



Historic-home renovations require additional planning and a bigger budget than newer homes.

Renovating an historic home

By Metro Creative connection

Living in an historic home can be a labor of love. The history and the distinct architecture of historic homes draw buyers to such properties, but what historic homes have in regard to history they often lack in the conveniences of modern life, forcing many historic-home owners to make renovations to bring their homes into the 21st century.

Historic-home renovations differ from other types of modifications. According to the Victorian Preservation Association, renovation is getting a home back to where it may have been when originally built, but making concessions for today's lifestyle. Preservation is the act of maintaining a structure in its current historic state, and restoration is returning a home to its original state. Unless a homeowner plans to use an outhouse or live without electricity, the majority of work done on historic

properties is likely to fall into the category of a renovation.

Renovating an aging structure can be fulfilling and help to make a home more functional. But make no mistake, such a renovation is a major undertaking. Before beginning, it pays to hire a professional consultant with expertise in renovating historic properties. He or she can inspect the property to determine which areas of the home are safe and which will need to be upgraded. A professional inspection also can determine if any deficiencies lie hidden in the structure. Potential concerns can be toxic paints and other substances, building code issues, rotting, and structural settling. Professionals will know what to look for and guide homeowners accordingly.

Homeowners also may want to consult with a preservation association, community restoration group or general owner-builder group. These people can refer homeowners to the craftspeople and materials that will

be needed for a job. Homeowners can request to see other historic properties in the area and learn what those owners did to maintain the integrity of a home when using newer materials.

Before any work is started, homeowners should find out if their home is listed with the National Register of Historic Places. According to the United States National Parks Service, property owners can do whatever they want with their property so long as there are no federal monies attached to the property. However, the property owner should also contact his or her state's historic preservation office, or SHPO. The SHPO is the state agency that oversees historic preservation efforts in each state, and there may be state or local preservation laws that the owner should be aware of before renovating a historic property.

Craftspeople should have experience with historic homes and a sensitivity and appreciation of renovating older properties.

Homeowners always should see examples of a craftspeople's work and verify references from each contractor before hiring anyone to work on the property.

Homeowners who want to include traditional hardware and other period details in their homes may be able to find quality replicas of historic milling materials, while others may want to scour antique shops or salvage yards for era-appropriate materials.

Historic renovations can be costly and have a tendency to go over budget because of unforeseen damage and hazards that have to be repaired so the building is up to code. Going into the project with this in mind can help soften the blow of extra costs down the road.

Historic homes can be beautiful and appeal to buyers who appreciate the one-of-a-kind nature of older properties. Renovating historic homes may take time and money, but the results may be well worth the effort.