

MAKEOVER ANNIE SELKE

PART 9

What I Learned...

In this column's final installment, Annie Selke looks back on her renovation.



Interview by
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Before you start a renovation, purge with the help of a professional organizer. They're unsentimental and will keep you focused.

Get the experts—like a good architect—in early. Be very clear about what you want, and then listen to them. They know what they're doing.

Spend money where you will appreciate it, and don't obsess about resale value.

Don't forget to budget for landscaping.

Explore what's new in building supplies and appliances. Things change and improve constantly.

Investing in new windows will result in lower energy costs for the long term.

Off-the-shelf products, chosen carefully, can offer an affordable, custom look for cabinets, windows, and doors.

Think about your traffic patterns when you're working out the floor plan and furniture placement.

Don't rush to purchase furniture just to fill the space. Allow time to find things you love that really work in each room.

Storage, storage, storage! Figure out what you need—then plan for 30 percent more.

Integrate firewood storage into the plan. I didn't, and I regret it.

For long-term choices like cabinet finishes, tile, countertops, and flooring, live with your samples for a while before you commit. Give yourself enough time to fall out of love with them, which can happen.

Look at your samples in the space at various times of day. Colors change with the light.

If you're renovating an older house, research the period. Knowing what they would have done originally can help guide you through tough choices.

Assume that you will go at least 50 percent over budget.

For hardware, stick to a uniform finish throughout the house.

Keep a basket with samples of all of your materials—flooring, paint chips, hardware, tiles.

Set up an Excel spreadsheet with your product specs—names and style numbers, prices, contact info—for everything. It will be a big help if you want to add on, repaint, or repair damage.

Integrate technology—Wi-Fi, cable, sound systems—from the start. It's much easier to run the necessary wires when the walls are ripped to the rafters.

Honor your clothes and shoes. Give them enough space to breathe. You want to make it a pleasure to stay organized.

Artwork should stand alone. And the upholstery fabrics do not have to match it!

Factor kids and dogs into the master plan, and be realistic about the wear and tear a room will have to take.

Get dogs that don't shed!

Color is your friend and wants you to come out and play. It's not like you're going to the principal's office if you paint your door pink.

Maximize natural light. Hang curtains so they don't encroach on the windows.

Give yourself as many lighting options as possible, always on dimmers.

Make utility areas—garage, laundry room, closets—as fabulous as the rest of the house, and you will want to whistle, not whine, while you work.

New spaces deserve new towels and new bedding. I tried to get along with my old towels and they just weren't on the same level.

Renovation is stressful. I found it helped to a) breathe; b) understand that your friends love you for you, and not for your house; c) entertain all through the process.

Even if renovating is just a dream, keep a notebook of things you like. It's never too early to start. •