BetterBuilders
Design. Build. Remodel.

The Complete Guide to Creating a Dream Bathroom: From Outdated to Oasis



Waking up to the chaos of a cramped and outdated bathroom was never your ideal situation, but you learned to live with it. Your bathroom may be decorated in a style the previous owner loved, but it doesn't suit your taste. It's time for a change—a bathroom renovation that transforms this essential space into a rejuvenating oasis.

When it comes to primary suites, many dream of creating a tranquil spa-like haven where every detail fosters relaxation and comfort; sustainability through water conservation and future-proofing for aging are also key considerations in these transformations.

This eBook delves into transforming bathrooms and primary suites, but the design principles and insights we share are valuable for any bathroom renovation, from a shared family bath to a charming powder room.



ASSESSING NEEDS AND WANTS

Before embarking on your renovation journey, it's crucial to identify the challenges at hand and the desired outcomes. Are you tackling a primary suite bath, considering an addition, or revamping another full bath or powder room? Will this project stand alone or be part of a larger renovation plan?

Often, a lack of space serves as a primary motivation for renovation. You may have endured a cramped setup with a combined bath and shower or commode crammed in the corner, leaving you longing for a more spacious and luxurious retreat.

Define your needs for the space first - what can't you live without in your new bathroom? Think about your ideal materials for basics like floor or wall tile, cabinets, and plumbing fixtures. What will you be excited to see and use every day? From there, we can take it further with wants and wishes. Consider upgrades like an oversized soaking tub or a steam shower with multiple shower heads. This is your opportunity to redefine the space, from layout to finishes, to align with your vision of comfort and functionality.



UPGRADING THE LOOK AND FUNCTIONALITY OF YOUR BATHROOM

Imagine your dream bathroom: a calming space that works seamlessly for you. Is low-maintenance cleaning a priority? Perhaps improved accessibility is critical. Maybe you simply crave a fresh, beautiful look.

No matter your vision, with proper planning, a bathroom renovation can create a tranquil haven that elevates your everyday routine. As you explore design options, consider how each element will enhance your space and bring joy to your daily rituals.

Optimizing Existing Space

Even spacious primary suites can sometimes feel cramped or outdated. But, with a clever redesign, you can tap into the full potential of your existing space. A skilled design-build firm can create a new plan that maximizes your current square footage by carefully evaluating your bathroom's layout and considering adjacent areas. This can breathe new life into your bathroom, making it more functional and enjoyable.

Even in compact bathroom makeovers, ample opportunities exist to optimize space and enhance functionality. Whether transforming a primary ensuite or refurbishing a powder room, consider innovative design solutions that maximize storage space and streamline the layout. From floating cabinets and wall-mounted storage units to built-in shower niches and benches, every detail should serve a purpose, creating a harmonious balance between form and function. Your skilled design partner will help you discover customized options you didn't realize you had and make the best use of your current footprint.



Creating New Space

Expanding your home with an addition provides the potential needed for your primary suite. This blank canvas allows you to design a dream bathroom oasis with luxurious features like heated floors and a freestanding tub.

Collaborate with your designer to bring your vision to life, ensuring every detail is crafted for your comfort and enjoyment.

Upgrade Infrastructure

A bathroom renovation presents an opportunity to address underlying issues and modernize essential systems.

Most plumbing is hidden away behind our walls—out of sight, out of mind. This is the main reason why leaks and other problems often come as a surprise to most homeowners. In an older Seattle-area home, you may have outdated galvanized plumbing that needs replacing. It's common for galvanized plumbing to accumulate



mineral deposits over time, reducing water pressure. As this corrosion deepens, it can compromise your plumbing system's stability and lead to catastrophic leaks.

The bathroom is one of the most likely sources of water leaks, so upgrading your plumbing infrastructure ensures optimal performance and longevity. A good design-build firm will use best practices in waterproofing not just the pipes themselves but also all of the newly installed bathroom features.

Potential for leaks aside, your plumbing may need to come up to the current code. For instance, you may need to install anti-scald fixtures. It balances the pressure to keep the water temperature from changing as water is drawn for use elsewhere in the home. So, if cold water suddenly goes away, the valve takes an equal amount of hot water away so that your mixes from the shower head stay the same.

Replacing outdated plumbing is also an excellent opportunity to conserve natural resources. For instance, installing a hot water recirculation system means not having to run gallons of cold water down the drain until the hot water starts flowing for your shower. Systems like this are one small step you can take to promote sustainability and reduce resource consumption.



