

Renovating Without Regret

From hidden costs to council consents, here's how to upgrade your home with clarity, confidence and zero budget surprises.



Introduction

Renovating is not the same as building new. With a new build, you start from a blank slate. With a renovation, you are working with the quirks and, sometimes, the problems of an existing structure.

Behind every wall or under every floorboard lies a story: some straightforward, some not. Renovations can reveal hidden electrical work, dated plumbing, or structural issues that only appear once work begins. They also come with added complexity, such as building consents, weathertightness requirements, restricted building work and coordination between old and new materials.

But with the right planning, the right people, and the right process, a renovation can completely transform how your home looks, feels and functions, without the stress or financial surprises. Here is what you can expect:

- ➔ **How to budget for renovations realistically, including the unknowns**
- ➔ **Which upgrades add the most value and comfort in New Zealand homes**
- ➔ **Smart design swaps that deliver architectural impact without overspending**
- ➔ **The red flags to look for before you start opening up walls**
- ➔ **How to choose a renovation builder who can handle complexity with care**
- ➔ **Ways to minimise disruption to your daily life while the work is underway**

Whether you are modernising for comfort, extending for space, or upgrading for lifestyle, this guide will give you the tools to renovate with confidence and clarity.

So pour a cuppa (or a vino) and let us show you how to turn the home you have into the home you want to live in.



Regan Bailey

BUDGET:

Expect the Unexpected

Know the True Cost of Renovating

Every renovation reveals surprises. Old wiring, corroded pipes, hidden moisture damage, or substandard framing are all common once demolition begins.

The key is not to fear these discoveries but to plan for them.

 Golden Rule:

Allow a contingency of at least 10% on top of your estimated cost. If you do not need it, fantastic. If you do, it is already built into your plan.

Include these items in your renovation budget upfront:

-  Demolition and waste removal: Often underestimated but can add up quickly.
-  Structural upgrades: Strengthening, bracing, or re-leveling foundations may require engineering input.
-  Code compliance: Any wall you open must meet today's Building Code standards.
-  Council consents and fees: Even small structural or layout changes can trigger consent requirements.



Staging a renovation can help with cash flow, but plan carefully. Some work, such as flooring or rewiring, is far more efficient when done once.



VALUE:

Renovations That Pay Off

Not every upgrade adds equal value. The best renovations balance lifestyle improvements with market return, enhancing how your home functions as much as how it looks.

Item	Top value-adding renovations
Kitchens	Functional layouts with timeless finishes, quality joinery and efficient lighting consistently deliver the best return.
Bathrooms	Modern, low-maintenance bathrooms improve comfort and resale appeal.
Extensions	Added space pays off only when it feels cohesive. Proportion and flow are everything.
Indoor–outdoor flow	Decks, patios and large sliders connecting living areas to the outdoors lift daily living quality.
Energy efficiency	Upgrades such as insulation, double glazing and ducted heating make homes healthier and more cost-efficient.



The biggest transformation often comes from layout and light. Reconfiguring spaces for better orientation and connection can make a home feel larger without adding a single square metre.

SMART RENO SWAPS: That Save Big

You do not have to spend top dollar to achieve an architectural finish. With thoughtful design and guidance, you can balance aesthetics, performance, and practicality.

1

Keep plumbing in place: Moving toilets, vanities, or showers means rerouting pipes, which adds cost. Work with existing plumbing layouts where possible to save thousands.

2

Choose large-format tiles: Bigger tiles look modern, reduce grout lines, and take less labour to lay meaning a clean, high-end finish for less.

3

Mix materials strategically: Splurge on statement features such as tiled showers or premium fixtures, then pair them with mid-range finishes elsewhere.

4

Flooring with function and longevity: Solution-dyed nylon carpet offers warmth, sound absorption and durability perfect for bedrooms and high-use areas. It is colourfast, stain-resistant, and ideal for busy households or coastal climates. While wool feels luxurious, it fades faster, absorbs spills, and needs more upkeep. For those watching budget, luxury vinyl tile (LVT) is a smart, practical option. It mimics timber at a lower cost, performs well in wet areas and provides a warm, comfortable underfoot feel that suits any style of home.

5

Reconfigure instead of extend: Removing a wall or improving light flow can achieve the same sense of space as an addition without the extra square metres.



What to Check Before You Renovate

Every renovation starts with understanding what you are working with. The quirks and character of older homes often reveal the best opportunities for improvement, but they can also uncover a few surprises. Knowing what to look for early helps you plan confidently and avoid budget shocks later.

- ✓ **Structure and foundations** → Sagging floors or cracked linings may point to movement that needs attention before cosmetic upgrades.
- ✓ **Wiring and plumbing** → Homes built before the 1970s usually require full replacement to meet today's standards.
- ✓ **Exterior cladding** → 1990s plaster systems can be tricky; have these checked before altering windows or adding extensions. Check to see if timber weatherboards need replacing
- ✓ **Moisture and ventilation** → Pay close attention under bathrooms and around windows, as small leaks can lead to big costs if left unchecked.
- ✓ **Council and compliance** → Heritage overlays, height limits, or boundary setbacks can shape your design options.
- ✓ **Access and logistics** → Steep sites or tight driveways can affect how materials and trades get to site and impact pricing.



