



Design Ideas for Your Renovation



Steven Harris,
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October is Renovation Month! Now that you've chosen a reputable renovator, part four of the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association's (WRHBA) renovation month series will discuss design ideas.

Good design is an integral part of a successful renovation. It adds to the functionality of your home, increases personal enjoyment, and ensures the best value for your investment. In other words, design can make a big difference.

The aim of good design is to create a harmonious environment of practical, common sense elements that enhance your life—a living environment that looks, feels and works well.

It always begins with function. Only when the function of a room has been clearly defined, can you begin to develop the space. That's why designers will often ask homeowners to spend time thinking through, sometimes in minute detail, how they use or wish to use a specific area. This is particularly important for a kitchen renovation to ensure the proper configuration of working and storage areas, lighting, and so on.

It is helpful to define your "style" right at the start. For instance, are you traditional, French country, urban chic or...? You may not have a "label" for your own style, but what are your preferences? Before consulting with professionals, create a portfolio of designs, products and materials that interest you—photos, brochures, samples, etc. This will help both you and them to zero in on the right style and details.

Every project is different, but designers and renovation experts agree that there are a number of design considerations that generally apply to all renovations.

Room sizing – New or reconfigured rooms may look large on paper or outlined on the floor, but may be too small once you get furniture and people inside. Draw your furniture (scaled proportionately) right on the plan—does the room seem too crowded now? If yes, add a few feet or more, when possible, to enhance the livability of the room. At the same time, consider: is your home overfurnished? For example, do you really need both a kitchen table and a dining room table?

Traffic flow – How does your family move around in the house, in and out of rooms, from one area to another? Are there awkward or "dead" areas? Poorly placed doors at diagonally opposite ends of a room, for instance, can

As you start to develop ideas for your renovation, consider consulting with a designer. Many professional renovators offer design-build services, or you can hire an independent design expert.

Design services can vary from a few hours consultation to full plans. Some designers will also work with you and your renovator during the project—shopping for and coordinating finishing products, for instance.

Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association

725 Bridge Street West, Suite 1, Waterloo, ON N2V 2H1 | Bus: 519.884.7590 | Fax: 519.884.7361

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, OR TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT:

Marie Schroeder, Executive Officer Email: Marie-schroeder@wrhba.com www.wrhba.com

severely limit placement of furniture, and therefore limit the use of the room. It's a great idea to literally draw "walking lines" on your plan, to identify possible problem areas and optimize the use of space in your home.

Flooring – There is an enormous selection of attractive flooring available at varying price points. This is great for renovating homeowners, but can also pose a challenge when it comes to deciding what type of flooring to use where. Using too many different materials, particularly in "open design" renovations, chops up the space and can be visually disturbing. Focus instead on one or two different flooring materials only, in complementary colours and hues. When using patterns or inlays to create a visual impact, keep it contained and surrounded by calmer flooring.

Moulding and trim – Nice trim, used well, can add subtle elegance to your home. Don't "cheap out"—be prepared to spend a little extra to get the thickness and profiles that will help finish your home in style. Don't overdo it, either. Too much moulding and trim can result in a "busy" room that may also be difficult to decorate.

Lighting – Experts suggest creating a lighting plan for your renovation. Lighting plays a large role in setting the mood in your home and accenting features of a room. Use a combination of fixtures to create different effects—pot lights, wall sconces, chandeliers. Install switches with dimmers so you can control and vary the light. Position wall plates discreetly, where they don't interfere with your décor or artwork, or otherwise stand out. And don't forget about lighting in closets—convenient for everyone in the family.

Fireplace – Whether your home has a fireplace already or you want to add one, there are a number of things to think about. Fireplaces are primarily used to create a comfortable and cozy atmosphere for people, so placement is important. A fireplace should not be the focal point in the room—position it so you have plenty of room for seating arrangements. If it dominates the room, e.g. floor to ceiling stone or brick, dry-walling the upper portion will prevent it from overwhelming the space.

To get the best out of your design, think through all other elements of your renovation, from windows and doors to stairs and railings. Always consider function, style, placement and compatibility with surroundings. Ask yourself if each element will contribute to the overall harmony of your home, and your subsequent enjoyment.

Consult with a renovation professional and take full advantage of their skills and expertise. Then you can renovate with confidence, knowing that your home will be just right for you.

For more information, or for a list of reputable renovators, visit www.wrhba.com and www.renomark.ca.

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.