CONSIDERATIONS BEYOND DESIGN

There are many choices to make when remodeling a bathroom. In addition to interior design and functional considerations, there are practical aspects to contemplate during your renovation journey.

Factors like grout selection, bathtub materials, and cleaning routines can significantly impact the longevity and maintenance of your bathroom. By prioritizing durability and ease of upkeep, you'll ensure your oasis remains pristine for years.

Grout Selection

Why should I think about my tile's grout? Old grout can harbor bacteria, and it doesn't look good as it gets old and crumbles away. Use newer non-organic grout products that are antifungal and antimicrobial so they do not grow mold. Another consideration when selecting your new grout is that very light and very dark grout colors are often more challenging to keep looking clean. While light grout and tile can help a space read larger, and dark grout can add depth to your tile design, dark and light grout tend to show more dirt and stains over time, while neutral grout such as beige or grey won't show dirt as readily.

Bathtub Materials

Today, the most common bathtub materials are acrylic, fiberglass, sometimes stone, and porcelain enameled steel. Porcelain is lightweight and inexpensive but can be prone to chipping. Acrylic tubs are resistant to chipping and cracking but can quickly develop scratches and get cloudy. Fiberglass is affordable and easy to install but less durable than other options. Have you considered the idea of a cast iron tub? While it's heavy and more challenging to install, cast iron is incredibly durable and has superior insulation capabilities, potentially saving you some money on hot water bills with the bath staying warmer for longer!

Cleaning and Maintenance

While elements like grout can be sourced to maximize efficiency, there is no such thing as a self-cleaning bathroom. If a bathroom is too small, it is often too difficult to get to all the important areas to clean. Understanding how to maintain the materials in your bathroom will go a long way to keep the space clean, minimize wear and tear, and extend the life of your fixtures and finishes. Here are just a few ideas to keep in mind when making bathroom selections:

- **Glass** - If glass panels are installed around a shower or to create a wet room space, and you have hard water, you need to be prepared to squeegee off the glass every time the space is used. Hard water stains on a glass shower are more than just a cosmetic issue; they can damage the glass over time, etching the surface and impacting its integrity. You may want to consider a glass coating upgrade to minimize cleaning.

- **Shower Heads**—A rainfall shower head is another popular item in a bathroom renovation. Cleaning a ceiling-mounted element will need to become part of the maintenance routine. It's often advised that a shower head be cleaned at least once monthly to avoid problematic build-up. Keep ease of cleaning and accessibility in mind when choosing where showerheads are placed.

- **Steam Unit** - Who doesn't love a steam shower? But this is more than what accumulates when running water through the shower. Steam shower maintenance goes beyond cleaning the shower heads, glass enclosure, and tile. Clean the steam shower generator and regularly flush the system to prevent mineral deposit build-up. Knowing the maintenance requirements for the steam unit will keep it functioning well and extend its life.

- **Sinks** - It may seem like a small piece of the design puzzle, but the style of sink you select can majorly impact your cleaning routine. Wall-mounted sinks open up more space below for storage solutions but can be challenging to clean, depending on your basin style. Top-mounted sinks are often inexpensive but add a seam for gunk and grime to accumulate. Vessel sinks add a unique style aspect but take up crucial bathroom vanity space. Installing under-mount sinks makes it simple to clean off the counters and wipe debris into the basin, allows more counter space, and offers a smoother, minimalistic design.

SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN BATHROOM RENOVATION

As you reimagine your bathroom, prioritize safety and accessibility to accommodate changing needs and lifestyles. You don't need to sacrifice design to make safety and accessibility a priority in the design.

If you plan to age in place or enhance overall safety, features like grab bars, curbless showers, walk-in tubs, and low-traction floors can make a significant difference. By integrating these elements seamlessly into your design ideas, you'll create an inviting and inclusive space.

A few other elements to consider for safety and accessibility:

- A floating sink means a wheelchair or a walker can pass underneath for easy use.
- Install low-traction floors so that slipping on wet ground is less of a concern.



- Shower doors are typically constructed from tempered glass. This type of glass is specially treated to break into small, pebble-like pieces rather than sharp shards, significantly reducing the chance of injury from accidental falls or impacts.
- A renovation will require the installation of GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlets near wet areas if they have not already been installed.
- Ensure you install water-rated lighting. Since building codes typically prohibit light fixtures directly over bathtubs, please consult with a qualified design-build partner to explore safe and suitable lighting options for your bathtub area.

Your design-build partner will help you make the right decisions to improve your quality of life and bring the bathroom up to code without sacrificing aesthetics. A safe, accessible, inclusive bathroom can be an oasis for anyone.

