

THE

Design-Build Guidebook

What to look for — and what to watch out for — when
choosing a design-build partner for your next remodel.

A HONEYDEW™ IMPROVEMENTS RESOURCE

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01

What Is Design-Build, Anyway?

Before you start interviewing firms, it helps to know exactly what you're shopping for — because not every "remodeler" works the same way.

In a design-build arrangement, one company is responsible for both the design of your project and the construction of it — under a single contract, with a single team, and a single point of accountability. That's different from the traditional route, where a homeowner hires an architect or designer first, gets a set of plans, and then separately shops those plans out to contractors for bids.

Design-Build

- One team, one contract, one budget
- Designer & builder collaborate from day one
- Cost feedback happens during design, not after
- One party to call with any question

Design-Bid-Build

- Separate designer and contractor, two contracts
- Plans finished before pricing is known
- Bids can come back over budget, sending you back to the drawing board
- Disputes can bounce between two companies

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The people drawing your new kitchen and the people building it are on the same team — and the same budget page — from the very first sketch.

02

7 Things to Look For

A strong design-build firm will make these easy to see. If any of them feel hard to pin down, take note.

1

A Portfolio That Matches Your Project

Look for variety and complexity similar to what you're planning – not just a handful of glossy photos.

2

Active License & Insurance

General liability and workers' comp should be shared freely and without hesitation, not after repeated asks.

3

A Real Design Process

Detailed drawings, renderings, and material selections should be finalized before any demolition begins.

4

Transparent, Itemized Proposals

Scope and costs spelled out line by line, with a payment schedule tied to real project milestones.

5

One Point of Contact

A named project manager or designer who owns communication with you from start to finish.

6

Verifiable References & Reviews

Recent clients willing to talk, and consistent reviews across Google, Houzz, and the BBB – not just a testimonials page.

7

Staying Power

An established, local business with real longevity in your community – not a crew that showed up this season.

03

Red Flags to Watch For

Any one of these alone isn't necessarily disqualifying — but two or three together are a real warning sign.

- ✗ A bid dramatically lower than every other estimate you've received.
- ✗ A vague or one - page contract , or reluctance to put scope and pricing in writing at all.
- ✗ Pressure to sign quickly , or "today only" pricing designed to rush your decision.
- ✗ Requests for full payment upfront , or a strong preference for cash-only deals.
- ✗ No mention of permits — or a suggestion that you pull them yourself.
- ✗ Demolition starting before design and material selections are actually finalized.
- ✗ Communication that goes quiet once the deposit clears.

04

Smart Questions to Ask Every Firm

Bring this list to your first meeting — with us, or with anyone else you're considering.

- 01 Who will be my main point of contact, and how often should I expect to hear from them?
- 02 How do you handle change orders and unexpected surprises once the walls are open?
- 03 What's included in this price, and what could realistically add to it later?
- 04 Can I speak with two or three references from projects similar in scope to mine?
- 05 What's the payment schedule, and what milestone triggers each payment?
- 06 What warranty comes with the finished work, and for how long?
- 07 How will you protect my home and family while construction is underway?

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A confident firm will answer every one of these clearly, in plain language — without hesitation and without hurrying you along.

05

The HoneyDew™ Process

One example of design-build done well — from first phone call to final walkthrough.

1

Proposal & Approval

2-3 WEEKS

A first conversation and photos of your space earn you a ballpark range. Once that's approved, we visit in person to measure and build out your first detailed proposal.

2

Design & Planning

8-12 WEEKS

Our design team builds 2D and 3D renderings of your space and works with you to finalize materials, finishes, and layout.

3

Pre-Construction

4-8 WEEKS

We pull permits, prep your home, walk through the payment schedule, and get you set up on our project software so you always know what's next.

4

Construction

VARIES BY SCOPE

Our crew brings the design to life, with regular updates by phone, text, and our online project portal.

5

Final Walkthrough

1-2 WEEKS

We walk the finished space together, close out any final details, and make sure you're genuinely thrilled with the result.

6

Post-Project Support

Every project is backed by a three-year workmanship warranty, with our team a phone call away long after we've left.

06

Why Homeowners Choose HoneyDew™

Whatever firm you choose, we hope this guide helps. Here's a bit about how we try to measure up to it.



Local, Not Corporate

Family owned and focused on Milwaukee's North Shore & Mequon — we know the neighborhood.



3-Year Warranty

We stand behind every project with an industry-leading workmanship guarantee.



Built for Flexibility

From a mud room refresh to a whole-home remodel, we scope projects to fit real life.



Conscious Craftsmanship

We recycle materials, minimize waste, and build with the environment in mind.

30+

KITCHENS

50+

BATHROOMS

20+

BASEMENTS

400+

PROJECTS COMPLETED

Ready to talk about your project?

We'd love to hear what you're dreaming up. Reach out any time — no pressure, just a conversation.



*Serving our community with integrity and compassion. Refreshing
homes with the heart of a craftsman.*

Keep this guide handy as you meet with firms. **A well - informed
homeowner makes the best decisions** — whoever ends up holding
the tape measure.

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