

# RENO CREEP

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Renovation creep is the stuff of nightmares. No, it's not a contractor that won't go away, but something much more costly.



## Tips to avoid project creep

- Know the difference between want and need regarding your project.
- Finalize the budget before hammer hits nail.
- Hire professionals who can do things faster and have established methods of operating.
- Choose someone with whom you can communicate and work well.
- Make sure the designer is not pushing their own product.
- Build in a 10% contingency for unexpected expenses.
- Remember – time is money, so don't change your mind mid-project. Be aware that projects are based on estimates, not invoices – the door is always open for costs to rise.

It's a scenario anyone could face. You've been living in your home for a while and it works just fine, but new flooring would really be nice . . . And the kitchen cabinets, well, they're so 1980s! Perhaps now's the time for that much-wanted sliding door off the kitchen into the back garden? Oh, and how about pot lighting throughout the whole main floor – and a new paint job? Let's do it all while we're at it . . .

The excitement grows as you envision the glory that will be your new home. Then suddenly, you wonder – while standing knee-deep in magazines, paint chips and schematics for that wall that you've now decided ought to come down too – how in the world do you know when to stop?

It's like buying a new home again without having to move.

— Joyce Heenan, homeowner

"It's all about project scope," says Marie-Claude Faubert of Faubert Interiors, a design company that focuses on kitchens and bathrooms. She advises that when you hire a professional design company to renovate, the entire project should be outlined right at the beginning. Once you've ironed-out the scope and have an agreement worked out, then the rest just falls into place.

"Quote, budget, timeline, work orders – this is the meat of a project," explains Marie-Claude who studied kitchen design at Seneca College in Toronto. "When you do this, and have a team that works with you, it's not that complicated and there's no room for add-ons."

Scoping the project allows you to see all the components as part of the whole. It also enables you to see the total cost of everything you have in mind. With the project scope

done, you can readily find something to cut if the renovation is over budget.

"I find our best projects are those that have tight budgets because, boy, we try hard to keep it in scope," says Marie-Claude. "It's got to go like clockwork and it's really hard to get it right. That's why you almost need someone that is keeping everything together and, yes, that costs more money, but that's the work."

The dream of a new kitchen, along with more space and light, was the catalyst for renovation creep in the Chapel Hill home of Joyce Heenan and her family. Built in Orleans by Minto in 1994, the 2,100 square-foot house had served the family well for more than a decade. But as the children and the extended family grew, the home began to feel cramped. Family dinners were held in the family room when the dining room could not fit everyone.

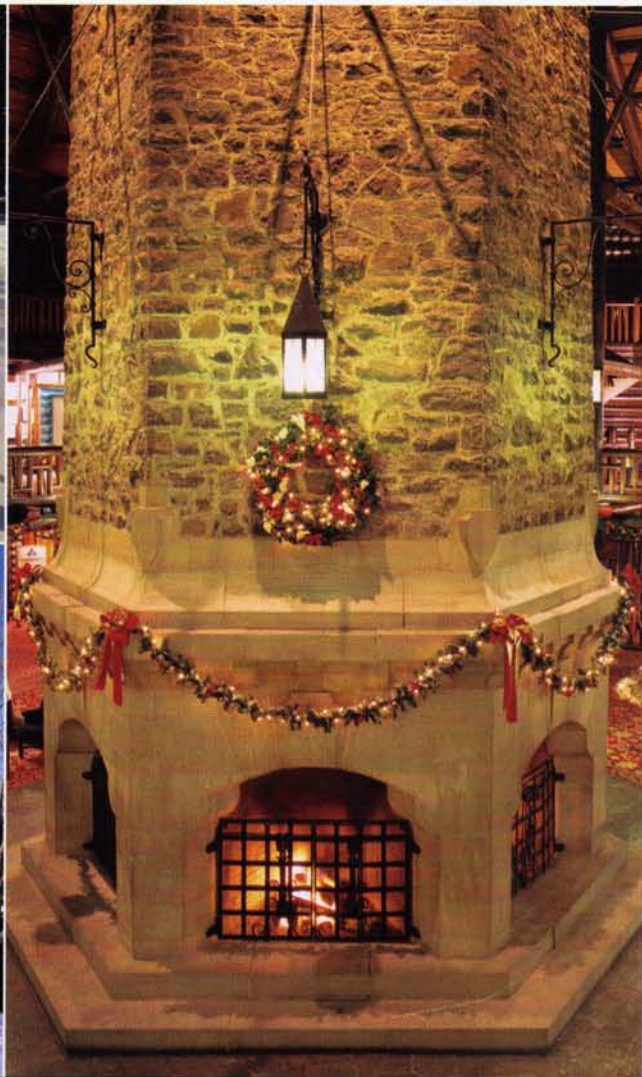
Plans to renovate the kitchen and add a bay window grew into updating the dining room and remodeling the front entry area and closet to improve storage and flow. Replacing the main level flooring extended to removing the carpet on the stairs and redoing the upstairs hallway. And what about new lights in the master bedroom?

All these projects and more accumulated in the Heenan home and Joyce took the view that once you start – you might as well do it all and get the renovation chaos over with as quickly as possible. Living in a busy household with two teenage daughters, a husband who travels for work, taking care of extended family and working full-time herself, Joyce opted for the "make it inconvenient for a set period of time and then get it over with" renovating philosophy.

Although, she admits that as the project blossomed, their budget doubled. "There is no doubt that once you start doing one thing, then you start thinking about something else that needs doing. For example, we didn't have overhead lighting in the master bedroom, so we figured, since the electrician was coming in anyway, we'd get it done."

Having renovated the basement of a previous home the Heenans know enough about the process to hire professionals. While husband Paul managed the project, the design was done by Marie-Claude Faubert of Faubert Interiors, who also recommended the contractors and helped them choose complimentary products.

In spite of the renovation creep, Joyce estimates the renovation time to be only six to seven weeks and says happily, "It's like buying a new home again without having to move!"



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