

HOME RENOVATION MADE TOLERABLE

A step-by-step guide to take some of the pain from the process

Some owners of the fine, 1910 to 1914-era homes in the Highlands aim to restore these buildings to their past glory - albeit with modern wiring and plumbing under the surface.

Others take a different route. The Martell family home was built in the 1950s. The 1,100-square-foot, two bedroom "flat top" at 11136 - 61st Street was too small for Clyde, Maureen and Scott. Their new home will be a 1,750-square-foot home of enhanced appearance and expanded function.

Here are the 10 steps to renovation.

1. **MONEY:** Have it or a wonderful credit line.

2. **LIST YOUR NEEDS:** When they moved in back in 1971, the Martells found that the house was truly a closet-free zone. And from that point on, their requirements slowly evolved. By 1993 they needed plenty of closets, plus an office, and room for an entertainment centre, hobby/plants room, and a pitched roof to eliminate the flat-roof blues!

3. **DECISION TIME:** Something will tell you when it's time: growing children, over-abundance of "stuff," the threat of divorce, etc. You will know.

4. **WHAT NEXT:** You will have to call upon a design oriented person of proven ability, be it designer, architect or inspired draftsman. Call the provincial architects association for a list of firms that specialize in small house design/renovation, check the Yellow Pages, ask around the neighborhood. There are always renovations underway somewhere in the Highlands.

When you have some names, invite potential candidates over for coffee and an interrogation. Ask for photos of past work, construction costs, fees expected, etc. That's what the Martells did.

5. **PLANNING:** Be prepared to spend many hours at the planning stage. Ideas will evolve over time. There will be reams of sketches and many pots of coffee. It costs nothing to move walls on paper. Making hasty changes too late in the process will make a contractor bad-tempered and punitive.

When all is right, the designer will generate "working drawings" from which a contractor can price the work, build the addition - and the city can judge whether they will let you build it at all. At this point, decide also if you want to tackle any of the work yourself: this may save money, but it tends to prolong the process.

6. **CITY HALL, AND ALL THAT:** By this point, your designer will hopefully have incorporated all building code and zoning requirements into the design. Have him or her apply for the Development and Building Permits. If your



Martell home at 11136 - 61 Street, above, and before construction, below

application goes ahead, you will have to pay several hundred dollars for these key documents.

7. **TENDERING:** Ask your renovating neighbors for some names of good contractors, or ask the designer, who will know a number of "tame" ones who have completed projects for him or her. Obtain at least four quotes. Allow up to two weeks for this stage.



8. **CHOOSING THE CONTRACTOR:** Use the lowest bidder, but if the price is substantially lower, do some checking. What has been forgotten! Proceed carefully before signing a contract, and be sure it lists all the work that is to be done. Standard contract forms are available. You should each have identical signed copies. Decide on payment periods: every two

weeks or monthly.

9. **CONSTRUCTION AND SWEAT EQUITY:** At last you're destroying your yard for your long-awaited addition. Your designer should be supervising all this activity and keeping track of what has been built for each payment date: you pay only for work actually done or materials delivered to the site.

Clyde Martell decided he and Scott could handle the finishing work if the contractor did the concrete, framing, sheathing, windows, shingling and plumbing.

As of June, the Martells have completed all the electrical and insulation work, and are now doing the drywall - and playing a bit of golf.

The building exterior will receive its siding later in the summer. The new attic is accessible via a pull down stair and is now the largest storage closet in the house.

10. **FINISHED:** Getting to the end is always an anti climax, but this stage produces some wonderful moments. Like the first "hanging" in the new closet, the first flush of the new toilet, and the first TV basketball game in the new entertainment room.