

# Signs of a Professional Remodeler

## ■ NAHB Remodelers

**NAHBR**  
REMODELERS

Membership in the NAHB Remodelers indicates a remodeler's commitment to professional-quality construction that meets or exceeds industry standards and practices, responsible business management, and reliable customer and warranty service. NAHB Remodelers have access to business and technical information, assistance from staff professionals who are experts in a variety of disciplines from accessibility to zoning, training, and educational programs for increasing business, technical and communication skills. NAHB Remodelers was founded in 1982.

## ■ Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR)



The CGR designation indicates that a remodeler has completed the requirements of the CGR program, including educational credits and certain prescribed standards of business experience and practices. If your remodeler has earned the CGR designation, you can be assured that he or she is a concerned professional who understands the value of continuing education and is ready to do his or her best for you.

## ■ Graduate Master Remodelers (GMR)



The GMR designation allows recognized CGRs to attain further recognition for their commitment to educational excellence and longevity in the remodeling industry. This program is designed to be the master level of the CGR designation and is only available after a remodeler has maintained their CGR for nine years.

## ■ Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS)



Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist  
Houses For Living, Homes For Life.

Developed by NAHB Remodelers, in collaboration with AARP, NAHB Research Center, and NAHB 50+ Housing Council, the CAPS program teaches the technical skills, customer service, marketing, and business management skills necessary to understand the expanding market for home modifications for aging in place. Remodelers who earn the CAPS designation demonstrate the specialized skills needed to serve customers who want to live in their own homes as they age.

## ■ Certified Green Professional



Remodelers who earn the CGP designation are dedicated to the best and latest in green building practices and techniques. This designation provides a solid background in green building methods including the principles of energy, water, and resource efficiency as well as indoor air and environmental quality.

For further information contact:

**NAHBR**  
REMODELERS

(800) 368-5242 x8216  
[www.nahb.org/remodel](http://www.nahb.org/remodel)

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## How to Find a

# PROFESSIONAL Remodeler



[www.nahb.org/remodel](http://www.nahb.org/remodel)

No matter the age of your home, sooner or later you may join the millions of people who remodel their homes each year. The reasons for remodeling are as varied as the projects themselves. Remodeling adds comfort, convenience, space, and value to what is for most home owners their most valuable asset.

This brochure will help you find a professional remodeler among the many people who seek your business. Your home is too important to entrust to anyone but a professional remodeler, who can:

- Save you money by doing your job right the first time.
- Ensure that your dreams are accurately translated into reality by offering design services in-house or through an arrangement with a professional architect or designer.
- Understand that your comfort during the project and its successful completion depends on effective communication and follow through.
- Maintain a safe and neat jobsite to prevent damage to your home or injury to household members and pets.
- Provide the best possible materials within your budget and assist you in making selections through the vendors they work with.
- Ensure that your job meets or exceeds applicable building codes and regulations.
- Guarantee the quality of their work with a workmanship warranty.
- Provide all applicable manufacturers' warranties.
- Respond promptly to service calls and inquiries.
- Provide proper licenses, comprehensive liability insurance and workers compensation coverage.\*



Credit: William Shaw & Associates, Inc.

Credit: Westhill Inc. Design/Build



## Where to Begin

- Develop an idea of what you want to do. Prioritize your needs and wants. Look at magazines and Web sites and collect pictures of what you like, so you can accurately convey your vision to the designer/architect of your project.
- Think about traffic patterns, furniture size and placement, colors, lighting, and how you expect to see the remodeled space.
- Figure out how much money you have to spend on the remodeling job, the furnishings, and the landscaping (if any). If necessary, talk to lenders and find out how much you can borrow and at what cost.
- The more clearly you can envision the project and describe it on paper, the more likely you are to convey a clear image of your project to your contractor.

## The Search for a Professional Remodeler

Seek referrals from:

- Online resources such as the Directory of Professional Remodelers available at [www.nahb.org/remodel](http://www.nahb.org/remodel)
- Local trade associations, such as your area's local home builders association and local Remodelers Council
- Friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and others who have had remodeling work done
- Building materials suppliers, architects, engineers, home building officials, local lenders, and insurance professionals

To further your comfort level, you can:

- Check with your local or state office of consumer protection and the local Better Business Bureau. Ask whether they have had any complaints about the remodeler. If so, were those complaints resolved satisfactorily?
- Check with your state's licensing agency and state and local building officials to see if they have received any complaints about the remodeler and to verify that the remodeler has the appropriate licenses and registrations.\*

\*requirements vary by state

# What to Look for & What to Ask

When you hire a remodeler, you are buying a service rather than a product. The quality of the service the remodeler provides will determine the quality of the finished product and your satisfaction with the result. Here are some qualifications you will want to explore and questions you will want to ask when interviewing a remodeler.