CREATING A SPA EXPERIENCE

Your bathroom is more than a functional space; it should be a sanctuary where you begin and end each day. A big reason for this renovation project is to create a space you want to spend time in rather than a room you want to leave as soon as possible. Embrace this opportunity to infuse tranquility and luxury into every design aspect. By prioritizing comfort and ambiance, you'll transform your bathroom into a personal haven that rivals any spa retreat.



Design, Color, Texture, Comfort

When dreaming up your perfect spa bathroom, think about how you want to feel in your space and what it will take to achieve that feeling. Think about the colors you see on your walls and the texture you feel in your floor tile and countertops. Picture the warm soak in the bath with calming music or aromatherapy sessions in the steam shower, then wrap up in a cozy towel fresh off the heated towel rack. It would help to think about everything you don't see in your new haven and where those things may be hiding away.

Consider where you may want more privacy. Should your design include a separate space for the toilet? Do you want a divider to create privacy for your new tub? Imagine how you'll live in your new space and the amenities that would make it perfect. Sleek mirrored medicine cabinets can store common countertop clutter. You envision a dedicated makeup vanity with picture-perfect lighting and drawers to store bulky hair tools. Integrated Bluetooth speakers and dimmable lighting can help set the tone for a relaxing self-care night.

In this past Better Builders project, the client sought to convert an awkward closet space into a usable bathroom. We used the opportunity to design a space with a coastal-inspired palette.



Initially, this particular room was heated using an antiquated steam radiator, which we removed to create space for the shower. Since we eliminated the original heating source, we installed an energy-efficient and compact ConvectAir heater instead.

Whatever space you are working with, a good design partner will help create a space that connects to your style, fits in with the rest of the home, and gives you that dreamy spa-like experience.

Consider Designing a Wet Room

Consider exploring the concept of a wet room—a modern interpretation of "open-concept" bathing known for clean lines and contemporary style. By eliminating traditional barriers and creating a spacious curb-free shower area, wet rooms offer a luxurious and versatile bathing experience.

Special attention must be paid to waterproofing and drainage throughout the wet room. Hidden tray systems and carefully sloped flooring can ensure water flows where it is supposed to and doesn't pool throughout the space. Proper waterproofing and drainage allow you to create a stunning focal point embodying style and functionality.



FINDING THE RIGHT DREAM BATHROOM DESIGN-BUILD PARTNER

While DIY renovations may seem appealing, entrusting your project to a reputable design-build partner ensures professional results and peace of mind. Unless you are experienced in plumbing, laying tile, and other vital trades needed for a bathroom renovation, it's best to call the professionals.

Look for a local design, homebuilding, and renovation expert with a long and steady history in the Seattle area. Depending on the complexity of your bathroom renovation, or if this is just one part of a larger project, you're entering a long-term relationship with your design-build partner.

Before signing a contract, please know how they work and ensure your values align well. Here are just a few key questions to ask:

- Do they have a clear and transparent pricing and billing process?
- Do they follow good practices for keeping the workspace and the rest of your home as clean and safe as possible?
- Where are people parking when they come to work on your home?
- How do the tradespeople dispose of waste materials from the project?
- What kind of warranty is offered?

Consider price and quality of work, but also pay close attention to the level of service and communication your builder upholds. When choosing a bathroom renovation company, prioritize consistent professionalism, clear and frequent communication, and a warranty that reflects the value of your investment.

This is a partnership that both you and your chosen design-build firm should be comfortable with. Better Builders has developed a successful, proven process over thousands of renovation and homebuilding projects.

In the first meeting, we seek to determine if we are a good fit for your needs. If we are not, we will do everything we can to help you find a partner that better meets your needs. When we are a good fit, we ensure you have all the information you need to make the right decision. A well-informed homeowner is an empowered homeowner.

IT'S TIME TO EMBRACE TRANSFORMATION

Revitalizing your bathroom is not just about updating aesthetics; it's about transforming a functional space into a personal sanctuary. From optimizing layout to enhancing safety and accessibility, every decision should reflect your unique needs and preferences. By partnering with a trusted design-build firm, you'll embark on a transformation journey, culminating in a bathroom that elevates your daily routine and enhances your quality of life.

To begin planning your at-home bathroom oasis, download Better Builders Proven Roadmap to Create the Home of Your Dreams.

Take the first step toward your dream project! Fill out the form to schedule a free discovery call. This call will allow you to share your vision and challenges with a Better Builder team member, who can answer your questions and help determine if we're a good fit for your needs.



