



# 10 Things You Should Know Before Renovating Your Home



Whether you're getting expert help or doing the work yourself, home renovations are notoriously stressful. In fact, one study found that **60% of home renovations** affect the general well-being of those who live there. That study also revealed one of the top causes of renovation stress: not anticipating that your renovation may hit a snag that requires more time and money.

Renovations can be tough. They disrupt your daily routine, and depending on which room is being renovated, make it more difficult to eat, sleep, and keep clean. But it's the unknowns that are the worst.

As subcontractors, we have observed firsthand the many issues that can arise during complex home renovation projects. So our experts decided to compile a list of the top 10 things homeowners should know before tackling a renovation.

**Let's start with the big one...**

# 01

## What Is Your Renovation For?



Are you renovating your home to prepare it for sale, or are you doing it for yourself? The answer to this question might dictate your budget. After all, if you're renovating your home to add value, you wouldn't want to pay more than you'll get back. The answer to this question might also help drive some other choices, like what styles and finishes to choose.

There's a saying among realtors, that kitchens and bathrooms sell houses. They're not wrong — kitchens and bathroom renovations **are on the list** of projects that add the most value. And even if your budget is relatively small, you can achieve stunning transformations.

If your renovation is just for you, then you can do what you want with your money based on what will work best for your family.

### Our Tips for Adding the Most Value

If adding value without changing the floor plan is your goal, you should definitely consult your local custom glass shop! There are a number of surprisingly inexpensive glass solutions that can make a space appear more high-end. For example, **large custom mirrors** can completely transform the look and feel of a room, and even **make smaller bathrooms more functional**.

Similarly, upgrading to a glass shower **can add a tremendous amount of value** to your home and make your bathroom feel bigger, look brighter, and feel much more luxurious in a relatively short amount of time. And while some styles can make your bathroom look more modern and chic, a skilled glass pro should carry a number of glass styles and finishes that can fit in beautifully with an older home.

In the greater St. Cloud area, many of our homes were originally built in the late 1800s or early 1900s, and we love being able to preserve their historic charm while making smaller bathrooms work for growing families!

Feel free to browse our **residential gallery** to get a sense of the hardware and styles you might like, and how a glass pro can accommodate a smaller space. Also, keep in mind that anything you see on our page can also be done with pattern or frosted glass to add more privacy while still achieving a light and airy look.

### Mirrors



### Showers





## Our Tips for Adding the Most Value

One of the best ways to add value to your kitchen without changing the floor plan is to **refresh your cabinetry**. Color and contrast are making their way back into kitchens, and open shelving is a great way to showcase your heirloom cookware or cookbook collection and break up a wall of cabinetry.

If you love the look of open shelving but don't want the burden of keeping storage items tidy, you might want to think about glass cabinet doors. They can give kitchens the same light and airy feeling of open shelving, but your items won't have to be on full display. You might even consider **frosted or patterned glass** to achieve the perfect amount of transparency.



# 02

## What Is a Realistic Timeframe & Budget for the Project?

Just like you should be wary of the realtor who is overly optimistic about pricing your home, you should also take a closer look at any bids that are far cheaper than the others. Some realtors use inflated sticker prices to get more clients, but ultimately your home may sell for less than it should if it sits on the market too long.

And when it comes to estimates, they are only that. An honest contractor will try their best to give you a realistic price for the time and materials, but there are some contractors out there who will make promises that aren't realistic just to get more business. We tell our clients that a glass shower door takes roughly a month from the time we order it to installation, but it can take longer.



**Whenever you're doing work in your home, do your research, but expect the unexpected.**

Unfortunately, everything seems to cost more and take longer these days! Even after good communication and thorough planning, your contractors and vendors may be unable to complete work within the expected timeframe. Material shortages and shipping delays happen and are entirely out of their control.



### Pro Tips

- When you're comparing multiple bids, make sure you're comparing apples to apples; the scope of the work should be the same in each bid.
- Get multiple bids. Many vendors and contractors will offer **free estimates**.
- Sometimes homeowners are to blame for their own sticker shock. If you have specific features and product choices in mind, make sure to let the contractor know so it can be included in the quote.
- Have a contingency plan for delays and additional costs

# 03

## What Are You Trying To Achieve?



Home renovation experts can be an incredible resource in more ways than one! If your renovation has an underlying goal in mind, like making a shared bathroom more functional, or defining living areas in an open floor plan, they might suggest ways for you to accomplish the same goal for less money, or come up with creative solutions that will add even more value.

Interior designers and contractors do this every day, and they know what has worked well in homes similar to yours. Take advantage of their knowledge!

