



At One Group, Hara provides clients with regular progress reports and reassures them that they can reach us by phone whenever questions come up.

BUILDING BETTER

Renovations thrive on preparation. Thiago Hara of One Group Design + Build shares how clarity, communication and foresight lead to spaces that work beautifully and last

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Renovating a home is equal parts exhilarating and intimidating. The glossy “after” shots are easy to fall in love with, but getting there requires patience, foresight, and the right strategy.

To help cut through the noise, I sat down with Thiago Hara of One Group Design + Build, who has guided countless homeowners through projects big and small.

His refreshingly direct advice proves that successful renovations begin long before the first wall comes down. “Why do I want to renovate, and what do I need to achieve?”

That’s the first question Hara insists homeowners ask. The answer, he says, sets the tone for everything that follows. It could be opening up a cramped kitchen, creating a forever home, or improving resale value.

Whatever the motivation, being clear about your “why” becomes the

anchor for every choice. He encourages clients to list must-haves versus nice-to-haves from the outset.

“Renovations are exciting, and it’s tempting to chase every idea. But decisions tie back to your core goal, you’re far less likely to regret them later.”

Clarity alone, however, isn’t enough. Hara sees too many projects falter because they launch without a detailed roadmap. Permits, finalized design decisions, scheduling materials, and proper communication are the four non-negotiables.

Overlooking permits can halt progress entirely. Delaying material selections or custom orders can blow up timelines. And assuming everyone is aligned without written documentation almost always leads to friction.

“A renovation should never start with ‘we’ll figure it out as we go,’” he warns. “Planning on paper is what spares your stress and costly detours later.

Then there’s the budget, a topic that makes most homeowners squirm. Hara’s advice? Confront it head-on. He recommends building a realistic plan and padding it with a ten to twenty per cent contingency.

“Once you start opening walls, you might find aging wiring or water damage. If nothing comes up, you can treat yourself to an upgrade or keep the funds untouched. If something does emerge, you’ll be grateful you’re accounted for it.”

Design is where many homeowners stumble — often separating beauty from function. For Hara, the magic lies in blending both.

“Spaces should feel as beautiful as they are practical,” he explains. He cautions against trends that overwhelm, suggesting classic finishes for foundational elements and trend-driven details for accents that evolve over time.

The result: rooms that not only impress but also stand the test of daily life. Preparation extends

beyond budgets and drawings. Homeowners who arrive at the first meeting with images of spaces they love, a clear sense of needs, and an understanding of local costs set the stage for stronger collaboration.

“You don’t need solutions — that’s our job — but having clarity about your preferences allows us to tailor advice,” Hara says.

And the biggest regrets? He’s seen them all: projects that overlooked functionality, budgets stretched beyond limits, picture-perfect rooms that are frustrating to live in, and designs that ignore future needs. The antidote is simple: Plan thoughtfully, think long-term, and make changes before construction begins.

Hara also emphasizes the human side of renovations. Trust and communication with your contractor are paramount. “It’s a partnership,” he notes.

Choosing a team you connect with, setting expectations early, documenting changes, and keeping

Hara’s 10 pro tips for a smooth renovation

1. Spend more time on design and scope before demolition.
2. Always build in a contingency fund of at least 10–20 per cent.
3. Collect inspiration images and note exactly what appeals to you.
4. Lock in key design decisions and materials before construction.
5. Put every change or agreement in writing.
6. Balance style with livability—never sacrifice one for the other.
7. Future-proof with adaptable layouts and durable materials.
8. Communicate regularly and set expectations with your contractor.
9. Invest in quality where it matters: structure, plumbing, windows, fixtures.
10. Prepare for disruption, stay flexible, and embrace the process.



Hara says one of the keys to a good renovation is outlining both your functional needs and your aesthetic aspirations for the space.

communication respectful all make the process smoother.

“Treat your contractor as a partner. A positive relationship makes the journey easier for everyone.”

In the end, success isn’t luck — it’s preparation, foresight, and perspective. As Hara puts it: “Plan thoroughly, expect surprises, communicate openly, and trust your team. If you do that, you’ll love not only the space you’ve created, but also the experience of getting there.”