



## **“Top 15 Questions to Answer Before Getting Your Basement Finished”**

### **What should I do first?**

You will need to determine what you will be using the finished space for. Some homeowners choose to remodel or finish only part of their basement by simply creating one extra bedroom with adjoining bathroom, leaving the remainder of the area unfinished for storage or workshop space. Other homeowners choose to finish the entire space in order to maximize the amount of livable space in their home.

Many homeowners with young children or teenagers opt to finish their basements in order to create a game room or media room for their children. Basement bars can make get-togethers and holiday party’s fun for adults. Many people create their basement to match their home exactly with doors, trim, fixtures etc. The basement is a great project because not only are you increasing value and living space, it gives you the opportunity to add things to your home that you may not have currently ie: master bath suites, wet-bars, fireplaces, home theatres etc. Several homeowners decide to create a combination of the basement remodeling ideas mentioned above.

By adding one or two extra bedrooms with a full bathroom, an exercise room, and a theatre room, many homeowners are able to significantly increase the resale value of their home. There are several factors for homeowners to consider when making the decision about what type of basement remodeling project to pursue. The list of questions below will help you to determine which basement remodeling idea will work best for you and your family.

## **Do you have children or teenagers living at home?**

If you have children or teenagers living at home, consider a design idea that would allow your kids or teens to have a gathering place for entertaining their friends. Many homeowners with teens choose to create one large media room with a full bathroom. Don't forget to leave room in the budget for a pool table and big screen! This will keep their messes confined to the basement which is always a plus!

Remember that this type of basement remodel is also fun for adults. While the kids are away at camp, cuddle up with your spouse on your micro suede sectional and watch a DVD or blue ray disk in HD while enjoying your surround sound theatre equipment! Other options for enhancing the level of entertainment in your basement are popcorn makers and bars.

## **Do you do a lot of entertaining?**

If you and your spouse frequently host the annual New Year's Eve party and Super bowl Sunday festivities, consider including a full bar, mini-kitchen, and theatre sound into your basement remodeling design. Now, all you'll need is a little Marvin Gaye, some wine for the wine cooler, beer for the fridge and a few bottles of your favorite liquors to get the party started!

## **Do you frequently entertain company from out of town who need a more private place to sleep and bathe than your main floor spare bedroom?**

If your mother-in-law likes to drop in for two week stays, make it easier on everyone and offer her premium comfort and peace in one of the new bedrooms in your basement. This way she won't be bothered with the hall traffic she'd have to deal with staying in the room between the kids' rooms. And you won't wake her before you leave for a busy day at the office or a day packed full of errands!

## **Have many of your neighbors completed their basement remodeling projects?**

This factor is important because if many of your neighbors are undergoing basement remodeling projects, then you may want to seriously consider jumping on the band wagon. Everyone knows the expression, "Keeping up with The Jones'," right? Well, this is one area where you will want to keep up!

Just like you wouldn't want to have the most expensive house in your subdivision, you certainly don't want to own the least expensive one. If you decide to remodel your basement, take a look at your neighbors remodeling ideas before making any definite decisions, unless of course you don't have plans to sell your home for at least 10 years.

## **Do you or anyone in your family exercise regularly?**

If you enjoy working out, but keep your exercise equipment in the garage or in the spare bedroom closet, think about incorporating a place to exercise into your basement remodeling plans. Many people who have done this have actually found that having a designated place in their home to exercise actually increased their adherence to a workout regimen. So, perhaps if you are thinking about starting a workout plan, this is a great way to encourage yourself to participate.

All of the basement remodeling ideas above can be as simple or as involved as your budget allows. You can certainly build a media room without a 60" plasma television and scored and stained concrete. And you can definitely add a bar to your remodeling plans without including a wine cooler and granite countertops.

Now that you have determined what you would like to use the space in your basement for, the next step in planning your basement remodeling project is determining your budget parameters.

