

What are renovation shows not telling you?



(NC) Renovating a home can be a wiser investment than moving and popular makeover shows are certainly inspiring. However, these shows can also leave viewers with mistaken impressions.

If life was like TV, we could dream up an addition on a Friday evening and be drinking coffee in it on Monday. While most of us know that's unrealistic, some may have to experience living through a renovation to understand how complex and time-consuming construction can be.

If a project is worthwhile, time and effort shouldn't be deal breakers. Instead, careful planning and patient execution can be signs that the job is being done right and will add value to the property.

An early step in the process is investigating the rules for new construction in your area. Many are surprised to learn that permits may be needed for smaller jobs, like finishing basements, updating plumbing, or adding a wood-burning stove.

The permit process ensures that renovations are safe and comply with local zoning, heritage protection and other rules. Waiting for a permit can be tedious, but not obtaining one can be downright painful. You might be asked to open walls, ceilings and other finishes so an inspector can see if the work complies. You may even have to remove the renovation entirely.

It's tempting to believe no one will ever find out that a renovation was completed without a permit, but what if questions come up when it's time to sell? Potential buyers often hire home inspectors who can identify renovations. A buyer who discovers that construction was done without a permit may demand a price reduction, or even scuttle the deal entirely.

Complete your home renovations the right way by following these four pointers:

- Consult the experts — a real estate lawyer can confirm that the work planned is legal and can review contracts before you sign.
- Obtain several quotes to get a good idea of the expected cost.
- Determine which renovations require permits in your municipality.
- Get your agreement with any contractors in writing.

If you're a buyer seeking assurances that renovations were done right, a real estate lawyer can also help you determine whether permits were obtained.

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