Chicago Bathroom Remodeling Pros

Educational Resources for Chicago Homeowners
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Walk-In Shower Buyer’s Guide

Everything You Need to Know Before Installing a Walk-In Shower

A walk-in shower is one of the most desirable upgrades you can make to your bathroom. It creates a spacious, modern appearance, improves accessibility, simplifies cleaning, and often increases the value of your home. Whether you’re replacing an outdated bathtub, remodeling your primary bathroom, or designing a luxury spa-inspired retreat, choosing the right walk-in shower requires thoughtful planning.

This guide will help you understand the available design options, materials, features, costs, and planning considerations so you can confidently make informed decisions before beginning your bathroom remodeling project.

Why Choose a Walk-In Shower?

Walk-in showers have become one of the most requested bathroom remodeling projects in Chicago homes.

Benefits Include:

✔Modern appearance

✔Larger visual space

✔Easier cleaning

✔Better accessibility

✔Improved resale appeal

✔Custom design options

✔Luxury features

✔Better use of available space

✔Aging-in-place benefits

✔Long-term durability

Many homeowners discover they use a walk-in shower every day while rarely using their bathtub.

Step 1 – Determine Your Goals

Before selecting materials, ask yourself:

□ Is this my primary bathroom?

□ Do I still need a bathtub?

□ Am I planning to age in place?

□ Is accessibility important?

□ Do I want a spa-inspired design?

□ Is easy maintenance a priority?

□ Will this be my forever home?

Your answers will help determine the best shower configuration.

Step 2 – Choose the Right Shower Size

The available space will influence your design options.

Common Shower Sizes

Shower Size	Best For
36” x 36”	Small Bathrooms
36” x 48”	Guest Bathrooms
48” x 48”	Standard Walk-In Shower
48” x 60”	Primary Bathroom
60” x 60”	Luxury Shower
Custom Sizes	High-End Remodels

Larger showers provide greater comfort while improving accessibility.

Step 3 – Curbless or Traditional Shower?

Curbless Shower

A curbless shower eliminates the raised threshold between the bathroom floor and shower floor.

Advantages

✔Easy entry

✔Modern appearance

✔Wheelchair accessibility

✔Aging-in-place friendly

✔Larger visual space

✔Fewer tripping hazards

Curbless showers require proper floor preparation and waterproofing but are among today's most desirable bathroom features.

Traditional Shower

Includes a low curb separating the shower from the bathroom floor.

Advantages

✔Lower installation cost

✔Works well in most homes

✔Easier to retrofit

✔Traditional appearance

Both options provide excellent performance when professionally installed.

Step 4 – Choose Your Shower Walls

Porcelain Tile

Advantages

✔Exceptional durability

✔Low maintenance

✔Wide variety of colors

✔Marble-look options

✔Excellent moisture resistance

Recommended for most luxury bathroom remodels.

Ceramic Tile

Advantages

✔Affordable

✔Beautiful appearance

✔Easy maintenance

✔Numerous design choices

Natural Stone

Advantages

✔Luxury appearance

✔Unique patterns

✔Premium finishes

Requires additional maintenance and sealing.

Acrylic Shower Systems

Advantages

✔Lower cost

✔Faster installation

✔Easy cleaning

✔Excellent moisture resistance

Ideal for homeowners seeking a practical, low-maintenance solution.

Step 5 – Select Your Shower Floor

Popular options include:

□ Mosaic tile

□ Porcelain tile

□ Textured tile

□ Natural stone

□ Prefabricated shower base

For safety, choose flooring with good slip resistance while maintaining easy maintenance.

Step 6 – Choose a Shower Door

Frameless Glass

Most popular option.

Benefits:

✔Open appearance

✔Modern design

✔Easy cleaning

✔Showcases tile

✔Larger visual space

Semi-Frameless Glass

Benefits:

✔Contemporary appearance

✔Lower cost

✔Good durability

Framed Shower Door

Benefits:

✔Budget-friendly

✔Traditional appearance

✔Excellent functionality

Frameless glass remains the preferred choice for most luxury bathroom remodels.

Step 7 – Choose Your Shower Fixtures

Popular fixture options include:

□ Rain shower head

□ Handheld shower

□ Dual shower heads

□ Body sprays

□ Thermostatic valve

□ Pressure-balanced valve

□ Ceiling-mounted shower head

□ Adjustable slide bar

Choose fixtures that match both your lifestyle and your bathroom’s design.

