

## **Elements of good design in kitchens - Form vs. Function, it's a delicate balance**

The functionality of good kitchen design is often placed second to its overall appearance, but these two elements need not be mutually exclusive of each other. When looking at the overall functionality of the design, the most important element to consider first is to ensure that it complies with all the local building codes and fire safety regulations. There's no point in designing a beautiful kitchen if it won't pass code. Working with an experienced custom kitchen designer will ensure that your design will meet or exceed all of the minimum requirements. Most people would be surprised to know that 95% of the kitchens in London today would not pass the current code requirements. It is very important to consider the cooking habits of the homeowner(s); how many cooks? What function does each cook typically provide in the meal preparation as well as in the cleanup? Designing around those habits is essential to a good functional kitchen. A design that functions well for one family may not be as ideal for another family.

An experienced kitchen designer will try to employ as many of the recommendations that are set out by the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) when designing a kitchen. The "work triangle" recommendations are the part of these guidelines that many are familiar with. Most kitchen designs won't comply with all of the recommendations but every effort will be made to ensure that at least the minimums are reached. This is where the true dance between form and function really happens and the design will often have to make minor sacrifices to ensure that these minimums are met. It takes the skill of an experienced kitchen designer to walk you through this; trying to include all your wants, needs, food preparation, cooking and cleanup preferences into the space, all the while trying to ensure that your kitchen still looks beautiful.

Designing kitchens is not as simple as one might think; employ the services of your local industry professionals for the best possible results.

## **Best practices of things a homeowner should consider when planning their kitchen**

Scope of work and budget, these two go hand in hand – What is to be included in your project and what are you budgeting for each item? It is never just new cabinetry and countertops, there are many other factors that need to be considered and budgeted for. These items should include;

- Permit applications
- Removal and disposal of the existing cabinetry and other job site debris
- Bulkhead or wall removals, use this opportunity to run wiring for new pot &/or pendant lights
- Light fixtures – Pot or pendant lights, under and in-cabinet lighting (consider LED lighting as an option)
- Plumbing work – a new sink and faucet as well as the hook-up
- Electrical work – any appliances relocation, additional wall outlets, lighting installation, dishwasher hook-up, as well as bringing the wiring up to current code
- Flooring – it is always best practice to replace the flooring at this time and to have the cabinetry installed on top of the new flooring
- New appliances – shop for what you like, but refrain from purchasing until the cabinetry design has been finalized. Clients often jump the gun and order appliances that won't work well in the space.
- Cabinetry and countertops
- Drywall repair, painting, decorating and backsplash tile
- Consider hiring a registered RenoMark™ contractor that can help to co-ordinate, give you professional advice and simplify your project. As contractors, they are typically entitled to discounts on products and services that will reduce the overall cost to the homeowner.

## **What are the most common mistakes people make?**

- #1 Not properly budgeting for all aspects of the renovation. Again, this is where hiring a registered RenoMark™ contractor can really benefit you.
- #2 Not working with an experienced Kitchen Designer. It takes an average of 10 years of experience to become a truly qualified Kitchen Designer. If that Designer's experience is with custom kitchens, as opposed to semi-custom or in-stock cabinetry, you will be exposed to far more design options than what is available to work with out of a catalogue. An industry professional will share their knowledge on so many other areas with regards to your complete renovation; their experience and guidance reaches so much further than just creating the perfect design.
- #3 Not doing enough research on the products they are selecting i.e. purchasing on price instead of quality – The kitchen cabinetry and the other products selected should last an average of 30 years, even then, it should likely be replaced because it is out of style, not because it is falling apart. This renovation is to improve the value of the home and your enjoyment of it for the long term, making selections based on price alone is a fatal mistake. Cheaper products typically don't last; they show scuffs, marks and wear and tear rather quickly which diminishes the value of the home. Selecting quality products will only enhance your enjoyment as well as the value of your home. Look for the warranties offered on the products selected, the longer the warranty, the better the products. Remember; "You get what you pay for".
- #4 Unrealistic expectations of how long a project like this takes. Custom cabinetry will take a minimum of 6-8 weeks to produce from the time the design is finalized, not from the time you first enter a kitchen showroom. Allow 3-4 weeks minimum for the design process as there are usually multiple revisions involved before a layout is finalized and approved. The entire job from beginning planning to the end should take several months. Don't plan it around special events like weddings and family Christmas', as clients who do this are inevitably disappointed.
- #5 Expect to have to take time off work for meetings, appointments and to make product selections. There is a great deal of time involved on the homeowner's part and not devoting the appropriate amount of time to the project will cause delays and disappointment. If you can't devote much time to it, hire a registered RenoMark™ contractor to assist you and to help keep you on track.
- #6 Expect to be inconvenienced. No project ever goes 100% smoothly; there can be back orders, delays, strikes, discontinued items, after installation service and so much more. If you enter this project with an expectation that there may be hick-ups along the way, then you will have a better overall experience.

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