By that same token, be sure to listen to your contractor, even if you don't like what they have to say. Sometimes what homeowners imagine and what is functional are two different things. A good contractor will consider things like making sure a door's placement and movement won't interfere with any electrical or plumbing components.





# 04

## What Don't You Know?



It's sometimes hard to know what you don't know, but be careful about making assumptions.

For example, at East Side Glass, one mistake many homeowners make is assuming that shower glass is all the same, or that it can be cut down to fit any enclosure. Unfortunately, this assumption can waste a lot of time and money.

### Cautionary Tales for Homeowners

We see a few common homeowner mistakes, and we thought we'd share a couple so that you can avoid their fate!

#### "The DIY Do-Over"

In a misguided effort to save money, some homeowners will design and build their own shower enclosure, assuming that a custom glass provider can make anything work. At East Side Glass, we can do quite a bit, but we can't do the impossible!

These homeowners often have to redo the work completely before we can install the glass.

#### "The Prefab Paradox"

We also get calls from homeowners who have already purchased a prefabricated shower door, assuming it would be cheaper than a custom solution. Unfortunately, by the time they call us, they've already tried to install the door themselves, only to realize it won't fit. But tempered glass can't be cut down after the fact. And at this point, they probably won't be able to return it to the store.

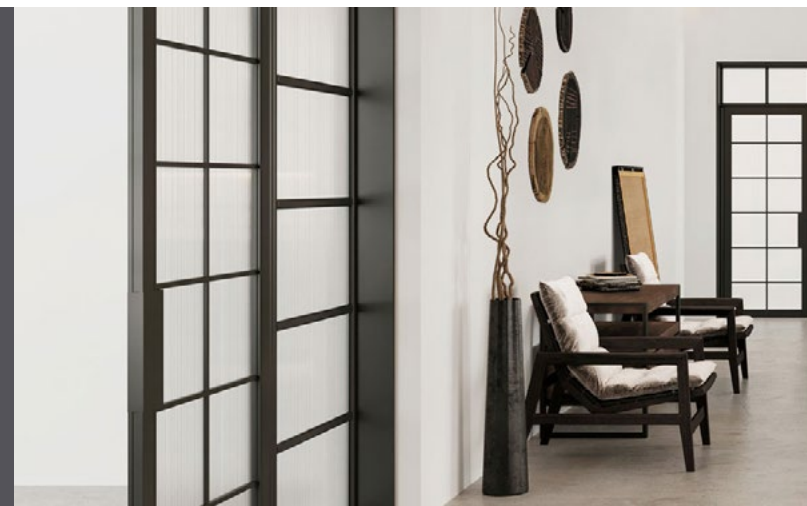
**Interested in learning more about prefab vs. custom shower doors?**  
**Get Our Complete Guide to Shower Doors**

# 05

## Could You Accomplish More With Less?

One popular home renovation these days is adding a home office. Many homeowners consider converting their attic space, but attic conversions can cost **up to \$80,000**.

Most homeowners don't want to chop up existing living space, but a glass partition wall can be a simpler and far more elegant solution that adds privacy without blocking the light.





# 06

## Are There Any Codes You Should Know About?



If you're doing some or all of the renovation yourself, it's always a good idea to check with your local inspector to see if there are any specific codes and rules you should know about. If you use a remodeling contractor, they should help you navigate the permit process, if needed.



### Rules for Glass

Glass rules vary by state. If your project involves glass, and you're located in Minnesota, you should know that safety glass (tempered or laminated) is typically required in bathrooms, walk-through doors, and anything within a two-foot radius of a door. You'll also need safety glass for anything less than 18" from a walking surface or door. To put it another way, safety glass should be used in any place a break could cause serious harm and injury.



