

AKA

Home Owner's Guide

PREPARING FOR YOUR HOME RENOVATION



WHERE TO START

The most important first step before you hire an Architect

Renovating a house can and should be really exciting. However too often we hear stories of unexpected surprises, misunderstandings between the Contractor, the Client and the Architect, and disputes over items not specified in the contract. I have decided to do something about it.

It all comes down to the brief

A good working relationship with your Architect is based on open, honest communication. This starts with a good brief that helps the Architect understand your expectations, preferences, wants, needs, aspirations and lifestyle. If your expectations are not clearly outlined and understood by all parties, you run the risk of spending unnecessary money, project complications, and costly delays. The Architect and Contractor will struggle to understand what to include when pricing your project.

A well thought-out design brief is the foundation for a successful project.

This guide will help you cover critical aspects of a design brief and includes work sheets that will help you outline your design brief.

Right then! Let's get started...

WHAT DO I WANT?

Your Starting Point

Spend some time in and around your house to get a real feel for it.

- Where is the sun in summer?
- Where is the sun in winter?
- Where are the views you want to enjoy every day and those you want to exclude?
- Where are the surrounding houses, other buildings and trees you may or may not want to see?
- Which parts of the house/yard are most/least noisy?
- Does the site slope?

Put all the information you have about your site in a file to share with your Architect (Photos, legal paperwork/covenants, existing plans or previous site information).

WHAT DO I WANT?

Design for Mood and Feeling

This is important. This is your home, where your children and other loved ones are, where they're going to grow up and you're going to have all your family memories.

Think about the 'feel' of your project:

- Modern? Traditional? Transitional?
- Think about your feelings - yes really! For example, what is your favorite time of day? Do you worry about shutting the curtains to protect the furniture from the sun, or do you like to enjoy coffee on the terrace? Is curling up with a good book your favorite hobby, or is it taking the dog for a walk no matter what the weather?
- Describe spaces, design features and styles that appeal to you and those that don't.
- Use Houzz.com to gather inspirational images. Put them in 'Ideabooks' to share with each other and your Architect

WHAT DO I WANT?

Spaces

Indoor

A good design can transform the way that we live. Think hard about your family's current and future needs. Map out your daily routine.

- How many people live in the house?
- How old are they?
- Who does what, where?
- Do you want to 'zone' spaces, separate family members, or functions?
- Make a list of who needs rooms to sleep, work and relax in.
- Where do you want to eat – in a large kitchen? separate dining room?
- Is your lifestyle formal, casual, relaxed or active?
- How often do you entertain? How many people?
- What type of home entertainment do you want to include e.g. music, television, projector or areas for storage of equipment?
- What method of heating do you want?
- Do you prefer natural ventilation or air conditioning?
- List any special requirements you have:
 - o Accessibility
 - o extra storage areas
 - o garage loft space
 - o built in furniture/shelving, home office.

WHAT DO I WANT?

Spaces

Outdoor

What do you want to do outdoors?

- Entertain? Relax? Play? Swim?
- What kind of space do you need for children?
- Garden?
- Do you want a high or low maintenance scheme?
- What features are important to you?
- Think about the sun and the wind
- Think of your external areas as outdoor rooms
- Consider privacy and connections between spaces.

WHAT DO I WANT?

Great Design

AKa believes that green buildings must first and foremost be beautiful and comfortable to enjoy. "Great Design is Sustainable Design".

- How important is a 'healthy home'?
- o One in which the air is fresh and not full of toxic off-gassing.
- How important is the local environment to you and your family?
- How can your decisions on the small things contribute to making a better world for all of us to enjoy?
- How can we build for enjoyment now and for years to come?

We strive to create homes that are a pleasure to be in and healthy environments for our families.

The Details

Think of the special pieces of furniture that you love or would like to have. Don't forget the artwork you want to showcase so your Architect can provide spaces and lighting for them in the new plans. Better to include it in your planning from day one, than to move in and wonder where you are going to put it.

WHAT DO I WANT?

Materials

Materials and finishes play a big part in creating the feeling you want in your home. They can be warm and soft, or cool and elegant. Contrast defines spaces, while continuity of finishes pulls things together. In the hands of a skilled Architect, materials are one of the most powerful design tools we have.

- List materials you like and dislike (inside and out)
 - o Your budget may be a determining factor in your final choice.
- Do you have any specific wall, ceiling and floor finishes in mind?
- Do you like warm natural stone and wood or elegant crisp glass and steel?
- Choices you make will determine how much you spend upfront, and how much you spend on maintenance in the longer term.

Your Architect can suggest appropriate green materials for a healthy home and many years of pleasure.

WHAT DO I WANT?

Timetable

Think about and share with your Architect key target dates that are important to you.

- When do you want to start and finish the project?
- Bear in mind that, as a rule of thumb, it takes at least 4 - 6 months to complete the design, obtain planning permission and prepare construction drawings before building work can commence.
- Allow 4 - 8 months for construction work on existing buildings and about 12 months for new buildings

Budget

Your budget is an important design tool. Ask yourself how much you are prepared to spend. Is this a firm amount? Will you make compromises to stick to the budget? Or will you spend a little more to get what you really want.

Lastly, have a conversation with yourself and keep asking why you want what it is you say you want. That way you are slowly elaborating your brief into more detail. Include the emotional aspects, as this is the overriding deeper reasoning behind what you want to change about your house. Use the checklists provided below to help you get a deeper understanding of what you want and why you want it.



WHAT DO I WANT?

I want to renovate my house, why?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Features

Some features, such as lots of daylight, space for outdoor gear, heated floors, etc will be more important to you than others. Thinking of things in terms of 'musthaves' and 'nice-to-haves' can help make the difficult design decisions easier. Take some time to list below (in no particular order), the features that most interest you.



WHAT DO I WANT?

'Must-Have' features:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



WHAT DO I WANT?

'Nice-to-Have' features:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



WHAT DO I WANT?

Congratulations!

You now have the key information that will help you lay a successful foundation for how to prepare for your design project.

We can't include every important piece of information about this very important step in the design and construction process successfully in this guide. As the project evolves, however, more unknowns are uncovered and get strategically incorporated in the final design.

Each project is unique and the brief will differ based on a multitude of factors. But with the concepts explained in this guide, you have the critical information to help you create a design brief that will ensure that your project is a success.

If you are in the process of looking for an Architect for your project, let's talk. We can help you through the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could negatively impact the project. We at AKa are committed to providing the best in sustainable design to enhance your quality of life. We work closely with you and your Builder from conception to completion to ensure that the final product reflects your aspirations for a beautiful, elegant and healthy home within your budget. Although every project has its particular needs, we have found that most renovation projects tend to unfold along the following lines.

Overview of a Typical Renovation Project

- Schematic Design package
- Design Development and Approvals
- Negotiate contract with Builder
- Detailed Permit and Construction
- Construction Phase
- 1 year warranty review

CONTACT

How to reach us...

Aleksandar Kolbas
B.A.S., M. Arch., OAA

Architect

AKa

95 Waterloo Street
Kitchener, Ontario, N2H 3V5
MOBILE: 519.572.0774

akolbas@ak-achitect.com

www.ak-architect.com