

# The Remodel Report™

A smiling family of three—a woman, a man, and a young child—are sitting on a large rock in the foreground. They are all looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a modern, two-story house with a dark roof and light-colored siding. The house has several windows and a stone wall in front of it. The scene is set outdoors with trees and greenery.

## Honest Advice

Receive honest advice based on over 30 years of remodeling experience.

This month's FREE Report:

**“The 5 Most Common Costly Mistakes People Make BEFORE Remodeling Their Home!”**

**30-Year Master Home Designer Reveals:**

# **“The 5 Most Common Costly Mistakes People Make BEFORE Remodeling Their Home”...**

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**Bob Porter - The 'Affordable' Home Designer**

My name is Bob Porter, that's me above enjoying what I do and working hard to satisfy yet another client. Even though I probably don't know you, my hope is that you and yours are blessed and doing well.

Our goal in writing this special report is to give you an overview of what we feel (**based on over 30 years of industry experience**), are the 5 most **'CRITICAL'** aspects of your project, big or small. The desire and goal is to educate you about the basics of 'proper' design process so you can avoid wasting your time and hard-earned money, choosing the wrong person or company to work with on your project.

Before we dive into the report, here are a few paragraphs about who I am and why you should listen to me when it comes to accomplishing your dreams, goals, and desires that you have for your custom project.

### **Who is Bob Porter, and Why Should I Listen to What He Says?**

My over 30 years of experience has seen me working my way up to managing the design teams at 5 firms, working as a lead project manager for one of the largest firms in the nation, owning my own General Construction company.

I have also done countless construction management projects...where I handled everything from the initial design concept, all the way through final construction, including pulling all permits, licenses, meeting or exceeding design standards, and complying with all city, county, and state code requirements.

Along the way, I have worked on hundreds, if not thousands, of both residential AND commercial projects, and even a few industrial projects, covering 4 states. The projects

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I've worked on have ranged from simple deck additions costing a few thousand dollars to retail and industrial projects costing upwards of 8-figures.

Additionally, I was co-owner of Kite-Porter Architecture for 3 years, in beautiful Lake Arrowhead, CA, before striking out with my own design firm.

As you can see, my experience has allowed me a unique perspective and I feel blessed that I continue to meet and work with so many amazing people. As 'The Affordable Designer', I work hard to make sure **my designs are done right the 1<sup>st</sup> time, on time, and on budget.**

Because I work closely with my clients, I thoroughly enjoy seeing the dreams they have for their residential or commercial projects, come-to-life. And I look forward to working with you as well.

Now that you know me a little better, let's get to the heart of the report...

In my experience, here are the things to 'do' and 'not' do when considering a remodel, addition, or new custom home ...

### **1) Do NOT Consider Hiring A Design/ Build Contractor...**

Here's why: While some may be qualified to do the design, drawings and construction, in my experience, most are not. They, for the most part, are qualified contractors, but very few, if any, are qualified designers. Here's what that means to you...

When hired, you have no way to bid their drawings with anyone else to get a comparable bid. Also...they NEVER give out their drawings, if they spent time and material on them, so you're stuck having to start over with someone else.

### **2) Hire A Qualified Designer or Architect So You Can Discuss All of Your Design Needs, Requirements and Options...**

Your Designer or Architect should have enough years of experience to explain the process, as well as offer creative ideas that fit your needs and budget. A plus would be those that have extensive experience working with various agencies, knowing code requirements and the permitting process.

The fee you are quoted should be a fixed amount with one exception. Some very large and complex projects will require an undetermined amount of design time, which could also be a fixed figure amount with *not to exceed hours*.

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(Example: Design Fee of \$3250, *not to exceed* 40 hours design time). At no time, should a designer spend time on your project without a *crystal-clear* understanding on both parties part what is to be expected.

### **3) Your Prospective Designer or Architect Should Have *Extensive* Experience Working With Contractors...**

In my business, I have contractors I trust, that I refer to all my clients, but at the same time some of those contractors are also my clients, that I do designs and drawings for.

This is a major plus for clients who may want to work with these contractors in the future, because it allows me to see which construction practices work and which don't, so I can pass this vital information on to you.

The reality is that there are a number of ways to build the same project. For example, a contractor could just nail floor sheathing to a floor joist...

– **OR** –

Instead of using nails, the contractor can use glue and screws to secure the sheathing to the floor joist...

This 2<sup>nd</sup> option is slightly more expensive, but will eliminate squeaky floors, which will occur in the next few years, when the nails work loose.

### **4) My 7-Step Process to Save You Both Time and Money, BEFORE You Meet With A Designer or Architect...**

If possible, spend time looking at floor plans in magazines, and on the web.

(**Note**: DO **NOT** purchase plans from a magazine or the web...more on that below.)

1. Pick one or more plans you like, and make sure you include the exterior elevations. It will be rare when one plan meets all of your desires or criteria, and in this initial stage, you're just trying to gather some ideas to incorporate into your project.
2. Circle the areas of each of those plans that you like.
3. Tab pictures in magazines or any other source you can find, of the interesting features of homes that you like.
4. Make a comprehensive list of your needs, wants, and desires.
5. Check the designer or architects references concerning those same services they would perform for you.

