

CDI. CONSTRUCTION

2026 EDITION

The Sacramento Renovation Process Guide

What to expect, what to ask, and how to tell a good contractor from a bad one, before you sign anything.



START HERE

What "design-build" actually means.

Most renovation headaches trace back to the same root cause: the people who designed the project and the people who built it were two different companies, pointing at each other when something went wrong. Design-build fixes that by putting both under one roof.

The old way is called design-bid-build, and it goes like this. You hire an architect. They draw plans. You take those plans to three contractors and collect three bids. Then, halfway through, the contractor hits something the drawings didn't account for, and now you're refereeing two companies who've never had to agree on anything. The change order lands on your desk. So does the delay.

Design-build means one company is accountable for the whole thing: the drawings, the price, the permits, and the work. The team that designed your kitchen is the team that builds it, and they priced it knowing they'd have to deliver it.

For you, that changes the experience in three concrete ways. **You see the project before it's built**, with real floor plans and 3D renders. **You get a fixed price, not a moving estimate.** And **you have one point of contact** from the first conversation to the final walk-through.

Seven steps, start to finish.

No surprises is mostly a function of knowing what comes next. Here's the whole path before we slow down and walk through each step.

- 1 The consultation**
A free, no-pressure conversation about your home and what you're trying to accomplish.

- 2 Design & drawings**
Floor plans, 3D renders, and finish selections. You see it before it's built.

- 3 The fixed-price proposal**
One detailed number, line by line. What you approve is what you pay.

- 4 Permits & approvals**
We pull the permits and manage plan check with the City or County.

- 5 The build**
One project manager, weekly photo updates, and a clear sequence of work.

- 6 The walk-through**
We build a punch list together and close out every last detail.

- 7 Hand-off & warranty**
A clean site, the paperwork, and a number that still answers after the final invoice.



FROM FIRST CALL TO FINAL WALK-THROUGH

The consultation.

A free, roughly 30-minute conversation about your home, your priorities, and whether we're the right team for the job.

WHAT HAPPENS

We come to your home if it's local, look at the space, and talk through what you want to accomplish and the range you're comfortable investing. At the end, we tell you honestly whether this is work we do well.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

A rough sense of your priorities and budget range. If we're meeting remotely, photos of the space help. Bring anything you've saved: screenshots, a Pinterest board, a sketch on a napkin.

WHAT TO EXPECT

A conversation, not a sales pitch. We ask more than we answer at this stage. If your project isn't a fit for us, we'll say so and point you toward someone better suited.

TYPICAL TIMING

About 30 minutes, and we follow up within a couple of business days.

Design & drawings.

Before anyone quotes a number, we spend real time on design, so you can see the project before it exists, and make the big decisions on paper instead of mid-build.



WHAT HAPPENS

We develop floor plans, 3D renders, and finish selections. This is where the project takes shape: layout, materials, fixtures, light. Deciding it here is far cheaper than deciding it once the walls are open.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Time and honest feedback. Tell us what's working and what isn't. The more candid you are early, the fewer surprises there are later.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Options, and the trade-offs behind them. We'll usually show you more than one way to solve a problem. Expect to make choices now rather than later.

TYPICAL TIMING

About three weeks for most projects; longer for whole-home remodels and additions.

The fixed-price proposal.

Once the design is settled, we price it as a fixed-price proposal, not an estimate that drifts upward once you've committed.

WHAT HAPPENS

We turn the finished design into a detailed, line-by-line scope and a single price. The number you approve is the number you pay, unless you later ask us to change the scope of work.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Read it carefully and ask about anything that isn't clear. If something you wanted is missing, now is the moment to catch it, not after demo.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Detail you can actually read. We'd rather spend an extra hour making the scope clear than have an awkward conversation about it halfway through the build.

TYPICAL TIMING

A few days to a week after you sign off on the design.

Permits & approvals.

