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## **Reuse: the Key to Renovating on a Budget**

In early spring, a couple I have the pleasure of calling friends purchased a house which required significant renovations. Throughout the summer I have been assisting them with these renovations starting from the initial planning sessions straight through to the last coat of paint.

I have often heard that when renovating, before you open a wall you need to be ready to double your schedule and double your budget, but my recent experiences have shown me that only half of this adage need hold true. Without fail, each and every project they embarked on this summer required that they double their expected schedule as soon as work began—you never know what mysteries lie behind the drywall or under the floorboards, but once you discover them you have to deal with them. Yet, even though their scheduling was always thrown off course, the couple were able to keep their budget in line with a little more planning and leg work.

As do-it-yourselfers (DIYers), the greatest expense this couple encountered was in building materials, and they were able to keep costs in line by seeking locally produced and recycled materials. Needless to say, the large hardware stores were critical to the completion of all the projects but there were also many opportunities were the couple could turn to alternative venues to acquire the necessary materials.

Firstly, the on-line classifieds site Kijiji.ca proved to be instrumental in reigning-in a budget with the potential to balloon exponentially. By connecting with local citizens who sought to pass-on any surplus belongings the couple was able to acquire many of the required tools at exceptionally reasonable prices. Furthermore, many of the finishing touches such as the kitchen sink, most of the light fixtures, and the back-yard fencing were all acquired through Kijiji.ca from previous owners who no longer had a need for such products. It is interesting to think that had the connection not been so easy to establish between the sellers and the buyers then perhaps these products would have simply been discarded or left to waste even though there was a clear use for them within the local community.

Just as Kijiji.ca proved to be a great market-based connecting service so did the Habitat for Humanity ReStore which recently opened in the Vanier Industrial Park. Although most projects were nearing completion by time the ReStore became operational, a few great finds made their way into the newly renovated home at a fraction of the expected cost. The ReStore provides recycled products as well as discontinued products, such as the new hot water heater which came to the ReStore from a Home Depot in Ontario and made its way into the couple's home for less than 40% of the original ticket price.

In one particular case, the couple sought a particular product, V-groove cedar for a living room ceiling, which was not available from recycled sources nor even from the large hardware stores (although they would have been able to special order it). Instead, the couple managed to identify a local cedar saw-mill

(Ridge Cedar Inc.) through word of mouth which not only had the product available but they also had it available at a fraction of the expected cost. By using locally-sourced wood the mill did not need to pass on any transportation and shipping charges to the couple, thereby keeping the final bill within financial reach.

With the couple's renovations drawing to a close it is clear that each project ended up being bigger than planned and hence taking longer than planned, yet by relying in large part on local and recycled products the final tally remained within financial reach.

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