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6. Give all of that information to your designer and explain why you like or need them. It lets them know what is important to you.
7. Finally, don't make your decision based solely on price. The least costly professional is not necessarily the best fit for you.

### **5) Do NOT Purchase Plans/ Drawings Out of A Magazine, Or On The Internet, Unless You Enjoy Wasting Your Hard-earned Money...**

Here's why:

I've seen people spend a few hundred dollars, to as much as \$18,500 for a set of plans that had to be reworked to fit their specific situation, or modified to comply with local building codes, costing them additional money and time.

I've had many, many people call me to help fix their drawings that didn't work because of bad design, no structural calculations, and code compliance (local codes and requirements can change from state to state and vary greatly), etc.

### **6) The 3 Little-known Tips Master Builders Pull Out-Of-Their-Hats, When Building Their Own Projects...**

1) Make sure your designs & drawings are *exactly* how you want them, well thought out, and within your established project budget. In other words, make sure whoever is planning your project does their homework and plans the details well.

**Remember:** The better you plan your project, the more time and money you'll save, and the more likely you are to get it built how YOU want it, which is how your project should be.

Here's why:

Your project budget can't be confirmed, modified or solidified *until* the design and final construction drawings are completed, because figures and estimates on preliminary drawings are purely an educated guess and can vary greatly.

Any contractor that gives a figure on preliminary thoughts or drawings will always give a high estimate because they truly won't know the real costs of the project until the final construction drawings are complete.

2) Choosing the *right* designer AND builder will make *all* the difference between having a nightmare of a project and results you are thrilled about, and will enjoy for years...maybe even decades to come.

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**The bottom line is:** The reputation of both the designer and contractor are critically important, and *must* be backed up by references, talk is cheap. They **MUST** have unquestionable integrity (so you know you're NOT being taken to the cleaners), and they need to have knowledge of current construction best practices (both local and national).

**3)** Concentrating on *areas* of improvement that will not only improve your living standards and needs, but will also give you greater marketability for your home if and when you choose to sell. What this means is you should consider projects where the money being spent has a high cost .vs resale value.

Here's a table that shows some national averages for cost versus re-sale value data for the South Atlantic Region for 2007:

<http://www.affordablehomedesigner.com/costvalue.html>

## **7) The Single Reason Projects Run Over Budget...**

Is the failure to create a bullet-proof project plan. In most over-budget projects, there wasn't sufficient planning done, i.e., budgeting, design, drawing, and research done prior to hiring a quality designer and or contractor.

## **8) Questions to Ask Your Designer and Builder Before You Schedule An Initial Meeting...**

Asking the right questions "up front" is the most important thing you can do in selecting your designer/builder. This section has two groups of questions to help you with the evaluation. There are questions: (1) for the Designer & Builder and (2) for Past Client References.

The success of your building or remodeling project depends heavily on the organization and people you choose. The lowest price is not necessarily the best choice -- nor is the highest price. You're assessing the professionalism, quality and empathy of the designer/builder, and you need to visualize how it will be to work together on the project.

### **Critical Questions to Ask Your Designer and Builder:**

**1)** What is the average number of jobs you do at the same time? How many jobs does your company have in progress right now?

(Ask yourself if these numbers seem in line with the number of support staff. Does it seem like each job has an adequate amount of supervision?)

**2)** How are jobs managed on a daily basis? Who will be in charge of my job each day? Who checks for quality, mistakes, progress? (Get names and contact information.)

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- 3) Who were your two best Clients? Who were your two worst Clients? Why?
- 4) Do you use sub-contractors for some specialties? What is the average length of time you have worked with them? (An established firm will have worked with their “subs” for 5 years or more.)
- 5) Have you worked on many projects like mine? Can I view examples of your work? Will the same crews who worked on those projects be working on my project? (A construction crew and subs that do beautiful work on one home will be of no value if they won't be working on your project.)
- 6) Will you please describe your payment schedules?

(Reputable builders do not require payment or advances for work not accomplished. Advance payments usually indicates that the builder is (1) in a poor financial position to complete your project or (2) wants to use the fact that he has your money as leverage negotiation or (3) plans to not complete your project and increase his profit. Payment should only be made on the basis of predefined building progress/milestones have been completed.)

- 7) Please describe your insurance protection as a builder. (Get a written statement of their insurance coverage.)

Many small builders do not carry workers compensation or general liability insurance claiming they are not required by law to do so. Many will tell you their sub-contractors carry it. They are correct. However, a reputable builder will carry both policies to protect his employees, his customers, and his assets.

**Warning:** your homeowners insurance will not protect you in the event your builder's employees become injured on your project or your builder damages someone else's property during the construction.

(Require your builder to have his insurance carrier mail you a copy of his insurance certificate. Do not accept a copy from a builder. Some uninsured builders carry reproduced copies of phony insurance certificates.)