**Codes can be frustrating, but ignoring them isn't a good idea. You could be fined or end up having to redo the work.**

# 07

## Who Should Do the Work?

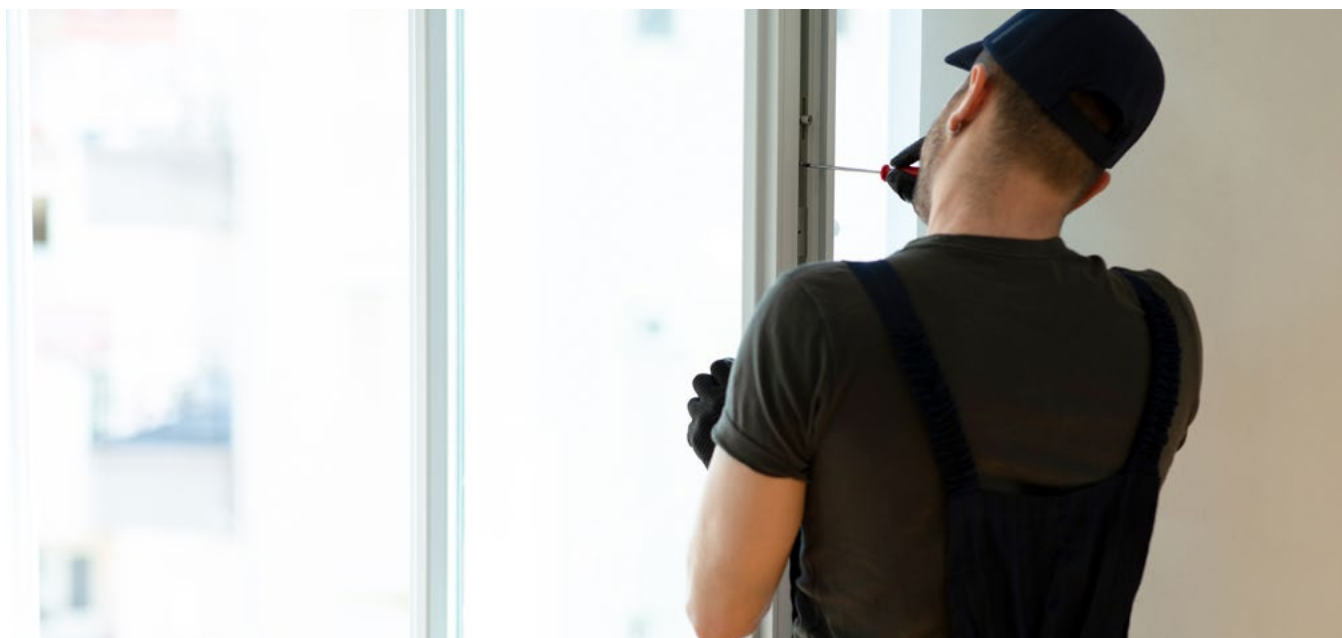


It's admirable to want to save money, and there's almost nothing like the satisfaction you can get from doing the work yourself. But we wouldn't advise a homeowner to jump into a project without really knowing what they were getting themselves into.

Most handy homeowners could add a tile backsplash or install vinyl flooring, but some projects are harder than they seem.

We can't speak for other specialized trades, but projects involving glass can be notoriously tricky, and in most cases, should be left to the experts. Glass is unforgiving, and even the smallest errors in measuring can cause big problems, like leaky shower doors.

And unlike many other building materials, glass can break, and when it does, you can be injured. Tempered glass, which is used in shower doors, is designed to break into tiny pieces instead of large shards, but **it's still possible to get nicks and cuts** from a broken door.





## 10 Glass Shower DIY Installation Tips

**If you're handy and want to install a glass shower yourself, here's what we'd recommend:**

- 1 Take accurate measurements, and make sure your shower bay is standard, and that your walls and floors are perfectly plumb — otherwise, a prefab kit won't work
- 2 Consider any protruding tile or other irregularities that might affect the fit and how the shower door will need to open
- 3 If a kit will work for your space, steer clear of 1/8" glass, which can feel wobbly even if you do everything right
- 4 While appearance is important, keep in mind that some styles are easier to replace, easier to maintain, and less prone to leaks than others
- 5 Make sure your walls are strong enough to support the weight
- 6 Make sure you have a level, drill, silicone caulk, a screwdriver, gloves, safety glasses, and towels handy
- 7 Follow the kit's instructions precisely
- 8 Make sure to have someone help you when lifting and placing the door, as the glass can be very heavy
- 9 Seal any gaps to prevent water from leaking, and allow it to cure fully before using the shower
- 10 Before using your shower for the first time, run a quick water test to check for leaks



# 08

## How To Find the Right Vendor or Contractor



Your vendors and contractor should be highly skilled, reliable, and trustworthy. But you might also want to consider their “bedside manner.” Your project may take some time, it might disrupt your life, and you might have to hear bad news from time to time.

At **East Side Glass**, if something unexpected comes up, we immediately contact the homeowner or contractor to work through it and come up with a solution that makes everyone happy. But some contractors aren’t known for being good communicators. Only you can decide how important that is to you.

Referrals are always helpful. But if your friends and family don’t have suggestions, online reviews can paint a decent picture. There are always those people out there who love to leave negative reviews no matter what, but if you see a ton of five-star reviews and happy testimonials, that’s always a great sign!