We pull the permits and manage plan check with the City of Sacramento or Sacramento County. We never ask you to pull your own permit.

WHAT HAPPENS

We prepare and submit the permit package, then shepherd it through plan check with whichever jurisdiction your home falls under. Additions and ADUs draw more scrutiny than interior work.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Usually nothing but patience and the occasional signature. If a plan checker asks for more information, we'll let you know and handle the response.

WHAT TO EXPECT

This step is mostly waiting on the jurisdiction, and the clock is genuinely out of everyone's hands. We build that wait into the schedule so it isn't a surprise.

TYPICAL TIMING

Anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, depending on jurisdiction and scope.

The build.

Demolition, then the work, in a sequence we plan in advance. One named project manager runs your job from the first day to the last.

WHAT HAPPENS

We execute the approved scope on a planned schedule. Your project manager coordinates the trades, keeps the site in order, and is your single point of contact throughout.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Decisions when we ask for them, and a reliable way to reach you. If we uncover something behind the walls that changes the plan, we price it and get your approval **before** we proceed.

WHAT TO EXPECT

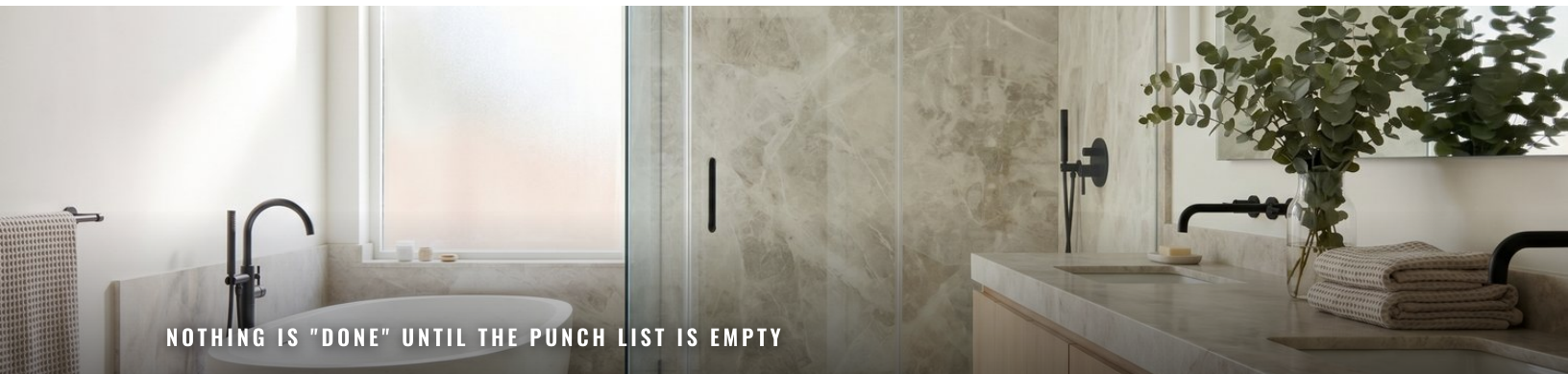
Weekly photo updates and answers before you have to ask twice. Construction is disruptive. We'll be honest about the messy stretches and help you plan around them.

TYPICAL TIMING

From a few weeks for a single bathroom to several months for a whole-home remodel.

The walk-through.

Before we call it done, we walk the whole project with you and build a punch list together: every small thing that needs a touch-up, an adjustment, or a second look.



WHAT HAPPENS

We go room by room with you and write down everything that isn't yet perfect, then close out each item. Nothing is finished until the list is empty and you agree it is.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

A careful eye. Open every drawer, run every fixture, flip every switch, and tell us what you see.

WHAT TO EXPECT

We want you to be picky. This is the moment to point at the reveal that's a hair off or the cabinet door that needs adjusting, not six months from now.

TYPICAL TIMING

An hour or two near the end, then however long the punch list takes to fully close.

Hand-off & warranty.

