LAMORINDA WEEKLY



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# Should I Stay or Should I Go Now?

*By Ken Ryerson*

Insulated walls and sealing and all new windows Photos Andy Scheck

Going through a remodel does not build character, but rather, it reveals character. My wife will tell you that I'm not a type A personality, but a Type AAA (triple A). Never has that been more evident than a few months back, when we were trying to decide whether to move out of our home or to attempt to live in our home during the construction. While driving my car on the way to work, I was thinking of what would be the best option for our family. Each way would be painful from either an inconvenient or financial perspective. During this internal debate, the 1982 Clash song "Should I Stay or Should I Go" came on the radio. I listened to the song's lyrics intently, thinking that it must be a sign from a higher power as the following words blared out from the radio: "If I go, there will be trouble.and if I stay there will be double." "Okay, that's it - I'm leaving!" I tell my self. Clearly, things happen for a reason and how fateful that the DJ played that song at the exact moment I was thinking about our remodel and our housing situation. However, by the time I got in to work, the rational side of my brain had kicked in. Regardless of what problem I was considering at the time, I'm sure that I could have interpreted any song to fit my needs at that particular moment. Therefore, the question remains. What is the best course of action - to move out or to remodel in phases, migrating from section to section during a renovation? If finances are not an issue, then by all means, renting is likely the best option for most people. Other than packing and coordinating the move out, this option would be the least disruptive and inconvenient. This is especially true the longer the remodel time needed, particularly for those remodels estimated to take six months or longer. If you have young children, moving out may also be a better option from

a safety perspective. Although most contractors are very conscientious about cleaning up after each day's work, there always exists the possibility that tools or nails could be left behind which could be very dangerous for a child. If finances are tight, however, you will need to carefully consider all aspects of the project to determine whether you should move. The scope and size of the project is an important factor. A smaller project that does not involve the kitchen is very different from a larger project that involves every room. Other considerations such as timing and cost of the project are best discussed upfront with the contractors prior to commencing the work. On a large scale job, deciding not to move out could end up adding both time and extra cost to the project. This increase in time and cost is likely to occur due to the need for the work (i.e. demolition, framing, plumbing, electrical, finish carpentry, etc.) to be completed section by section. Each sub-contractor must complete his or her portion before turning it over to the next sub-contractor. Proceeding section by section requires multiple visits over the course of the remodel by each of the different sub-contractors. This would result in more time needed to complete the job and, consequently, higher labor costs. Contractors will generally want to complete your project, get paid, and then move on to the next job, just as much as you want to move back into your home. If you plan on acting as your own general contractor, however, or anticipate the need to be involved in most of the decisions along the way, then it may very well make sense to live on site during the remodel. Many friends, clients, and acquaintances I spoke to told me that when they lived in their house during a kitchen remodel, they were often forced to eat out. This cost was often overlooked when putting together their remodeling budget. On the flip side, the money that you can save from not having to pay for a rental could be used to subsidize some mighty fine dinners, with plenty of spending money left over! For us, we decided to move out of our home for the remodel for various reasons. In addition to not wanting to deal with the inconvenience, our most compelling motivation was medical - our youngest son has asthma and we did not want to expose him to the daily dust of the construction. This decision has made our daily lives much easier for the most part, as we were able to find a place close to our home (which kept us close to the kids' schools). This has really helped to simplify our lives during this hectic time. Financially, it has added to the cost of the remodel, but the increase will likely only be about 5% of the project. Please keep in mind that the cost of a rental should be included in your total remodeling budget, so if you have an upper limit of what you think you can spend for your remodel, you may have to give up something else to keep the cost down. In addition, rental cost cannot be financed, so it will decrease your monthly cash flow. Another option that I (briefly) considered was to moving in with my parents for the summer and then finding a rental in Moraga once school started. Although tempting, this idea was quickly discarded as I would rather camp in my back yard than try and live with my parents for even one week (okay, even only one night). However, if you do have relatives who live close by, this may be an economical option to consider. In the end, whether you decide to stay or go during a remodel is largely dependent on your needs, situation, and requirements. There is no one-size fits all solution when deciding what is best for you and your family.

Sheet Rock for an inside wall

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