



Beatty Lumber & Millwork Company
1835 State Road Upper Darby, PA 19082

*I'm thinking of being my own General Contractor . . .
. . . what should I plan for?*

Your design and subcontractor professionals do this work all the time. There are some things that are assumed by the different trades in regard to timing and who is responsible for what. Since you are probably new to this, if you are “GC’ing” your own job, you are responsible for asking all the questions. Here are some things to think about. Also, plan on your project’s lasting 6 – 8 weeks longer than you expected and to cost 10 – 20% more. Plan for the worst and hope for the best!

Advance Planning

- BEFORE you start demolition, the layout needs to be finalized. While some things can be changed in the field, most of the project is interrelated and one little change can have a snowball effect and end up being a costly adjustment in time and material.
- Make a color palette board or bag with swatches of paint color, flooring, counters, cabinet stain, etc.
- Read all the literature your designer gives you.
- Measure all the small appliances you have, as well as the larger ones that are staying to ensure proper placement, fit, and accessibility.
- Plan for light switches, outlets, data, and telecommunication wiring
- Legwork: visits to the kitchen designer, appliance dealer, flooring store, counter fabricator, lighting store, plumbing supplier, paint/wallpaper store
- Make sure your designer is aware of all decisions, especially appliances and flooring.
- Will cabinets fit through your door(s)? What path will be used to get to the proper room?
- Will the delivery truck(s) fit down your street/driveway? Consider complications (road work, weather).
- Where will the staging area for cabinetry and appliances be? Hopefully close to the room for installation?
- Where will your temporary “kitchen” be during construction? Will you need to rearrange or store furniture elsewhere?
- What dimensions might change once construction starts? Overall ceiling height due to adding drywall over existing ceiling or due to adding thick flooring. Wall size due to adding insulation, straightening, etc. Window/door size due to replacement and moulding changes?
- Double check all dimensions, even ¼” can make a difference!
- Where will messy things like sawing wood happen? If the answer is not “inside,” is there a place out of the weather to do it outside? If not, weather can delay installation.



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Who will do the following? In what order will they happen?

- Demolition (be sure to cover items in the room below to protect from dust)
- Disposal of demolition material and trash from packaging
- Flooring
- Plumbing (ask about a temporary sink installation)
- Electrical – who makes brand, color, and style selections for under cabinet lighting, recessed lighting, decorative lighting outlets/switches/dimmers?
- HVAC – who is moving/adding heating/cooling sources? Who is ducting the exhaust fan?
- Drywall
- Painting
- Carrying drop-shipments into the house
- Appliance installation and connection
- Cabinetry installation and related moulding
- Moulding in other areas of room (how do they affect and interact with the moulding on the cabinetry?)
- Counter installation

The Domino Effect

- Even though you have your plan set in place, delays happen. A delay in one area usually affects all the other pieces to the puzzle.
- A full-time GC has sub-contractors who rely on the GC for regular work and are very willing to be there when needed. If you are just a once-every-other year customer, you might not have the priority status you need. A delayed subcontractor can really mess up your schedule.
- Just because a subcontractor has said that he/she will be available to do their part during a certain week three months beforehand, does not necessarily mean that they will be available at a different time if you fall behind in your schedule. Furthermore, if some of their other jobs fall behind, it will affect yours as well.
- When a delay happens, relate that to all the other people involved so they can work to switch their schedules. If workers and deliveries show up at a previously expected time and you are not ready for them, there may be additional expenses for redelivery, storage, or additional trip charges. Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!

Availability at job site

- If you will be working outside the home while the work is being done, how available are you for questions, problems and the resulting change orders, deliveries (and where they get placed), vendor visits (proofing granite layout, design changes), etc.?



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Additional fees

- Subcontractors and material suppliers make their profit on time and material. If they have quoted you a certain price on their contract and for whatever reason the time or materials needed exceeds what was anticipated, you may be charged more money. Here are some examples:
 - If you would like your designer to go to the stone yard to select granite, to the tile store to select tile, and other consultation needs outside of the showroom, that person will need to be compensated for his/her time.
 - If your designer needs to be at your job site during your counter installation (or at other times) because you are unable to be there, he/she will need to be compensated for their time.
 - If there is a major unexpected change to the plan once a contract has been signed and further design work and product modifications are needed, there will be an additional charge for the time involved and possibly a change-order charge from the factory.

The unfortunate part of construction and renovation work is that there are so many trades involved and frequently many unknowns. Good communication is key to preventing erroneous assumptions. Designers and trades people deserve a fair wage, just as you deserve good quality work done for the good quality price you are paying. When the unexpected happens, be sure to ask the people involved, "Will there be an additional fee for _____?" Sometimes the extra work can be done for no additional charge. But those "freebies" add up if they keep happening, and sooner or later you will find that additional compensation is needed.

When you are purchasing materials through a dealer or tradesperson, they are not able to control damage, missing parts, delays, etc. (unless they delayed in ordering it ordered it incorrectly). Most trades people will keep working until you are satisfied. Your being compensated for down time and delays need to come from the manufacturer, not necessarily from the person who purchased the item on your behalf.

Also, keep in mind that warranties usually only apply to replacement of the product. If labor is required to remove the defective item and replace it with the new piece, that will be an additional cost for you.

If you are looking to save money by being your own General Contractor, be sure to look at all aspects of the job, make sure you are available, and that you have great communication and organizational skills. Having a cell phone, fax, and copy machine helps also.

Good Luck!!!