

— FOR COLONNADE HOMEOWNERS —

The 7-Step Guide to Predictable Renovation Success



A Clear Process. Better Decisions.
Created for Colonnade Homeowners.



PREPARED BY
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ATTENTION: Colonnade Homeowner

Before you spend “1 Minute or \$1.00” on your renovation project, understand this...

The 7-Step Guide to Predictable Renovation Success outlines seven steps that apply to every renovation project, large or small.

You will gain clarity, confidence and control as quickly as you can read.

1. YOUR GOALS	Set the goals for your project.
2. PROJECT FEASIBILITY	Is your project practical, possible and approximately how much will it cost?
3. PRO TEAM	Architect, contractor or designer: who should you speak with first?
4. DRAWINGS	What is required and how much might it cost?
5. CONTRACT	What is included? Are the terms fair or lopsided?
6. PERMITTING	A necessary step to stay legal.
7. CONSTRUCTION	We finally get to start.

Start Strong and Finish Stronger

What you are about to learn is not “common sense”; it is a practical formula for success.

If you ever wished you had a competent friend in the construction business to guide you down the right path, he would sit down and tell you what I’m about to share with you.

More homeowner renovation resources: [Boca Raton Renovation Guide](#)

A QUICK WORD FROM LOU

My name is Lou St. George. I know this process works because I've worked with hundreds of clients over the course of my 23+ year career as a State Licensed General Contractor in Florida, primarily in Palm Beach and Broward counties.

My simple seven-step process is easy, effective and proven.

STEP 1. YOUR GOALS

Here's how you clarify goals. Yes, this is the starting point!

Your goals will guide your decisions through the entire planning process.

Renovation goals are often inspired by a desire for convenience, lifestyle, aesthetics, modernization, privacy, organization, time savings and sometimes safety. Other times, renovation is forced by Mother Nature, your insurance company or an HOA.

The easiest way to start is to make a list of all the things you dislike—or even hate—about your home. This can be motivating. Go from room to room and create a list.

Another approach is to start with the end in mind. What is the big picture? How will this renovation enhance your lifestyle when completed? Visualize yourself, your family and friends enjoying the new space.

Think about the interior and exterior, then walk through your home and make a list of what you notice. You can also include anything that needs maintenance or repair.

Next, visualize what it will be like three years from now if you do nothing. Revise your list if needed.

EXAMPLES OF GOALS

- My goal is to have a comfortable, energy-efficient, modern home with new air conditioning, windows, doors and lighting.
- My goal is to have a professional-grade kitchen because I love to cook and entertain.
- My goal is to add space for a workout room. The traffic driving to the gym is torture.

Set your goals so someone else does not influence you away from what is important to you. It is your home and your money—set goals for yourself.

YOUR PRIORITIES

Now that you have goals, you can set priorities. Priorities can go from macro to micro as you see fit. They help guide the project through planning, design and budgeting.

You can prioritize your goals, have priorities within each goal, or both.

1. Kitchen renovation is priority one. The appliances are outdated and organized storage is desperately needed.
2. The primary bathroom needs a full renovation. It smells musty and we want a roll-in shower for the future.
3. Replace the driveway and sidewalks. They are full of trip hazards—and our neighbor's new driveway looks much more attractive.

Write down your priorities. This can be as simple as numbering your goals.

BUDGET

Even though you may not know the exact cost of your desired renovation, write down a price range.

Example: I think I will spend between \$325,000 and \$375,000.

Writing down a preliminary range frees up your thinking so the budget is not always floating around in your mind.

WARNING: There are a lot of numbers thrown around by non-contractors regarding cost per square foot. Every renovation has a different size, scope, existing condition and logistical challenge. You also rarely know what is included in someone else's undefined square-foot price.

Need help establishing a realistic starting budget?

READY-ESTIMATE can help you develop an initial renovation cost range before you spend money on full drawings. It takes about two minutes and is intended as a practical planning starting point—not a final bid.

[Explore READY-ESTIMATE](#)

STEP 2. PROJECT FEASIBILITY

Can your dream renovation become reality? These are the governors experienced contractors know they must address before saying, “Yes, we can do this.”

Depending on the project, we usually face two to four of them:

- Your home's structural and system limitations
- Florida Building Code requirements
- HOA restrictions and requirements
- Budget

You need to understand that these limitations exist before spending significant money on construction or drawings.

An experienced, competent and trustworthy General Contractor can be your best early resource in helping determine feasibility.

Want to keep learning without starting a sales conversation?

Explore short renovation videos and homeowner resources covering cost, timelines, plans, budgeting, contractor selection and the full renovation process.

[Visit the Boca Raton Renovation Guide](#)

STEP 3. PRO-TEAM ASSEMBLY

A common question homeowners ask is, “Who do I call or hire first?”

Great question, I'll explain what each party's role is and then give my opinion.

Architect – An architect may help with space planning, structural or exterior changes, design development and the drawings needed for permitting.

General Contractor – A General Contractor is responsible for turning the plans into a completed renovation. This includes budgeting, permitting, scheduling, managing construction and project closeout.

Interior Designer – Anyone in Florida can use the title “Interior Designer” and work on residential projects. They cannot legally hire or manage construction subcontractors.

