



FREE HOMEOWNER PLANNING GUIDE

Home Addition Planning Guide

A grounded path for adding space while protecting the structure, weather barrier, systems, and character of the home you already have.

USE THIS FOR

Better questions, clearer scope and more useful early conversations.

KEEP IN MIND

Every property, permit path and existing condition requires project-specific verification.

For homeowners considering a bedroom, suite, family room, expanded kitchen, second story, bump-out, or other attached addition instead of moving.



START WITH PURPOSE

Good planning makes the unknowns visible.

How to use this guide

An addition is both a small new building and a careful alteration to an existing one. The new foundation, structure, roof, exterior walls, utilities, and finishes must connect to the old house without creating weak points. Site constraints and the tie-in often matter as much as the square footage. Use this guide to prepare for a useful conversation, not to diagnose the house from a distance. Write down assumptions as assumptions. When new information changes the plan, ask for the scope, cost, and schedule effect in writing before work continues whenever practical.

Six principles to carry through the project

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| 01 Define the result before the products. A strong brief describes what daily life should improve, what must remain, and which compromises are acceptable. | 02 Compare scopes, not just totals. Two proposals can look similar while assigning demolition, permits, protection, selections, restoration, and unknowns very differently. |
| 03 Make decisions in dependency order. Layout and performance choices come before finishes; products that affect rough-in or fabrication must be known before those steps are released. | 04 Treat unknowns honestly. Visible conditions, reasonable expectations, and concealed possibilities are different categories. Investigation can reduce uncertainty, but some conditions remain unknowable until opening. |
| 05 Protect quality beneath the finish. Structure, water control, fire and life safety, utility work, ventilation, and manufacturer requirements should not be traded away for a cosmetic upgrade. | 06 Keep one current record. Consolidated decisions, drawings, selections, questions, approvals, and changes help the homeowner and every trade work from the same information. |

Planning boundary: This document supports early discussion and decision-making. It is not a site assessment, permit decision, engineering review, estimate, contract, or substitute for manufacturer instructions.

THE PROJECT PATH

Decisions should create useful outputs.

01 Need, alternatives, and future use

Define the missing function, likely users, desired relationship to the existing home, accessibility, privacy, and how long the household expects to stay.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Compare an addition with reconfiguration, conversion, detached space, or moving, then choose evaluation criteria.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

A clear space brief and documented reason an addition is the preferred path.

02 Property and existing-home feasibility

Review setbacks or other current land-use controls, easements, utilities, trees, slope, drainage, access, foundation, structure, roof, and likely connection points.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Authorize survey, records, engineering, or targeted openings when needed.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Feasibility summary, site constraints, investigation list, and viable location options.

03 Concept and massing

Test footprint, height, roof form, daylight, circulation, room layout, exterior relationship, and effects on the yard and existing rooms.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Choose a concept and balance added area against disruption and site work.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Preferred floor plan and exterior direction with preliminary structural and systems assumptions.

04 Detailed design and engineering

Coordinate foundation, framing, lateral and gravity loads, roof drainage, envelope transitions, windows, doors, insulation, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and interior finishes.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Approve design milestones and resolve appearance, performance, and future-flexibility choices.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Coordinated construction documents, engineering, schedules, and specifications.

THE PROJECT PATH

Decisions should create useful outputs.

05 Permits, pricing, and selections

Submit required information, respond to review, price the current set, define allowances and exclusions, and select long-lead exterior and interior products.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Approve the aligned scope, investment, alternates, and procurement decisions.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Permit status, construction proposal, purchasing log, and baseline schedule.

06 Site setup and weather-tight construction

Protect occupied areas and landscaping, establish access, complete excavation and foundation, frame, roof, flash, and close the exterior before opening major interior connections when sequencing permits.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Confirm access, temporary conditions, and responses to documented site discoveries.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Stable structure, protected openings, weather-managed shell, and passed milestone inspections.

07 Tie-in, interiors, and handoff

Connect systems and rooms, complete insulation, drywall, flooring, trim, cabinetry, paint, fixtures, exterior restoration, testing, punch work, and final approvals.

HOMEOWNER DECISION

Review tie-in details, finish transitions, and completed operation.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

Integrated addition, restored site, inspection records, manuals, and maintenance guidance.

Before construction is released

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| ☐ Current drawings and written scope agree | ☐ Permit, inspection, and consultant paths are identified |
| ☐ Approval roles and communication channel are clear | ☐ Long-lead status and decision dates are visible |
| ☐ Critical selections and owner-supplied items are documented | ☐ Site logistics, protection, and change approval are understood |

SCOPE, COST AND TIME

Compare what is included—not just the total.

Feasibility and site

- ☐ Survey, property constraints, utilities, drainage, slope, trees, access, staging, excavation, and soils questions
- ☐ Existing foundation, framing, roof, exterior wall, windows, doors, and intended tie-in
- ☐ Temporary protection, occupied-home access, landscaping, fencing, neighbors, and restoration

New building work

- ☐ Foundation, structure, roof, weather-resistive layers, flashing, siding, windows, doors, insulation, and air sealing
- ☐ Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, ventilation, service capacity, controls, and inspections
- ☐ Interior layout, kitchen or bath if included, drywall, flooring, trim, cabinetry, paint, fixtures, and hardware

Coordination

- ☐ Architecture, engineering, survey, civil or other consultants, permits, reviews, and fees
- ☐ Selections, long-lead procurement, temporary utility interruptions, tie-in sequence, and weather plan
- ☐ Testing, final approvals, cleanup, punch list, closeout records, and warranty information

What commonly moves budget or schedule

Foundation and site work

Excavation, access, slope, soil, drainage, retaining, and utility conflicts can outweigh simple area comparisons.