## **How do I know what my basement remodel will cost?**

Most contractors can provide you with a ballpark price per square foot for a remodel. Get a couple of ball park quotes from reliable, licensed and insured contractors. Then use the hints below to go from there. It is recommended to get a minimum of 3 quotes. Choosing a company that has a sole focus on basements

is always a plus. You don't want to hire the landscaper to finish your basement, for the same reason you wouldn't hire the fence company to build your house!

### **Include room for architect fees**

In most areas, architect approved and stamped drawings are required for permitting. If you don't have plans already, be sure to include up to \$1500 in your budget for your architect to draw your plans. Depending on the contractors and companies you get estimates from, you may or may not need to consider this. Many high quality contractors will take care of this for you and quality companies do this in house.

### **Include room for engineering fees**

If you plan to relocate any load bearing walls as part of your basement remodel, you may need to provide an engineering report to the contractor. An engineering report will tell the contractor how to remove the wall without compromising the structural integrity of your home. The engineer will give specific directions as to the size and type of beams that will be required in order to ensure that the house won't collapse when the wall is demoed. You may not have to consider this until you meet with a qualified contractor or basement finish company. They will be able to discuss possibilities with you and recommend quality engineers that they have worked with. It's always good to understand what is involved before you decide to do a serious overhaul. Typically anything you can dream can be done, but it's important to realize that you need to have the budget to support that dream.

### **Include costs for permits**

Your project will more than likely require a city-issued permit. Most permits cost a flat rate plus a percentage of the total cost of the remodeling job. Check with your town hall to find out what their process entails and how long it will take for you to secure your permits. The Regional Building Department issues your permit and the inspectors to inspect each stage of your project. The inspector will sign-off on your permit each time they inspect so it will be documented and posted outside your home. Never trust a contractor that asks you to pull permits. That usually means that they are not licensed. A quality basement finish company

handles all of your permit pulling, sign-offs and inspections for you. You won't even have to deal with the inspectors at all.

### **What types of finishes do you prefer?**

Door hardware, flooring, electrical fixtures, appliances, and plumbing fixtures can very easily dictate the cost of your basement remodeling project. Your faucets, door knobs, cabinets and other finish items can cause you to miss your budget - by A LOT! Depending on your design taste and expectations for quality, you may need to include 15%-20% more money than you thought in your budget for selection items.

### **Are there any ways that I can save money and still get my basement remodeling project done the way I want it done?**

There are a few major design considerations to think about in order to get the most bang for your buck! Just like purchasing a car, remodeling can be as expensive or inexpensive as you allow it to be. Below are some helpful hints that will save you money on the actual construction costs of your basement remodel.

### **Don't move plumbing and electrical sources**

Moving plumbing and electrical components is a really easy way to increase the costs of your remodel. By incorporating your existing plumbing and electrical sources into your design, you will save thousands of dollars.

For example, if the plumbing for your kitchen is at the corner of the north and east walls, then don't plan to put your basement bathroom in the southwest corner of the basement. Simply manipulating your plans to accommodate what already exists will save time and money on your build.

### **Get a solid estimate**

Before giving your contractor the deposit to build your project, be sure to get a written and agreed upon estimate that includes the scope of work to be performed. This way, you know exactly what you are getting for the agreed upon price. Without this documentation, you risk potential discrepancies about

whether the contractor was suppose to purchase the fixtures or not, and whether you stated that you wanted wood floors as opposed to ceramic tile.

It requires more work on the contractor's end to prepare this information for you, but if he/she wants to build your project, he/she will provide you with the documentation that will make you comfortable. And, you won't have to worry about being asked for additional money that you weren't made aware of originally. Also, be considerate here, if you walk downstairs in the middle of the project and ask the contractor to make a bunch of little changes and purchase this and that, you should both agree to put that on paper so that there are no disagreements at the end when the final bill is printed.

## **Choose a Company, Basement Specialty or Design/Build Contractor**

Now that you've decided what to do with the space in your basement and how much money you're able to invest in the remodel, you will need to choose a contractor or company who does design work as well as the actual construction so that you can get your plans drawn. Share your design ideas and budgetary expectations with your company or contractor and they will draft your plans for you. Be sure to discuss pricing for the design service ahead of time so that there are no surprises! Set up a consultation to meet and discuss as well as get an estimate.