A detailed inspection with a builder and potentially an engineer gives you clarity before you start. Spending a little on investigation now often saves tens of thousands once work begins.



HOW TO:

Choose the Right Renovation Builder

Renovations require greater skill and adaptability than new builds. You need a builder who can problem-solve, interpret existing structures and communicate clearly. See below to learn what to look for:



Experience with renovations → Ask to see case studies of completed work



Transparency in pricing → Expect detailed, line-by-line estimates with clear inclusions and exclusions



Communication → Weekly updates and clear explanations of progress and changes.



Professional standards → Licensed Building Practitioner (LBP) accreditation, insurance and proven project management systems.



Post-Build Care → Ongoing support after completion to ensure quality holds.



The cheapest quote in a renovation is almost never the best one.
Look for clarity, not just cost.



HOW TO:

Live Through a Renovation

Renovations are as much about managing your lifestyle as they are about construction. With good planning, you can stay comfortable and in control. See our tips for living well during the process:

- ✓ Zone the project → Seal off work areas to reduce dust and noise.
- ✓ Plan temporary facilities → A small kitchenette or portable shower keeps things running.
- ✓ Know your timelines → Understand when you will need to adjust your living arrangements.
- ✓ Professional standards → Licensed Building Practitioner (LBP) accreditation, insurance and proven project management systems.
- ✓ Consider moving out → For large-scale work, short-term accommodation may be cheaper and far less stressful.



Noise and dust are inevitable, but clear communication and a tidy site make a big difference to how liveable your renovation feels day to day.



MUST DO:

6 Questions to Ask Your Renovation Builder

1

How do you handle unexpected issues such as rot, wiring, or plumbing?

2

Can you provide a clear measured estimate with defined inclusions and exclusions?

3

How will you contain dust and manage noise during the build?

4

What consents are needed, and will you manage them?

5

Can I speak to past renovation clients?

6

What does your Post-Build Care include?



Ask these questions early.
The builders who answer them clearly are the ones worth working with.



Conclusion

Renovating your home is one of the most powerful ways to enhance how you live, but it requires careful planning, transparency, and the right team.

Keep this guide close and use it as your renovation roadmap. With the right knowledge and the right builder, your renovation will not just improve your home and it will transform how you live.

Let's Talk About Your Home

Every renovation is unique. The best first step is a conversation.

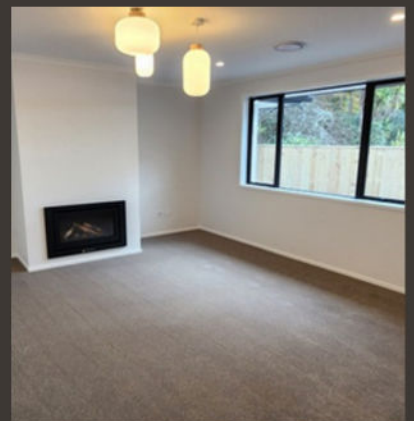
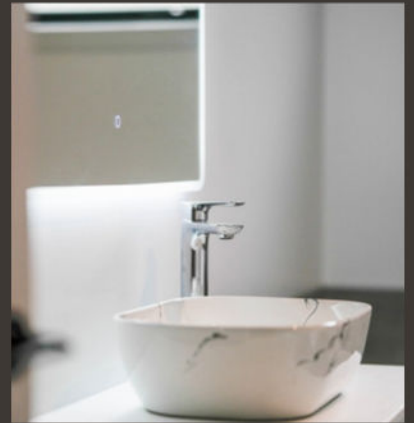
Bring us your ideas, challenges, and budget, and we will show you what is possible.

Here is how Elevation Homes works with renovation clients:

- ✓ **Personal Consult:** We listen first, then advise.
- ✓ **Tailored Advice:** Every existing home is different. We will show you the smartest way forward.
- ✓ **Clarity in Pricing:** While renovations cannot always be fixed-price, our process ensures transparent pricing, regular updates, and open communication about any changes, so you stay in control.

*You deserve a renovation experience
with zero guesswork, total clarity
and no budget surprises.*

— Elevation Homes





At Elevation Homes, we have seen too many homeowners begin renovations full of excitement, only to feel blindsided by hidden costs, unclear communication, or disruption they were not prepared for.

This guide is our way of sharing what we have learned from years of building and renovating homes across the Kāpiti Coast and beyond.

We believe in doing things differently:



Transparency upfront. No grey areas, no vague allowances.



Transparent pricing. While no renovation can be fixed-price, we promise open and frequent communication, line-by-line estimates, and clarity around costs at every stage.



Post-Build Care. We are here long after handover, ensuring your home feels just right.

Because a renovation should improve your life, not complicate it.



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