We hand over the finished space along with the paperwork that protects it, and a number that still answers the phone after the final invoice.

WHAT HAPPENS

You get the completed project, the manufacturer warranties on what we installed, and our written workmanship warranty. We make sure you know what was used and where.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Nothing but to enjoy it. Reach out if anything comes up. We'd rather hear from you than have you live with something that isn't right.

WHAT TO EXPECT

A clean site and a clear answer on who to call if something needs attention later. A good contractor's relationship with you doesn't end at hand-off.

TYPICAL TIMING

About a day to hand off, and a relationship that's meant to outlast the project.

A quick word on Sacramento permits.

You don't need to become an expert in this. That's our job. But knowing the basics helps you spot a contractor who's cutting corners.

- **Who issues your permit depends on where you live.** Inside city limits it's the City of Sacramento. In unincorporated areas it's Sacramento County. That covers much of Carmichael, Fair Oaks, Orangevale, and Arden-Arcade. Folsom, Roseville, Citrus Heights, and Elk Grove each run their own building departments.
- **Most structural, plumbing, gas, or electrical work needs a permit.** Cosmetic work, meaning paint, flooring, or swapping a fixture for a like one, usually doesn't. When it's a gray area, we check rather than guess.
- **Plan check is the part nobody can rush.** Simple interior permits can move quickly; additions, ADUs, and anything touching the structure get more review and take longer. We build that wait into the schedule up front.
- **Every permitted job ends with inspections and a final sign-off.** That sign-off is your proof the work was done to code. It matters a great deal when you eventually sell.
- **A contractor who suggests skipping the permit is not saving you money.** Unpermitted work resurfaces at resale, and you pay for it then. Usually more, and on someone else's timeline.

TEAR THIS PAGE OUT

12 questions to ask any contractor.

Ask all twelve before you sign anything. How a contractor answers tells you more than any brochure.

- 1 Are you licensed with the CSLB, and what's your license number?**
Verify it yourself at cslb.ca.gov. (Ours is #1116441.) An unlicensed contractor is a liability you inherit.

- 2 Are you bonded and carrying workers' comp and liability insurance?**
Ask for the certificates. If a worker is hurt on an uninsured job, the exposure can land on you.

- 3 Is the price fixed, or an estimate that can move?**
Know exactly which one you're signing. "Estimate" and "fixed price" are very different promises.

- 4 How are change orders priced and approved?**
You want them in writing, priced before the work, and approved by you. Never assumed.

- 5 Who is my single point of contact, and how often will I hear from them?**
"Everyone and no one" is the wrong answer. You want one name and a rhythm of updates.

- 6 Will you pull the permits, or are you asking me to?**
A contractor who asks you to pull the permit may be sidestepping accountability for the work.

- 7 Can I see a finished project like mine and talk to that homeowner?**
References from completed work are the ones that count, not works-in-progress.

- 8 Who is actually on site each day?**
Your own crew, or subs the contractor has never worked with? It shapes the quality and the schedule.

- 9 What's the payment schedule, and is the deposit reasonable?**
In California, a residential down payment is capped at \$1,000 or 10% of the contract, whichever is less.

- 10 What's your written warranty, and what does it cover after hand-off?**
Get it in writing. "We stand behind our work" is a sentence, not a warranty.

- 11 How do you handle the schedule, and what happens if it slips?**
Delays happen. You want a contractor who plans for them honestly, not one who pretends they won't.

- 12 What's *not* included in this price?**
Make them say the exclusions out loud. The gap between "included" and "assumed" is where budgets break.



LET'S TALK

When you're ready, so are we.

No pressure and no sales pitch, just an honest, 30-minute conversation about your home and whether CDI is the right fit for it.

CDI CONSTRUCTION · DESIGN-BUILD

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Book your free design consultation at **cdical.com/contact**, or call the number above. Bring this guide. The twelve questions are fair game, and we'll answer every one.