## **Get three quotes from licensed and insured contractors**

Everyone knows that it's always wise to get three quotes for remodeling projects. Below is a list of important things to look for when choosing a contractor for your remodeling project.

## **Licenses**

Request copies of all licenses prior to hiring a contractor. Check the dates to make sure the licenses are current. Also, make sure that the license is actually for Residential Remodeling.

## **Insurance**

Request copies of general liability and workman's compensation insurance from the contractor candidates. Be sure to check dates and coverage limits. A safe amount of general liability coverage is \$1+ million.

## **Start and End Date**

Ask each candidate for specifics on when construction on your project will begin and when it will be completed. These will be estimates of course, but it is helpful to have an idea of when your project will be completed. Some contractors are booked out for months at a time. This may or may not weigh on your decision to hire.

## **When will they be working?**

Ask contractor candidates what hours crews will be working on your remodeling project. You may or may not have preferences regarding how early they begin working each day. The contractors' flexibility with scheduling might be important to you.

## **Contact Information**

Ask for specific addresses and contact information for references. Get at least three and actually call the homeowners! Your house is probably the largest investment you've ever made. Be sure that the people you hire to alter its look are reputable and trustworthy.

## **Confirm each candidate's payment schedule**

The payment schedule should be based on verifiable percentage of completion. Billing cycles may vary among contractors. Some bill bi-weekly based on % complete, some bill monthly, and some bill in thirds based on % complete.

## **Compare who you are considering to the competition, what are the differences? Are there subtleties to what they offer? le: timelines, warranties, free estimates and consults etc.**

You will typically get what you pay for, so the cheapest is not always the best. Spend time with your candidates asking questions and expressing thoughts and concerns. Do they seem knowledgeable? How long have they been finishing basements? How many have they done and what is their standing in the business? Do they have customer testimonies and references that you have talked to? Also, did they offer to show you any previous jobs in person? It's always a great sign if one of their previous customers opens their house to show their basement to you.

## **Choose your selection items**

Once you have interviewed three contractors and determined who will be building your basement remodeling dream, you will need to choose your selection items. This is the fun part! These include paint colors, flooring choices, electrical fixtures, plumbing fixtures, baseboards, doors, any wood-working designs etc.

Depending on your agreement with your contractor, you may be able to select your finishes from one of his/her suppliers so that a lower rate is passed on to you. Otherwise, you can go to major retailers like Home Depot or Lowes to choose most of your selection items.

## **Final Considerations**

Make sure that the area that the contractor will be working in is ready for their use.

Discuss entry access to your home with the contractor. Determine whether a lock box will be used or whether you will need to let the workers in each morning.

Discuss "Rules of the House" with the contractors. If you don't want them to smoke in your house or yard you will need to tell the project manager ahead of time just to be safe. If you don't want them to use any of the sinks, toilets or garbage receptacles in your home, tell the project manager ahead of time. If you

have restrictions for parking in your neighborhood, make sure that the project manager is aware of these restrictions.

Always keep a copy of your plans with you. In the event that there is a question, you will want to be able to reference the plans quickly so that your project isn't delayed.

Take your time and find a basement remodeling contractor who not only shares your vision, but can execute your plans. Your basement can be anything you want it to be—home theater, game room, home gym, or work space—the key is finding the right contractor and/or company to work with.

## Happy Basement Building!

### **Basements Etc. Incorporated Five Unbeatable Promises:**

- 1. FREE In-Home Consultation and Estimate**
- 2. 2 Day Estimate Delivery Pledge**
- 3. 40 Day Completion Guarantee**
- 4. Estimate Price Promise**
- 5. 3 Year Ironclad Warranty**

**Compliments of:** Basements Etc. Incorporated [www.BasementsEtcInc.com](http://www.BasementsEtcInc.com)

Phone: 719-491-0075 [ContactUs@BasementsEtcInc.com](mailto:ContactUs@BasementsEtcInc.com)