Structural tie-in

Loads, openings, roof geometry, lateral resistance, and support in the existing house require coordinated design and field verification.

Envelope complexity

Roof valleys, wall transitions, flashing, windows, and drainage details must keep water out through PNW seasons.

Systems capacity

The existing electrical, plumbing, heating, cooling, and ventilation systems may need extension or upgrade.

Room type

A simple room differs from a kitchen, bath, laundry, or second-story project with dense systems and finishes.

Occupied-home protection

Separating construction from daily life, maintaining security, and managing temporary openings add time and care.

Permit and consultant path

Survey, design, engineering, agency review, and corrections must be included before construction timing is dependable.

Finish matching

Matching older siding, roofing, flooring, trim, texture, and paint may require broader replacement or intentional contrast.

BEFORE WORK BEGINS

Prepare the household and the decision path.

Homeowner preparation

- ☐ Choose one or two household decision-makers and agree on how approvals will be given.
- ☐ Create a short priority list: must solve, would like, and can wait. Use it when scope or budget choices compete.
- ☐ Gather surveys, plans, past permits, product records, repair history, and any photos of earlier work.
- ☐ Remove valuables and fragile items; discuss furniture, artwork, window coverings, and stored belongings before mobilization.
- ☐ Plan for children, pets, parking, deliveries, work hours, bathroom access, and any needed temporary kitchen or living setup.
- ☐ Tell the team about alarms, gates, neighbors, HOA rules, home-office hours, allergies, or access restrictions.
- ☐ Keep project decisions in the agreed system rather than splitting them across texts, calls, and side conversations.
- ☐ Expect some disruption. Decide in advance when you need notice for noisy work or utility shutoffs.
- ☐ Identify outdoor features, plantings, storage, gates, and utilities that must be protected, relocated, or restored.
- ☐ Discuss how the addition changes taxes, insurance, financing, and future use with the appropriate independent advisers.

Questions worth asking

- 01 Who will be the day-to-day contact, and how often will we receive progress updates?
- 02 What is included, excluded, allowed for, owner-supplied, or still awaiting a decision?
- 03 Which drawings, engineering, permits, inspections, or specialist reviews are likely to be required?
- 04 How will concealed conditions be documented, priced, approved, and scheduled before added work begins?
- 05 Which selections have long lead times, and what are the decision deadlines?
- 06 How will occupied areas, pets, children, furnishings, landscaping, and daily access be protected?
- 07 How are schedule changes communicated, and what owner decisions could affect the critical path?
- 08 What quality checks occur before framing, waterproofing, wiring, plumbing, or other concealed work is covered?
- 09 Who coordinates trade partners and confirms that their work is ready for the next trade?
- 10 What permits, manuals, warranties, finish records, and maintenance guidance will be provided at handoff?
- 11 How will the new foundation, structure, roof, and drainage tie into the existing home?
- 12 At what point will the occupied home be opened, and what is the weather and security backup plan?

PAUSE, VERIFY AND FINISH WELL

Quality includes what happens before and after the visible work.

Red flags and unresolved unknowns

- ☐ A price presented as final before the existing conditions, design, selections, and scope boundaries are understood.
- ☐ A proposal that omits protection, demolition disposal, permits, supervision, finish restoration, or final cleanup.
- ☐ Pressure to start demolition while drawings, key selections, or responsibility for open items remain unclear.
- ☐ Verbal changes with no written description of added scope, price, and schedule effect.
- ☐ No clear plan for dust, noise, temporary utility interruptions, weather exposure, or safe homeowner access.
- ☐ Assurances that hidden areas are fine without investigation, documentation, or an appropriate contingency plan.
- ☐ Products chosen for appearance without checking substrate, exposure, maintenance, installation, or warranty requirements.
- ☐ No defined inspection hold points before important concealed work is covered.
- ☐ An area-based price that ignores site work, tie-ins, systems capacity, consultants, and restoration.
- ☐ No clear responsibility for protecting the existing house when the roof or exterior wall is opened.

Closeout and handoff

- ☐ Walk every work area in good light and record remaining items in one shared punch list.
- ☐ Confirm that required final inspections and permit signoffs are complete or that any open item is clearly assigned.
- ☐ Operate doors, drawers, windows, fixtures, lights, fans, controls, appliances, and safety devices included in the work.
- ☐ Review cleaning, curing, ventilation, seasonal adjustment, and maintenance instructions before normal use.
- ☐ Collect approved plans, permits, inspection records, manuals, warranties, finish schedules, paint colors, and spare materials.
- ☐ Photograph shutoffs, access panels, concealed blocking, and key rough-in locations when documentation is available.
- ☐ Confirm the final change-order record, owner-supplied item status, and any remaining delivery or service appointment.
- ☐ Check that debris, temporary protection, keys, access codes, and contractor-owned materials have been addressed.
- ☐ Understand who to contact for a question, warranty concern, or urgent issue after completion.
- ☐ Store the closeout package with the home's permanent records for maintenance and future resale.

Professional verification: Addition feasibility and requirements depend on the specific property, current local rules, survey information, existing structure, utilities, and professional design. Structural, civil, geotechnical, energy, hazardous-material, and licensed-trade input may be required. This guide is not an approval or code determination.

Start with an honest conversation.

Before measuring the dream room, study where and how it can responsibly join the home. Ideal Construction & Renovation can help organize site review, design coordination, tie-in planning, and