

painfree paperwork

You could say a council is to a renovation what a dentist is to a great smile – a necessary evil. However, by being organised and knowing exactly what your rights and obligations are, it needn't feel like pulling teeth. Manukau City Council's booklet, *Doing it Right*, starts us off with this advice:

"Do it right and the project will go smoothly. Taking short cuts and ignoring the rules will cost you more in the long run. It may mean risks, delays, complaints and disputes. These can lead to loss of insurance cover, future loss of value, lawsuits, enforcement and abatement orders, fines and even prosecution. Do it right, and in the long run you'll spend less and save more."

Depending on how extensive and complex your renovation is, you may prefer to let your design professional deal with the council. If you decide to project manage it yourself, though, you'll save money and learn quite a lot in the process, says architectural designer Merv Sandford of Sandford Design.

"The key is to do as much homework as possible and follow a realistic timeline, bearing in mind that building consent applications can take between 10 and 20 working days to approve, and resource consents can take longer," he says.

"Firstly, visit your council and talk to a planner about what you want to do. They can advise you on issues such as zoning, height in relation to boundary rules, and drainage. This 'pre-planning' exercise will pinpoint what you'll need to provide when lodging your consent applications.

And at this initial visit, request documentation such as your property's certificate of title and a LIM report if you haven't already got them."

Merv adds that if council hasn't got the original plans – which can sometimes be the case, especially if the house is more than 100 years old - this is the time to either carry out the necessary measurements or consult your designer. As a specialist in house alterations and additions, he says his golden rule is always to apply for a project information memorandum (PIM).

"A PIM will uncover very early on all the information the council holds that is relevant to your building project, such as the location of underground services and whether you need to apply for a resource consent. These can be factored in sooner rather than later, when drawing up plans."

A thorough approach will minimise confusion, delay and cost, and help ensure the building consent application is processed more rapidly. Merv says not supplying certain information will mean returning to the drawing board over and over again. For example, if the home has unauthorised works, have they been added to the plans? Have all the engineering aspects of the proposal been included – a geotechnical report, a flood risk assessment, drainage, pipe



and stormwater reports? If you plan to use a new material or product, have you included a producer statement?

Dealing with council doesn't end once you've got the building consent. The Building Consent Authority will inspect the work at specific stages identified in the building consent, and again at completion. Peter Moloney, team leader of building compliance with Manukau Building Consultants, says his team frequently comes across issues that can delay the building process and, ultimately, that all-important council blessing; a code compliance certificate.

Making sure work complies with consent documentation at each stage of the renovation process is critical, especially if you have a strict deadline. Peter highlights, in particular, four 'hot spots' that home renovators should be prepared for when a building inspector calls.

Plumbing and drainage work: A registered member of the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Boards must carry this work out and it requires a building consent. The building inspector will want to know the company's name and registration number, and sight the tradesperson's membership card. Prior to lining the walls, hot and cold supply and waste pipes will be checked, along with any connections to drains – expect these to be tested at inspection.

Smoke detectors: It's now mandatory to install smoke detectors, not only throughout new homes, but where there are alterations and additions. Locations should be shown on the plans and an on-site inspection will be carried out to ensure detectors are the right type and have been installed correctly.

Safety glazing: There are stringent rules regarding glazing and safety, with bathroom glazing regarded as particularly high-risk. Some imported glazing does not necessarily meet New Zealand Standards (NZS), in particular the requirement for all panels to be permanently and legibly etched with NZS markings. If this is the case with a product you plan to install, contact the Glass Association of NZ (GANZ), which can organise individual testing. This will be needed to satisfy the inspector that your glazing complies.

“Do it right, and in the long run you'll spend less and save more.”

Flooring: Flooring in wet areas or places prone to splashes must be impermeable – this means that an additional damp-proof membrane (DPM) must be applied to timber floors. A building inspector will need verification that the DPM under any tiling meets the minimum 15-year durability requirement and carries a five-year workmanship warranty.

Once your renovation is complete, you can organise a final inspection and apply for a code compliance certificate. Again, if you've taken the time to get all your ducks in a row, it should be a breeze! The next problem? Probably how often your mother-in-law decides to stay, now that you've got that spacious new ensuite... **H**

To order a copy of Manukau City Council's booklet, *Doing it Right*, go to www.manukau.govt.nz/forms.htm.

- Resene Bluegrass
- Resene Dark Knight
- Resene Desperado