Registered Interior Designer – A Registered Interior Designer may prepare interior design documents for nonstructural elements, such as space planning. An RID cannot pull building permits or hire, contract with or manage construction subcontractors.

PROFESSIONAL OPINION: WHO SHOULD YOU CALL FIRST?

This depends on the project scope and the level of trust and confidence you have in the person you are considering.

For medium-to-large renovations, my biased opinion is that if you can find an experienced, competent and trustworthy General Contractor—a tall order—that is usually your best starting point.

An experienced GC can help determine early feasibility, identify likely cost and construction concerns, and coordinate the architect, engineer and designer around the realities of the project.

STEP 4. DRAWINGS

Most renovation projects require drawings before accurate pricing, permitting and construction can begin.

The level of detail depends on the size and complexity of the project. A simple interior renovation may require limited plans, while a major renovation or addition may require architectural, structural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing drawings.

WHAT DRAWINGS ACCOMPLISH

They help you understand the proposed result. Floor plans and elevations allow you to see how the renovated space will function and look before construction begins.

They allow the project to be priced more accurately. The more clearly the scope, materials and construction details are defined, the more reliable the contractor’s pricing can be.

They are used for permitting and construction. Permit drawings must comply with Florida Building Code and provide the information needed by the building department, contractor and trades.

COST OF DRAWINGS

Drawing costs vary significantly based on project size, scope and complexity. They may begin around several thousand dollars for a smaller project and reach tens of thousands of dollars for a major renovation or addition.

This is why it is important to confirm your goals, budget and project feasibility before committing to a full set of plans.

Good drawings are valuable. Drawings created before the project direction is clear can become an expensive detour.

STEP 5. RENOVATION CONTRACT

A renovation contract should clearly explain what you are buying, what the contractor is responsible for, how payments will be made and how common project issues will be handled.

Do not rely on verbal promises or assumptions. If something matters, it should be written into the agreement.

SCOPE OF WORK

The contract should clearly describe the work being performed and identify the labor, materials, supervision, management and other services included. A vague scope creates room for misunderstandings, change orders and unexpected costs.

CONTRACT PRICE

The agreement should explain how the project will be priced. Common methods include fixed price, cost plus, time and materials, and hourly or management-based fees. No single method fits every project, but you should understand exactly how the final cost will be determined.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Payments should be tied to deposits, progress or clearly defined milestones. The schedule should provide the contractor with enough money to keep the project moving while protecting the homeowner from paying too far ahead of completed work.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The contract should explain how concealed conditions, change orders, delays, warranties, disputes, permits and construction liens will be handled.

A good contract does more than protect the contractor. It creates clear expectations and helps protect both parties.

The goal is not to eliminate every possible problem. It is to make sure everyone understands the rules before construction begins.

STEP 6. PERMITTING

Most renovation projects in Florida require permits before construction can legally begin.

Permit requirements vary depending on the size and scope of the work, but may involve architectural or engineering drawings, product approvals, contractor licensing, insurance documents and other supporting information.

WHO HANDLES THE PERMIT?

The General Contractor typically coordinates the permitting process. This may include reviewing plans, collecting required documents, submitting the permit package, responding to building department comments and scheduling inspections during construction.

WHY PERMITTING MATTERS

Permits help confirm that the work complies with Florida Building Code and local requirements. They also create an official record of the improvements made to your home.

The review process may take weeks or longer depending on the project and the quality of the submitted plans.

Good preparation matters. A complete, coordinated permit package can help reduce unnecessary corrections and delays.

STEP 7. CONSTRUCTION START

Once the plans are complete and the required permits are approved, construction can begin.

Your contractor should confirm the start date, review what to expect and explain how the project will be managed.

BEFORE WORK STARTS

- The anticipated schedule
- How your home will be protected
- Who will supervise the work
- How questions and changes will be handled
- How often you will receive progress updates

DURING CONSTRUCTION

Your contractor coordinates the trades, materials, inspections, schedule and day-to-day decisions needed to keep the project moving.

Renovation work may involve surprises, especially inside an existing home. Good planning and clear communication make those issues easier to manage when they arise.

Construction may be the most visible phase, but successful projects are usually determined by the quality of the decisions made before the first wall is opened.

Start strong, stay informed and finish with the result you planned for.

IS THIS THE BEGINNING—OR THE END?

You now understand the seven essential steps that lead from a renovation idea to the start of construction.

Construction may feel like the beginning, but many of the decisions that determine success—or create problems—are made long before the first wall is opened.

Clear goals, early feasibility, the right professional team and proper planning can help you avoid wasted time, unnecessary expense and disappointment.

The stronger you start, the better your chances of achieving the renovation you originally envisioned.

If you're considering a significant renovation and have questions about feasibility, planning, cost or where to begin, give me a call.

I'm happy to have a brief conversation and help you determine the best next step.

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This guide is provided for general educational and informational purposes only. Renovation requirements, costs, feasibility, design needs, permitting requirements and construction conditions vary by property, project scope, governing authority and other circumstances.

The information presented should not be considered a project-specific estimate, feasibility determination, design recommendation, legal opinion, engineering opinion or substitute for advice from properly licensed professionals who have reviewed your particular property and proposed work.

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