



The Record

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On the Spot begins work on an add-a-level in North Haledon.



Interior of the North Haledon project, which doubled the size of the home.



An add-on in Lafayette by On the Spot, in progress.



New roofing and windows completed.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ON THE SPOT HOME IMPROVEMENTS



The finished project in Lafayette by On the Spot added a whole new section to the house, encompassing about 700 square feet.

MOVING UP!

Go up or out to add more living space

BY TOM SKEVIN
SPECIAL TO THE RECORD HOME

When it comes to an addition, make a list and start subtracting! Start with the four P's — planning, professionals, pricing and permits — then cross off each item on the list. And be realistic about the time frame. "One customer we did a project for wanted everything to be done by Christmas," recalled James Centrella of On the Spot Home Improvements in Saddle Brook. "We said that's not a problem, as we had months to get everything done. Turns out, she doesn't sign the contract and give a deposit until three weeks before Christmas, and still expected us to have it done on time!"

Once the contract is signed, take a deep breath, leave the heavy lifting to the general contractor and keep an eye on the budget and the job's progress.

Planning

Taking the plunge is half the battle. "Decide whether you really want to move forward with the project or not," said Centrella. "Don't go through the whole

process of getting a few estimates, making the contractors spend hours on getting you the estimates and then decide not to move forward with the project."

Part of planning is knowing that the process could take six months or more, from the hiring of an architect to waving goodbye to the contractor on the final day. So don't plan on hiring someone Memorial Day weekend and expect the addition to be done in time for a June wedding reception.

Lining up adequate financing is the key early step. Decide how big the budget will be and what is needed versus what is wanted, said remodeler Tom Segrich of GTFM in Hackensack.

For ideas on design, products and styles, check home-improvement magazines, books, Internet sites and home centers.

Professionals

First, hire a licensed architect. to find a reputable contractor, check with anyone who has had similar work done, ask at the local building department if there have been any complaints about the company's work and check the Internet for reviews.

"Make sure the contractor is fully licensed

[by the state] and insured," advised Centrella. "Don't just take their word for it — actually check into it."

Also, hire someone with a known street address.

"Stay with mainstream, healthy firms and avoid risky situations or those offers that are too good to be true," said Segrich.

Along with references, look for memberships in the BBB and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

Pricing

Price ranges can vary widely, with variables including size and complexity of the project, any custom work, materials and fixtures.

Getting specific information from the contractor is important. For instance, if the job includes a new bathroom that is going to cost \$20,000 — or more — will the faucet be a bottom-shelf model that will have to be rebuilt or replaced in a year or two?

Also, professionals warn, the lowest price often is not the way to go.

"Don't always look at the price when comparing two different estimates," said Centrella. "Look at the services they are offering, look at what they are including."

Handy homeowners can save thousands by doing some of the work themselves, including light demolition and finishing work such as trim carpentry and painting. They also can rent their own rubbish container and bring out the debris. Be sure it's clear ahead of time what the homeowner will do versus what the contractor will.

Keep the deposit "as low as possible to avoid loss and to stay in control," warned GTFM's Segrich. "We accept only a five percent deposit and very little on starting the project."

Permits

A permit from the municipal building department is required for any enlargement of the home or foundation and any changes to roofing, framing, electrical and plumbing. So anyone going forward with an addition will need a permit, usually obtained by the general contractor.

Since most local building inspectors have part-time hours and can work for several towns, getting an inspection done before moving on to the next phase of construction can cause delays. Do not make the last payment to the contractor until the project has passed all inspections.

And don't forget the final "P" — throwing a big party to celebrate the new addition!



A ranch house in Wyckoff awaits a new level by GTFM.



The GTFM crew frames out a 1,200-square-foot second level.



On top of that goes a 1,000-square-foot attic.



With new windows and doors, the renovation is almost done.

At right, the redesigned home gets an exterior finish of authentic masonry stucco.

PLANNING AN ADDITION

When planning an addition, along with browsing through home-improvement books, be sure to look at the checkbook. Projects can get pricey, and it's a good idea to build an extra 20 to 25 percent into the budget to allow for unforeseen expenses.

According to contractors Tom Segrich of GTFM and James Centrella of On the Spot Home Improvements, following are broad ranges for common projects. Prices could be higher with customized work.

- Add-a-level: \$100,000 to \$200,000.
- Dormers: \$65,000 to \$125,000.
- Family room: \$20,000 to \$65,000.

Additionally:

■ If the project includes a new bath and/or kitchen, hiring a designer is about \$750 for the bath and \$1,500 for the kitchen, according to veteran designer Fred Salerno of Manor House Cabinetry in Paramus.

■ An architect's fee is around 5 percent of the total cost of construction, says Tom Cohen of Hackensack, a licensed architect for over 30 years.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GTFM

