

## **Before you choose a remodeler, do your homework!**

Before you look for a contractor, think your project through from start to finish. Be prepared to tell the remodeler what you want, as specifically as you can. He or she will transform your ideas into reality using his/her expertise and professional knowledge, but only based on how much information you are able to supply in the beginning. Some items to consider when selecting the contractor for your remodeling job:

### **First, qualify your contractor...**

- Determine if the contractor's license status is appropriate for your size job. Class A contractors can make contracts of any value; Class B contractors up to \$70,000; Class C up to \$7,500. Require proof of license status (this should be based on your total job estimate).
- How long has the contractor been in business? Has the contractor had any serious complaints made with the Better Business Bureau (531-1300)?
- Require that the contractor show proof of worker's compensation & general liability insurance before you sign a contract.
- Request references. Also, ask if it's possible for you to visit with a current or completed job of the contractor's. Ask for at least one reference over one year old.
- Is the contractor a member of any trade association (Tidewater Builders Association and its Remodelers Council, 420-2434; Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, 622-2312; National Association of the Remodeling Industry, 703-276-7600 or other)?
- Are subcontractors used by the contractor properly licensed? Ask the remodeling contractor who will service the remodeling work installed?

### **Get Specific...**

- Insist on complete specifications before signing a contract.
- Make sure the contract includes a payment schedule.
- The contractor's start date and estimated completion date should be included in the contract. How will foul weather impact the project? Will you have a vacation or other event that may interfere with the project?
- Ask the contractor what provisions and policies he employs to assure the safety, security and cleanliness of your home. Make sure these policies and provisions are clearly stated in your contract.
- Who will be your primary contact while the work is being performed, and will the contractor be readily available if there are any problems?
- What inconveniences will you be subject to and how long for each? Will workmen be using your telephone? What time will the work begin and end each day, and does this include Saturdays? Where will the workmen park? Where will deliveries of materials be designated to unload via trucks, etc.? Will restroom facilities be furnished by you or will the contractor supply a portable toilet? Find out when you will receive warranties for products purchased. Is there a warranty for workmanship in the contract?

### **Most important...**

- It should be stated in the contract that the contractor must obtain a permit from the city. You should not get the permit. If you obtain the permit, this makes it almost impossible to hold the contractor responsible if any problems occur. The permit initiates inspections from the city to make sure the contractor is performing the work to meet regulations.

### **Ask yourself...**

- Was the contractor cordial and responsive to my questions?
- Does the contractor fully understand the scope of the work?
- Will the contractor be responsible and responsive to my needs?
- If a discrepancy occurs, do I feel the contractor will promptly address my concerns?
- If the contractor cannot start at the anticipated time, will I be willing to wait and work within his time frame?
- Is there a written set of standards the contractor is building by and do I understand exactly what I'm getting?
- Do I trust this contractor to work on one of my most valuable possessions?

Contact the Tidewater Builders Association Remodelers Council, (757) 420-2434, for a current listing of council members who are active in the remodeling industry. The council network provides information and assistance to the public and increases the skill and knowledge of its members. The council also administers an awards program recognizing outstanding remodeling and workmanship.