

Selecting the right contractor for your project



Choosing the right contractor is a critical step in ensuring your remodeling or custom home project is a success. The contractor builds what we design, manages the construction team, and coordinates schedules, materials, and inspections. A strong contractor-client-architect relationship sets the stage for a smoother process and a better outcome. The right contractor becomes part of our team, allowing us to proactively involve the general contractor or key subcontractors in design decisions, ensuring challenges are addressed well before construction.

How we can help with contractor selection

With nearly 30 years of experience in residential remodeling and custom home projects in Southeast Michigan, Studio Z has built strong relationships with trusted contractors. We help clients identify builders who are a good fit for their specific project, review preliminary cost estimates after schematic design is complete, and guide them in asking the right questions during interviews. Just as important, we assist in interpreting the responses so our clients can make an informed and confident choice.

What to look for in a contractor

The right contractor will have experience with projects like yours and a track record of satisfied clients. They should communicate clearly, stay organized, and provide realistic, transparent estimates. Look for someone with the staffing and resources to meet your schedule, backed by proper licensing, insurance, and active involvement in professional organizations.

How to find a contractor

Contractors can be found through professional organizations such as BRAG in Ann Arbor or the Home Builders Association of Southeast Michigan (membership in these groups often signals a commitment to ethics and ongoing professional development). You may also get referrals from friends or neighbors who have recently completed renovations. Even something as simple as noticing job signs in your neighborhood can provide leads; tidy worksites usually reflect professionalism, and homeowners are often willing to share their experiences. In addition, we are always glad to recommend contractors we've worked with successfully.

Questions to ask a potential contractor

When interviewing contractors, these questions will help you learn more about their experience, process, and professionalism:

- Do you specialize in residential construction?
- How much experience do you have remodeling existing homes or building custom homes?
- Have you completed projects similar to mine?
- How long have you been in business? Can you provide references or a list of projects I can visit?
- Do you have photos of completed projects on your website?
- How is payment structured (lump sum vs. cost-plus)?
- How often will payments be due?
- How do you handle unforeseen changes or contingencies during construction?
- Will you provide a detailed schedule, including key dates when I need to prepare (such as emptying kitchen cabinets)?
- Are you a member of a professional organization such as the Home Builders Association or the National Association of the Remodeling Industry?

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Checking references

Speaking with past clients is one of the best ways to understand how a contractor works in practice. Ask questions like these to get a clear picture:

- What kind of work did the contractor do for you, and when?
- Did they provide a clear contract with cost and schedule details?
- Did the contractor show up reliably and explain any absences in advance?
- How was communication throughout the project—was it clear and timely?
- Were changes to cost or schedule explained clearly?
- If this was a remodel, were you able to live in your home during construction?
- Did the contractor keep the site clean and safe on a daily basis?
- Did they respect your family, pets, and property?
- Did the contractor help make the home comfortable and livable during construction?
- Did you experience any surprises? If so, how were they handled?
- Did the finished project meet your expectations? Was the work worth the cost?
- Did the contractor pull the required permits, and did the work pass inspections?
- If you had an architect, how well did the contractor collaborate with them?
- Would you hire this contractor again?



Building the right team

Selecting the right contractor is about more than cost. It's about finding a partner you trust to build your home with care, quality, and respect. The right contractor becomes part of the team—working with you and with us to solve challenges and bring your project to life. With this collaboration, you'll have the best chance of a smooth process and results you'll love.