Credit: Lawrence Murr Remodeling

## Interview Previous or Present Customers

Before you sign a contract:

- Ask if the remodeler has completed jobs similar to yours.
- Ask to see before and after photos, if possible.
- Does the quality of work meet your standards?
- Ask the remodeler to share with you names, and contact information of some customers. Take the time to see the remodeler's work, if possible.

Ask the remodeler's customers:

- Would you hire this company again and would you recommend them to others?
- Did the remodeler maintain a neat jobsite, provide regular clean-up, and haul away debris and trash?
- Did the remodeler keep labor and materials delays to a minimum, so that your job could be started and completed on time and within budget?
- Did you find the remodeler easy to work with? Did the remodeler keep you informed as the job progressed?
- Did the remodeler supply you with paperwork in a timely fashion?
- How well did the remodeler deal with any problems that arose?
- Did the remodeler do everything their contract stated?



Credit: William Shaw & Associates, Inc.

## Make the Decision

- Ask yourself if you feel comfortable with the remodeler and confident that this company will do the work according to your plans, budget, and specifications.
- If you are satisfied with the answers to your questions, ask for a written estimate of the work to be done based on a set of plans and specifications. Be prepared to pay for this package. If the estimated cost of the project is more than you can afford, see if you can trim something from the project or postpone part of it so you can still work with a professional remodeler.
- Ask the remodeler to explain the plans, specifications and company procedures to you. For instance, once construction begins how does the company handle changes to the initial design, choice of materials, or schedule? Be sure that the estimate is based upon the same set of plans, specifications and scope of work you suggested. If there are any deviations, ask the remodeler to present them as options separate from the main proposal.
- Find out whether the remodeler uses a detailed, written contract that complies with local, state, and federal laws. The contract must spell out the work that will and will not be performed and provide a fair payment schedule.
- Select the remodeler with a track record of a variety of excellent projects and plenty of experience with your type of project. Beware of an exceptionally low price.

## Business Experience & Management

Does the remodeler:

- Maintain a permanent mailing address (not a PO Box), e-mail address, published personal phone number, fax number, cell phone, or voice-messaging system? You will want to be able to reach the remodeler quickly and easily throughout the process, especially at critical times.
- Carry insurance that protects you from claims arising from property damage or jobsite injuries?
- Have an established presence in the community?
- Possess a trustworthy reputation among customers, peers, local officials, and people involved in all aspects of the industry?
- Actively participate in a trade organization such as NAHB Remodelers? This and similar organizations help to keep their members informed about new products, construction techniques, business practices, and industry issues. Participation demonstrates a remodeler's commitment to professionalism and the remodeling industry.
- Has the remodeler earned any professional designations? Through education programs, these organizations confer designations such as Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), Graduate Master Remodeler (GMR), Certified Green Professional (CGP), and Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) to those who meet the requirements.



Credit: William Shaw & Associates, Inc.

## Construction & Technical Experience

Does the remodeler:

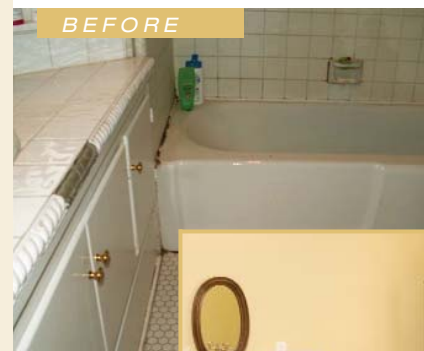
- Have a working knowledge of the types and ages of homes in the area? Knowing what is likely to be behind a wall or under a floor helps the remodeler to provide reliable estimates. An extremely low bid may indicate lack of experience and an inability to later cover the actual costs involved in the job and create unnecessary change orders.
- Know how to work safely in homes that may have lead paint to contain remodeling areas and minimize lead paint exposure?
- Specialize in particular types of projects?
- Arrange for building permits? The person who obtains the permit is the contractor of record and therefore liable for making sure the work complies with codes.
- Offer a workmanship warranty? If so, what kind and for how long?
- Agree to begin and complete your job within a reasonable timetable?

## Customer Service & Communication

Does the remodeler:

- Respond promptly to your inquires?
- Schedule meetings and attend them on time?
- Emphasize service and developing a trusting relationship with you?
- Listen to and understand your needs and wants and work with you to ensure that the plans for your job accurately reflect your expectations?
- Facilitate communication among all parties involved in the project?

For more remodeling tips and resources, including a list of "Red Flags: Signs of the Un-Professional Remodeler" visit [www.nahb.org/remodel](http://www.nahb.org/remodel).



Credit: Shirey Contracting, Inc.