



## Choose Your Renovator with Care



Steven Harris,  
WRHBA President 2014-15

October is Renovation Month! Last week we gave you the tools to find a list of renovators that adhere to RenoMark™, the renovator's mark of excellence. Part three of the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association's (WRHBA) renovation month series discusses aspects to help you choose the right renovator for your project.

Deciding who to hire for your home renovation is an important part of planning for the success of your project. You want to work with a professional contractor—someone who is reputable and in business for the long term. You need to find a contractor that is right for your particular project, and not least, you want someone with whom you feel comfortable and can develop a good

working relationship.

### Make sure the renovator is legitimate

Not everyone who offers renovation services is in business legitimately. Some are “fly-by-nighters”—here today, gone tomorrow. Some are “moonlighters”—they do renovation on the side but it's not their real job. Others are “low-ballers”, who ask for cash payment and fly “under the radar” by avoiding taxes and other normal costs of doing business properly.

Any home renovation, no matter the size, is an investment in your home and your life. Look for a contractor who:

- Offers proof of being in business: HST/business registration, workers' compensation, insurance, and so on
- Works with a written contract
- Offers a warranty on their work
- Provides referrals to previous work and clients
- Is happy to talk about their company, their experience and their plans for the future.

Companies that belong to RenoMark™, a program for professional renovators in most areas of Canada, commit to a renovation-specific code of conduct. Check [www.renomark.ca](http://www.renomark.ca) for more information and a listing of members.

### The right renovator for the job

The term “renovation” covers a lot. While many companies are capable of taking on a wide range of different projects, they may also specialize in certain types or sizes of projects or a particular type of client.

## Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association

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It is important to find someone who has experience with the kind of renovation you are planning and can add value to your project through their expertise. As you search for renovators:

- Ask friends, family and co-workers for recommendations for companies with proven experience. Were their renovations similar to what you are planning? Were they happy with the process and results? What did they like/dislike about the renovator? Would they hire the company again?
- Do a little independent research for companies that may be a good match for your project—call your local Home Builders’ Association or check their website, visit home shows and manufacturers’ showrooms, talk with building product retailers.
- Ask renovators directly about their experience and possible fit with your project. For instance, have you done projects like this before and how did it go? Does your company have the expertise in-house, and how would you go about doing my project? Ask for references to previous clients, and follow up. If possible, visit one or two completed projects to see if the look and the standards of finishing meet your expectations.
- Consider a design build approach. Using this approach you can hire a renovator that offers professional design services so that a plan is clearly laid out with many details and a scope of work that meets your needs, wants and investment range. Once you are satisfied with the design you can proceed to detailed pricing before having to make the larger commitment of signing a full renovation contract. All design build businesses operate slightly different, so be sure to understand the steps and commitments involved.

### **The right renovator for you**

Most renovations are more than just nuts and bolts. Unless you are simply repairing or replacing components of your home, then your renovation is likely motivated by a desire to improve your home, to make it more comfortable and enjoyable to live in—in other words, it’s a lifestyle decision.

Furthermore, even a relatively minor project can take time, during which you “share” your home with the renovator and the crew.

That’s why the personal “fit” between you and your renovator matters greatly, not just the renovator’s technical and business expertise. You need to feel at ease and have confidence in both the renovator and the renovation process.

As you meet with renovators, ask yourself:

- Does the renovator listen and understand what I want? Respond in a way that relates to my concerns?
- Is the renovator personable and professional?
- Do we communicate well and easily?
- Would my family and I feel comfortable working with this company?

If the answer is no, keep on looking until you find someone you “click” with. In a way, hiring a renovator on a design build basis provides you with the opportunity to “try them out first”. If the design process was painful, chances are it won’t get better once the renovation contract is signed.

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Reputable, experienced renovators are often booked well in advance. Start your search early on in your planning process, and be prepared to wait, if possible. When you find the right renovator, a small delay is a reasonable price to pay for a renovation done right.

Visit [www.wrhba.com](http://www.wrhba.com) and [www.renomark.ca](http://www.renomark.ca) for a list of reputable renovators who are members of the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association.

*Since 1946, the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association (WRHBA) has been "the voice of residential development and construction industry"—one of the most vital and enterprising industries in Canada. WRHBA represents over 220 member companies comprised of all disciplines involved in residential construction. WRHBA is built on a vision to be a leader in supporting our industry by fostering a vital membership through advocacy, resource sharing and education and in its commitment to improve new housing affordability and choice for new home purchasers and renovation consumers through positively impacting legislation, regulation and policy that affect the industry at all levels of government.*

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