?

Once you begin working with your contractor you can share this Scrapbook with them. A qualified designer or design/build contractor will be able to recognize a theme among your photos and can help design a project that will achieve your desired style/look.



Choosing a Contractor

Traditional Contractor vs. Design/ Build Contractor

A Traditional Contractor provides the skills necessary to take your design and make it a reality. However you must provide that design either yourself or in conjunction with a professional designer or architect. This approach can work well if you have an established relationship with a design professional. This also requires that you know exactly what you want for your new space and have a good handle on the costs associated with this particular renovation.

The downside of this route is your Traditional Contractor and design professional may not always be on the same page. Or if you have created your own design certain aspects may have been overlooked in terms of layout, functionality or legality. The last thing you want to do is create a beautiful kitchen or bath only to realize soon after its complete your layout just does not work.

A professional designer or Design/Build Contractor has the knowledge and expertise to analyze not only the aesthetics of your project but also the practicality. With a Design-Build Contractor you work with the same company from start to finish. Everyone is on the same page from the beginning. Your project is designed with your target investment range in mind from the outset.



Choosing a Contractor

Traditional Contractor vs. Design/ Build Contractor

Often people will work with a designer/architect to develop a project plan only to find out when they begin the pricing phase with their Traditional Contractor the design will cost twice what they are comfortable investing. Not the case with a Design/Build Contractor. There is a high level of continuity that you'll enjoy when working with a Design/Build Contractor.

When building commences, the project lead and any newly involved vendor or subcontractor will also be given access to pertinent information dating back to the design phase. The lines of communication will be clear. If any issues come up a Design/Build Contractor can quickly resolve any discrepancies or handle change orders on site without waiting days to hear back from an outside architect or designer.

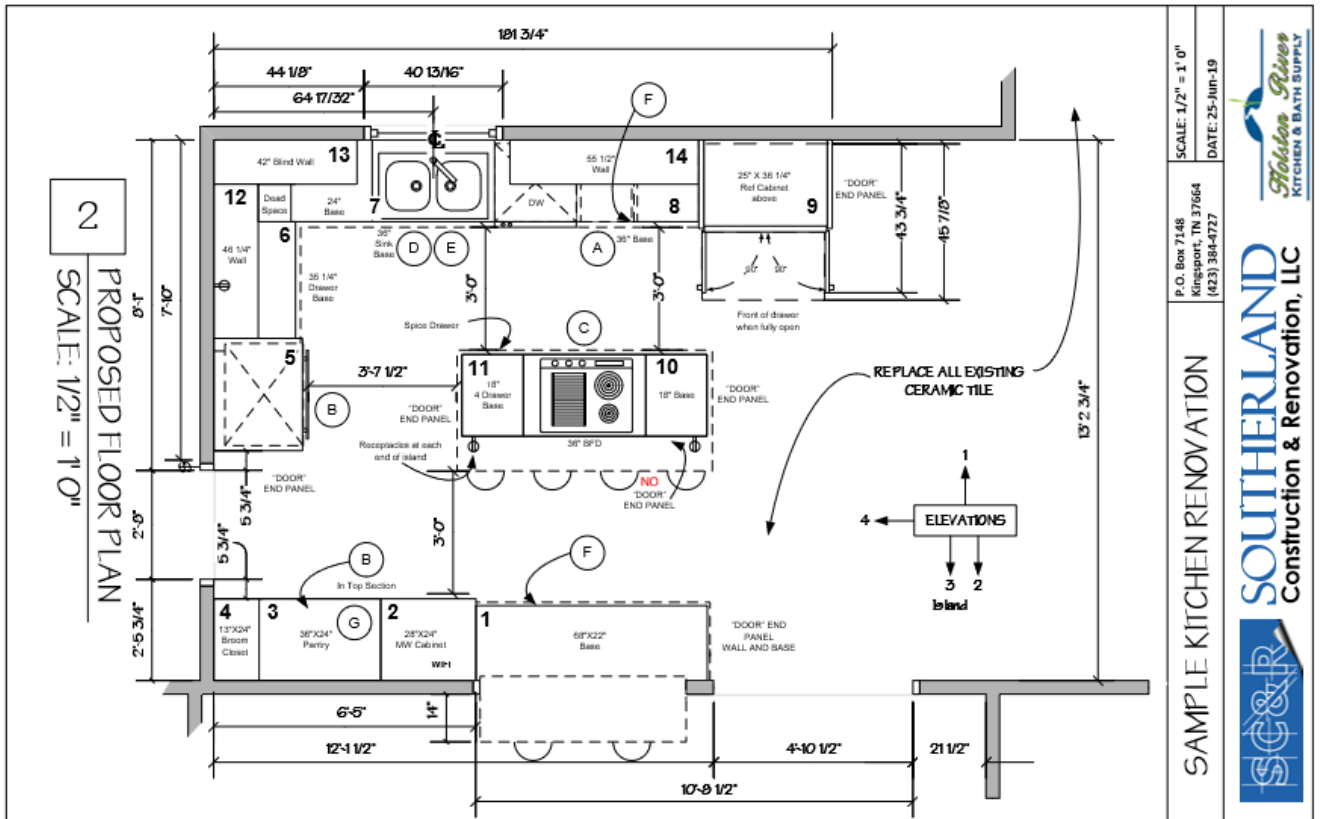
After construction, warranty work is much easier as well as follow up projects because all details of the original remodel are kept in one place with one company. Overall projects completed by a Design/Build Contractor tend to run smoother, finish on time and within budget.



