

Renovation Tasks Checklist

This is a list of renovations you might encounter when getting a house ready to flip. It is extremely unlikely that you will face all these tasks during any one flip, but I want you to be aware of the many renovation possibilities you may at some point have to consider. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it should give you an idea of what your scope of work document may include. The renovations listed are organized by exterior, interior, and general tasks.

EXTERIOR

Roof: Depending on the age and condition, a roof could require repair or replacement.

Rain gutters: Gutters should be cleaned and, if necessary, painted, repaired, or replaced. Check downspouts to make sure they aren't clogged and are operating properly.

Soffit and fascia: The soffit is the material underneath the eaves of a roof, and fascia is the board along the edge of the soffit that supports the rain gutters. Depending on age and material, there may be damage that will require repair or replacement.

Chimney: Have the chimney inspected and cleaned or repaired if necessary.

Windows: Windows that are old, don't close or latch properly, have fogged glass, or have other issues should be replaced.

Paint: I almost always paint the exteriors of homes I buy; it instantly improves curb appeal.

Siding: Siding may need to be repaired or replaced. At the very least, make sure it is clean and have it pressure washed if it is not.

Garage: Garage doors that are damaged or don't open properly should be replaced. Check to make sure electric garage door openers are working. Detached garages should be assessed for damage and repaired if necessary.

Doors: Exterior doors that are beat-up, unattractive, or not working properly should be replaced.

Fencing: Fencing should be freshly painted or cleaned and any broken or otherwise damaged sections replaced. I sometimes add fencing to create a shield if the property next door is not well maintained.

Pools: Pools can be an asset or a liability, depending on their condition and what buyers are looking for. If you have a property with a pool, you'll need to make sure it's in good condition and operable and that it meets safety standards of the municipality in which the property is located.

Porches or decks: Porches or decks that are not structurally sound or code-compliant will need to be repaired, or in some cases replaced. If most other houses in the neighborhood have a deck and mine does not, I'll often have a deck added to match the comps.

Lighting: Exterior lighting is important for both appearance and safety. Make sure it is adequate and in working condition, replacing fixtures if necessary to update the house's appearance.

Foundation: Check for and address moisture or mold problems, cracks, and other issues affecting the foundation.

Concrete: Concrete that is stained with oil or other substances can be cleaned and minor cracks patched. Concrete can also be resealed if necessary, a process that greatly improves its appearance.

Sheds and outbuildings: Like detached garages, any buildings separate from the main house should be inspected for damage and repaired if necessary. On occasion I've had unsightly sheds and other structures removed from the property.

Landscaping: Landscaping can go a long way in improving curb appeal. Some possible tasks include reseeding the lawn or installing sod; planting bushes, small trees, and flowers; trimming existing shrubbery; spreading mulch; and cleaning up dropped leaves, sticks, etc.

INTERIOR

Demolition: Nearly all flips require some demolition work, such as removing old and cracked tubs from a bathroom or ripping out kitchen cabinets. You'll need a large roll-off dumpster to dispose of everything you remove from the home.

Floor plan: I often open up a house by changing the floor plan, but this requires planning, and you might need permits to do so. As I mentioned in chapter 6, I depend on Home Designer software to experiment with different floor plans.

Electrical: It's important to make sure the electrical system in any home meets all standards and to properly upgrade it as needed. New circuits might need to be added if you're finishing an area of the house that was previously unfinished, and outlets may need to be added or upgraded. Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and in working order. Check to make sure all exhaust and ceiling fans are operational.

Plumbing: Addressing the plumbing might require fixing leaks, replacing old appliances such as water softeners or dishwashers, and replacing showers, bathtubs, toilets, and sinks. If you're fortunate enough not to have to replace everything, consider getting new hardware to give appliances an updated look.

HVAC: It's not unusual to have to upgrade the HVAC system. Have someone assess the condition of the furnace and air conditioning systems to make sure everything is in working order. You'll also want to be sure the ductwork is in good shape.

Insulation: There are codes and standards that pertain to insulation, and they vary depending on climate zones and other factors. Be sure your contractor is aware of the codes for your area and that all insulation meets applicable requirements.

Framing: If you're finishing an area of the house, you'll need to address framing.

Drywall: Any heavily damaged drywall should be replaced, and you'll need to install new drywall in newly finished areas.

Fireplaces: Have fireplaces inspected to make sure they are in good working order.

Flooring: Different types of flooring are popular in different geographical regions, but in the Bay Area I usually install hardwood, as that seems to be what buyers prefer, and I feel that it helps to set my properties apart.

Doors: Any interior doors that are damaged, old, or cheap-looking should be replaced. If the doors are okay, you still might want to consider updating the hardware to refresh them.

Trim: New trim can make a big difference, so replace any baseboards or molding that is dated or damaged. New trim will be necessary for newly finished areas.

Patching and painting: I normally repaint the entire interior of my flips in colors that I know are popular based on comps. I have favorite brands and colors that I like to use, but they're always in the same palettes of what the comps tell me are popular.

Light fixtures: Modern light fixtures, especially in kitchens and bathrooms, can set your flip apart. I often replace all light fixtures.

Cabinets: Don't be tempted to skimp on cabinets. I once thought I could get by with repainting kitchen cabinets rather than replacing them but found that even after being painted, they still looked like old cabinets and needed to be replaced. But if the cabinets are fairly new and in good shape, they may only need to be painted. Be sure to pay attention to the hardware.

Countertops: I like marble countertops, but they're not always necessary. Know what the comps have and plan accordingly, but remember that you want your kitchens and bathrooms to impress potential buyers.

Vanities: Bathrooms are important when it comes to selling houses, so replace any vanities that are dated, damaged, or too small. Double vanities are popular among many home buyers.

Backsplash: Installing modern-looking backsplashes can create a wow factor, and you can find some good values at specialty shops or online venues.

GENERAL

Permits: Make sure you know what permits you'll need for your rehab. Discuss the need for permits with your contractor, who is responsible for obtaining them.

Pest control and termite inspection: Have a pest control technician check the property for any pest problems. I normally have a termite inspection done when renovations are completed but before the house is sold in order to provide peace of mind for potential buyers.

Mold: Check for evidence of mold or water issues and arrange to have a professional address any problems.