Step 8 – Add Luxury Features

Today’s walk-in showers can include numerous premium upgrades.

Popular options include:

✔Built-in bench

✔Recessed shampoo niche

✔Multiple niches

✔Heated flooring

✔Steam shower preparation

✔LED niche lighting

✔Linear drain

✔Decorative accent wall

✔Floating bench

✔Bluetooth audio

These upgrades create a spa-inspired shower experience you’ll enjoy every day.

Step 9 – Select Plumbing Fixture Finishes

Popular finishes include:

□ Matte Black

□ Brushed Nickel

□ Chrome

□ Brushed Brass

□ Polished Nickel

□ Oil-Rubbed Bronze

Coordinate shower fixtures with vanity hardware, faucets, lighting, and accessories for a cohesive design.

Step 10 – Waterproofing Matters

Beautiful tile is only part of a successful shower.

Professional waterproofing should include:

✔Waterproof membrane

✔Proper shower pan

✔Correct drain installation

✔Moisture-resistant backer board

✔Waterproof corners

✔Proper slope toward the drain

✔Quality grout

✔Professional caulking

Never compromise on waterproofing—it protects your home from expensive moisture damage.

Step 11 – Accessibility Planning

If you plan to remain in your home long term, consider incorporating universal design features now.

Popular upgrades include:

□ Curbless entry

□ Built-in bench

□ Grab bar blocking

□ Slip-resistant flooring

□ Handheld shower

□ Wider shower opening

□ Thermostatic controls

These features enhance safety without sacrificing appearance.

Step 12 – High-Rise Condo Considerations

If you live in a Chicago condominium, ask about:

□ HOA approval

□ Freight elevator scheduling

□ Contractor parking

□ Product deliveries

□ Building superintendent coordination

□ Insurance requirements

□ Work-hour restrictions

Planning ahead helps prevent costly delays.

Current Walk-In Shower Design Trends

Many Chicago homeowners are choosing:

- Large-format porcelain tile
- Curbless showers
- Frameless glass
- Linear drains
- Built-in benches
- Floor-to-ceiling tile
- Matte Black fixtures
- Marble-look porcelain
- Recessed shower niches
- Rain shower systems
- Heated tile flooring
- Minimal grout lines

These timeless features create bathrooms that remain stylish for many years.

Typical Investment

Shower Type	Typical Investment*
Acrylic Walk-In Shower	$8,000–$15,000
Tile Walk-In Shower	$12,000–$25,000
Luxury Custom Shower	$20,000–$40,000+
Steam Shower	Add $5,000–$12,000

*Pricing reflects typical Chicago-area remodeling ranges and varies based on size, material selections, plumbing changes, and project complexity.

Questions to Ask Before Buying

□ Will I miss having a bathtub?

□ Is the shower large enough?

□ Should I choose tile or acrylic?

□ Do I want frameless glass?

□ Is a built-in bench worthwhile?

□ Should I install heated floors?

□ Will this design still work in 15 years?

□ Does it fit my budget?

□ Is professional waterproofing included?

□ Have I selected quality plumbing fixtures?

Common Walk-In Shower Buying Mistakes

Avoid these common errors:

- Choosing appearance over functionality
- Making the shower too small
- Forgetting storage niches
- Selecting slippery flooring
- Skipping professional waterproofing
- Installing insufficient lighting
- Choosing inexpensive plumbing fixtures
- Overlooking future accessibility needs
- Ignoring ventilation requirements
- Hiring an inexperienced tile installer

Proper planning helps avoid expensive corrections later.

Our Recommendations

For most Chicago homeowners, we recommend:

✔Curbless walk-in shower (where feasible)

✔Large-format porcelain tile

✔Frameless glass enclosure

✔Built-in bench

✔Recessed shower niche

✔Linear drain

✔Rain shower head with handheld sprayer

✔Thermostatic mixing valve

✔Heated tile flooring

✔Slip-resistant shower floor

✔Professional waterproofing system

This combination offers the best balance of luxury, functionality, low maintenance, and long-term value.

Chicago Bathroom Remodeling Pros

A walk-in shower is one of the most valuable investments you can make in your home. Our experienced remodeling team helps homeowners throughout Chicago compare materials, layouts, plumbing fixtures, glass enclosures, and accessibility features to design showers that are beautiful, durable, and built to last. Whether you're planning a simple shower replacement or a luxury spa-inspired retreat, we're here to help you make informed decisions and create a bathroom you'll enjoy every day for years to come.

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