### Questions You Should Ask

If everything else looks good, here are a few other things we recommend asking before you sign anything:

- Are you licensed to work in this state?
- Do you have general liability and workers’ comp insurance?
- How long have you been in this business?
- Will you be using subcontractors? If so, for what?
- Who is responsible for things like scheduling inspections or obtaining permits?
- Can you provide a detailed, written estimate?
- What happens if an unexpected issue changes the scope of the work?
- What guarantee do you offer for your work?
- Do you have a cancellation policy?
- What are your normal working hours?
- Will you be my main point of contact?
- How often can I expect to get project updates?
- Who’s responsible for clean-up?

## Certifications To Look for

Not all contractors will need certifications, but electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and roofing workers should definitely be certified. Here's what language to look for on their websites!

### Contractor Certifications by Industry



#### **Electrical**

Certified by the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA)



#### **Plumbing**

Certified by the National Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors (PHCC)



#### **HVAC**

Certified by North American Technician Excellence (NATE)



#### **Roofing**

Certifications from manufacturers like GAF or Owens Corning



#### **General Remodeling**

Certified by the National Association of Home Builders or the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI)



#### **Lead Paint Removal**

EPA Lead-Safe Certification



#### **Energy Efficiency Upgrades**

BPI (Building Performance Institute) or LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certified

At East Side Glass, we do have LEED-certified installers on staff, but most custom glass shops won't have many certifications. They simply don't exist for us in the same way they do for plumbers and electricians. If a glass shop often works on larger projects with multiple contractors, then they should have built a solid reputation for lasting, quality work. Apart from reading reviews, if you trust a company that often works with glass pros, you can also ask them for a recommendation.

# 09

## How You'll Make Life Easier for Yourself



Depending on your renovation, you might have to make alternative arrangements for cleaning, cooking, and sleeping for the time being. You also might want to take a few additional worries off your plate. Renovations can be stressful, and you certainly don't need to add to it.

### Stress-Reduction Checklist

- ☐ Remove clutter and clear pathways to make it easier for workers to bring materials and equipment into your home without breaking anything
- ☐ Make sure pets have a safe space. At various stages in your project, workers may need to come and go, and it's easy for an outside door to be left open
- ☐ Secure any valuables for added peace of mind
- ☐ Consider staying elsewhere during a particularly disruptive portion of the renovation to give yourself a break
- ☐ If you're doing some or all of the work yourself, it can be tough on relationships. Anticipate this, and talk through how you'll work through any additional challenges that pop up





## Cold Weather Renovation Hacks

A lot of people don't know this. But if you're in a northern state like we are, winter can be a great time to get home projects done! Contractors usually aren't as busy, and that often means you can get better deals and more personalized attention.

### However, here's what you should know:

- 1 Indoor projects can happen year-round, but if any digging is involved, you might want to start planning in advance so foundations, for example, can get poured before the ground freezes. And ideally, any exterior painting should wait until spring.
- 2 Because your windows will be closed, dust and fumes can hang around longer. You might want to change your furnace filter more often and use an air purifier. If you get a nice sunny day, try your best to air out your rooms!
- 3 Renovations can be loud, and during the winter, it will be harder to get away from the noise. If you'll be stuck at home, you might want to invest in comfortable earplugs or noise-canceling headphones.
- 4 Because workers will be coming in and out of your home often, plan for higher heating bills.
- 5 Ice, snowstorms, and extreme temperatures can cause additional delays! If your area is known for a big blizzard here and there, factor that into your plans.
- 6 If you need to move some of your household items, be sure to store anything temperature-sensitive in a warm, dry place.
- 7 Even if you have snow cover, some heavy foot traffic or equipment can be hard on plants. If you have areas you'd like to protect, be sure to mark them off.
- 8 It gets darker earlier during the winter, so some areas of your home may need more artificial light to keep work moving.

# 10

## Track Your Expenses!



If you're doing some or all of the work yourself, there are plenty of apps now that help you track your expenses so you'll know when you're going over budget. Excel also has a few helpful **budget-tracking templates**.

There's an additional benefit to tracking your expenses — good record-keeping can help you reduce your capital gains taxes when you eventually sell your home. Do it — you'll thank yourself later!



## Contemplating a Home Renovation in Central MN?

At East Side Glass, we've been proudly serving the greater St. Cloud area since 1953. **Our mission** — then and now — is to build new opportunities and relationships with our customers that stand the test of time.

We can help local homeowners and contractors with **these projects**:

- Custom mirrors
- Glass shower doors
- Decorative cabinetry glass
- Windows and window/screen repair
- Glass railings
- Glass partitions

We hope this guide was helpful. And if your renovation involves glass, our estimates are always — as they say — on the house!

**You're welcome to call our shop or click the link below to get started.**

**Get a free estimate**