Choosing a Contractor

Traditional Contractor vs. Design/Build Contractor

We put many hours into our design and planning. Whether your project is small or large, kitchen or bath, deck, addition, we ask the right questions and plan your project thoroughly. The more complex the project, the more things that need to be considered in order to "get it right the first time". Below is just one page of many in a typical set of drawings. Often our competitors will not even create plans until you have signed a contract. We feel it brings value to both parties and is evidence of our attention to detail.





The "3 Bid Myth"

Let's take a Closer Look

Typical Process

- Research and decide on 3 Contractors.
- Contractor visits the site and discusses the project.
- Client receives 3 "Bids" and makes a decision.

Flaws in the Process

- Assumes that all three bids have been assembled based on the same scope, specification and material quality producing and "apples to apples" comparison —unfortunately this is rarely the case.
- Decision is often based on price.

Reality of the Process

- The contractor comparison isn't apples to apples, not even apples to oranges. It's more like apples to tomatoes to a loaf of bread.
- A 1 hour site visit is simply not enough time to fully develop a complete scope and set of specification for most remodeling projects.
- Price is not the most relevant factor to predict a successful project, rather the decision should be based on skill, experience, personality, past customer references and an overall professionalism.
- More often than not, the low bidder's price will continue to rise as the project progresses due to change orders.

The "3 Bid Myth"

Let's take a Closer Look

A Better Solution - *The Interview Process*

- Interview 3 contractors and speak to their references.
- Ask each to provide an initial scope of work along with an estimated budget.
- Based on that information pick the contractor you feel most comfortable working with using their estimated budget as a price reference.
- Use the design phase of the project to iron out the details and assemble a complete scope of work and specifications that not only meet your needs/desires but also fall within in a budget you are comfortable investing in this project.





10 Key Questions to Ask Every Contractor

1. How long have you been in business? - Do you really want someone learning the ropes on your job?
2. Do you offer fixed price proposals? Is that price guaranteed and what if any contingencies could cause that price to change? There are only a few things that should/could change the initial quote. Often in renovations, things are found after demolition that cannot be foreseen. These things require remediation to assure you have a correct final project. Also, if you make changes, these are obviously additional cost.
3. How long will it take to have your proposal ready? Don't accept someone "shooting from the hip" and giving a price on the spot. That is the first red flag of an amateur.
4. What is your communication policy? – (how quickly did they return your call...)
5. Do your crews clean up daily?
6. Will there be a lead or project manager on site everyday? Will this be the same person throughout the whole project?
7. What is your warranty?
8. Do you have references I can call? Actually call and have an in-depth conversation with them.