- 8) Describe your warranty policy. What items are covered? What are the terms of warranty, response time, and advocacy for you in the event of a conflict? (Even a well-executed project may need subsequent attention by the builder after it's finished.)
- 9) Will a building permit be issued for the project? (Most remodeling projects, as required by NC law, must have a building permit. A builder that is hesitant to “pull” a permit should be avoided.)

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## 9) Important Questions To Ask Your Designer's & Builder's Past Clients...

Past performance is a strong indicator of what you can expect in the future -- and that is particularly true for building/remodeling. Checking the experiences of your builder/designer's past clients is a very important step, and don't worry about "bothering" them. They were once in your place and will almost always be happy to discuss their experience and answer your questions.

**Here are some of the most important questions to ask:**

- 1) What work did the builder perform for you? What highlights made the project a unique solution? (Is the project similar to yours?)
- 2) What was the level of collaboration during the design and building process? Were your ideas incorporated into the design? Did the design solutions fit your budget?
- 3) Did the builder prepare you and your family for the construction? Was there a pre-construction meeting to discuss how the work would be done to minimize the impact on your daily living?
- 4) How was the communication between you and the builder? Did the builder keep you updated on design progress? Did the builder keep you updated on the progress of the job through weekly meetings? Was the builder readily available via phone or pager?
- 5) Were the members of the design and construction team likable? Were they trustworthy? Did members of the team treat you and each other with respect?
- 6) Are you pleased with the quality of the design and construction work? Was the design work creative and aesthetically attractive? Was the construction work done with high quality craftsmanship? Have there been any problems with the design or construction? How were problems resolved? (Hint: ask about the details!)
- 7) Was the project completed within budget? What affected the project costs? Could the builder have foreseen these issues?
- 8) Was there anything that concerned you about working with this builder? If so, how did the builder respond to those issues?
- 9) Do you feel the quality of design and construction justified the project costs? Was the quality of work consistent with the cost of the project?

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**10)** Was the process interesting and what you expected? How did the builder make the process more enjoyable? (The process is hard work, but shouldn't be unbearable)

**11)** Is there anything I should know about this builder that I didn't ask? (Let the client share their own feelings and impressions in their own words.)

Asking the right questions of your designer/ builder and their past clients will pay big dividends in anticipating what you can expect and your confidence that the project will be a success.

And by success we mean getting you results you are thrilled about, and will enjoy for years...maybe even decades to come!

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**If you are seriously considering a remodeling project for your home, please consider these comments from recent clients and their experiences working with me:**

**Use Design Plus 3 - you won't be sorry!**

Bob Porter was recommended to me, and I can attest that I will continue to recommend him to others. He is a genuine pleasure to work with, has very creative ideas, and executes a great design.

He is flexible in communicating (I strongly prefer email), very responsive, always on time for appointments, and delivers more than he promises. It seems also that the construction community is confident in working with his designs; a very important asset! Use Design Plus 3 - you won't be sorry!

**- Pam Sinclair**

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**I would HIGHLY recommend his services!**

Robert with Design Plus 3, Inc. designed a new attached two car garage for our home. Robert walked the property, looked at our original survey, listened to our ideas, then went to work to draw up some designs. Within days, he emailed us ideas of what we could accomplish with the space we had to work with.

After answering our questions he finished the job and delivered the final drawings. Robert was an absolute pleasure to work with. He always arrived on time, provided superior customer service (returning phone calls promptly) while answering all of our questions thoroughly. I felt very comfortable with Robert from our first meeting. I'm THRILLED with his work.

His drawings were EXACTLY what I envisioned I wanted from his project and I would HIGHLY recommend his services!

**- Darren King & Nadine Allen**

**Don't hesitate to hire him!**

Bob with Design Plus 3, Inc. designed and completed drawings for a remodel/addition to our ranch home. He was so thorough on our first meeting, and even pointed out things that might pop up as surprises, and made sure he included everything in his drawings to ensure those things wouldn't be missed.

Bob is profesional, kind, punctual, knowledgable, and VERY easy to work with. He gave an estimate and delivered the finished product true to the original estimate...and his experience as a builder was also very helpful - he was able to easily combine design with fuction (e.g. extra outlets and wider stairs for moving furniture).

After a painstaking decision whether to move or remodel, we are thrilled with our design and home. Don't hesitate to hire him!

**- Eric and Darla Ellington**

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**How to Accomplish The Vision, Desires,  
And Goals You Have For Your Remodeling Project**

When you use the information in this report to the fullest, accomplishing the vision, goals and desires you have for your home or project will be much simpler, much more cost effective, and more rewarding and enjoyable for months and years to come.

I hope you've enjoyed this report and find it useful when looking to begin your next project.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Take care and God bless,



*Robert Porter, Master Designer*

Robert Porter, Master Designer  
"The Affordable Home Designer"

**PS** - Currently, I'm available for consultations and project design on a limited basis. My calendar fills quickly, so if you're interested in speaking with me about your custom project, call me now @ **(704) 841-1988**.

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