

TO BUILD, OR NOT TO BUILD? THAT IS THE QUESTION

By Marina Shektman, principal,
Studio M Kitchens

For this feature, Marina Shektman of Studio M Kitchens in Wellesley weighed in on interior renovation challenges during the pandemic. Marina spent several years as an architect in New York and Philadelphia. Returning to Boston, she ventured into interior design. In 2002, Marina established her design business, eventually expanding into kitchen design. Studio M Kitchens is a full-service kitchen and bathroom design studio and purveyor of beautiful luxury cabinetry.

A few readers asked me whether they should go ahead with their home renovations during the pandemic. As we were homebound during the first stages, our homes were tested to the max on their ability to be our family's safe haven. Every surface in the house may have been scrutinized. The threadbare wood floors may need reviving, worn-down kitchen cabinets could use a makeover, or your home's functionality may no longer fit new demands of the times. How can it be possible to go through with a construction project during the uncertainty? To build, or not to build? That is the question.

You could be at different stages of planning your project: perhaps you are wondering if it's a good time to start, or you might have done some planning with your architect or designer already, or you could have started renovation prior to the lockdown and now are in disarray on what to do.

There are a few things to contemplate. First, consider how to isolate your family members, including pets.



from the construction area. Can you vacate the house during renovation, perhaps to a vacation home or a sublet apartment? If that's not achievable, can the job site be isolated from the rest of the house with a separate entrance and plastic shield? If your household includes elderly parents, for instance, an interior renovation may not be feasible in the foreseeable future.

Logistics of your renovation will take precedence above all else. Preparation may mean planning out every detail of the project ahead of time. Make sure your finances are in order and choose most finishes and fixtures ahead of time. It would be disappointing to halt operations because your coveted tub is out of stock.

Kitchens are the most complex room in a house to renovate, so I especially suggest planning in advance for this room. It is a complex project that involves all construction trades. Identifying long lead items will help you avoid unnecessary delays. Kitchen cabinets in particular require long lead times. It may take anywhere from 6-12 weeks, depending on the manufacturer. When sourcing cabinetry, ask what current and projected manufacturing times are, and how long shipping and delivery will take. You will also need to choose appliances, faucets, flooring, lighting, paint, tile and countertops. If

that sounds overwhelming, you may ask a design professional to guide you along.

Unfortunately, some factories had to close during the lockdown. Some have reopened and are trying to keep up with demand but supply shortages may affect the choices. I ran into that problem myself when my washer croaked, and I was forced to settle for the model that was in stock instead of the one I wanted. Thus, allowing 3-6 months in advance to mastermind a project with your architect and/or interior designer will ensure a smooth operation during construction. Once the selections are made, I would advise you to purchase it all in advance to allow plenty of time for uncertainties.

Choosing your construction team will likely take time as well. Getting a contractor on board early will aid in the preparation process as the construction schedule is a helpful planning tool. In addition, you must make sure that you and your GC are on the same page as far as COVID preparedness goes, including such things as wearing masks or scheduling one trade at a time to avoid a crowded jobsite. Your GC may already have certain COVID protocols in place. Asking lots of questions regarding this issue will help bypass uncomfortable situations.

Overall, try to maximize your return on the investment. Real-estate experts would agree that a basement renovation won't yield the same return as a kitchen or a bathroom would. I suggest doing your homework rather than making emotion-based decisions. ■

Instagram: @studiomkitchens
Email: designer.studiom@yahoo.com
studiomkitchens.com



studio **M** kitchens

Thoughtful kitchen
designer and purveyor
of beautiful cabinetry

www.studiomkitchens.com
617-645-3506
Marina Shektman