References

Questions to Ask

You will want to make a list of 5-10 questions to ask each reference you talk with to compare their answers. Also be sure to confirm the type and scope of the project the company completed. Just because Johnny can build a great fence doesn't mean he is best suited to complete your renovation.

Sample Reference Questions

- Did they start when they said they would?
- Did they clean up daily? Was your house still safe during the project?
- Were they courteous to everyone in your home?
- What was the level of communication?
- Was the price quoted what you paid? If not, why not?
- Were there any problems during the job...and how did they handle them?
- Did the project finish on time? If not why not?
- Why did you choose them as opposed to another contractor?
- Would you – or have you recommended them to someone else?
- Will you hire them again for future projects?



Project Development/ Design Phase

Now that you have selected your Design/Build Contractor the real fun begins. While every Design/Build Contractor will have slightly different processes, the following is a list of steps typical during this stage of the project development.

Modify Initial Scope of Work as Necessary

- **Target Investment** – It does nobody any good to design a project that is not financially feasible.
- **Needs vs. Wants** – Some items in a remodel will be a deal breaker if they are not included while others may simply be a nice additional feature. A Design/Build Contractor will help you prioritize.
- **Long Term Plans/Resale** - Do you plan on selling in the next few years or is this your last home? The answer to that question will help guide the project scope and product selection. Some updates/upgrades are more personal and may not appeal to a future buyer. Your contractor will assist in framing your product/scope selections based on your long term plans.
- **Visual Comparison** - Explore various layout/design options including floor plans and elevations.



Project Development/ Design Phase

Material Selection

- **Selection Process** - Your contractor should provide you with a list of all the selection decisions needed as well as local showrooms/suppliers.
- **Material Options** - Your Design/Build Contractor will assist with the product/finish selections by providing:
 - Education on available options and how they affect the overall project cost & long-term function.
 - Accompanying you on showroom visits and put you in contact with sales professionals with the skills to handle a project of your scope.

Subcontractors

The last thing to expect during this phase is for specialized trade contractors to come out for a site visit to identify potential issues as well as opportunities for cost savings.

For example: Say you are adding a larger master bathtub – the plumber may notice that the current hot water tank is inadequately sized to fill the new tub at an ideal temperature. It is much easier to adjust the scope of work to include a smaller tub or upgraded hot water tank at this point in the process rather than once construction begins.



Final **Estimate/Contract**

What Needs to be Included

You will want to review the Estimate/Contract carefully to make sure that everything is in line with the agreements/selections made up to this point. Below are key items to review:

- **Line Item Detail:** A detailed step by step scope of work and material specifications. This is helpful to you and the contractor.
- **Price:** Price with listed contingencies that could change that price.
- **Allowances:** Materials are usually chosen after an agreement is reached to work with a contractor. The allowances section will show you how much is in the budget for the major components of the project.
- **Change Orders:** Specific wording detailing the change order process should the need arise. You want the change order process to be very clear and to require your signature on a written change order before any additional work is started.
- **Payment Schedule:** Detailed payment schedule tied to project milestones. Be very weary of a contractor that requests a large percentage of the contract price up front. A reasonable starting "draw" or initial payment is common.



Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to read our e-Book! I hope this guide will be helpful as you begin the remodeling process.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns. We are always more than happy to provide information or assistance in any way possible. We would also love the opportunity to come and take a look at your project when you are ready to get started.

Until then, I wish you all the best!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Shannon Southerland'.

Shannon Southerland
Southernland Construction & Renovation, LLC
info@southerlandconst.com
(423)384-4727