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weight if the soil turns out to be soft. Because the concrete sits right on the ground, it's not suited for subfreezing climates. However, if your whole addition is going to be heated, it's possible to use slab anyway, by sandwiching the slab between sheets of rigid, polystyrene insulation. Or you can also go with a crawl space foundation, giving you some storage and room to house the mechanical systems for the new space above.

Pricewise, Scopelieti estimates that for a kitchen addition with stock cabinets, an island, granite counters, tile floor, a mudroom and small laundry room, you can expect to pay per square foot, \$125 with a slab foundation, \$200 with crawl space, or \$325 with a full basement.

Because the whole addition will be new, you won't be dealing with concerns about weight affecting the main house. Instead, you'll be tackling issues of blending the two structures. "Often contractors will build the main shell before breaking through to the old house, so they'll wait until the addition is 'buttoned up'—or weather-tight—to merge them," says Charles Cook, a Chicago-based architect. "If the work hasn't been careful, the floors or walls may not align."

Wherever there's a joint—the place any two structures meet—there's a potential weak spot. "It's best not to extend the same wall from the old to the new," Cook says. "If the house will settle, it will happen there, and you'll see a hairline crack going up."

Instead, Rory McCreesh, president of a New York City construction company, suggests moving the joints at least 6 inches into the old construction, so the two parts overlap for added strength. "If something goes wrong, you'll just have finish failure, not safety failure," he says.

Once the structure's been built, with either type of additions, your contractor will typically extend existing wiring and plumb-

Tip

Building out's often less expensive than building up—as much as 10 to 12 percent cheaper in the New York City area.

ing to the new space, but install a new, second HVAC system. "A larger addition would require its own system, because the initial one was designed to serve the size of the original house," Cook says.

Look at this as an opportunity to upgrade the systems you have, as well. "If your water service is just adequate, expand it, or bring in a larger supply pipe, if your house is older," Cook says. Prewar homes had smaller service lines coming in because less water was used then. Many also had $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch galvanized steel supply pipes, which have narrowed inside over time, restricting water flow. These should be replaced with $1\frac{1}{2}$ - or 2-inch pipes. "You're not bringing in a new service, you're improving it for the whole house," he says.

Payback

The main payoff from the job will be space to add people and monetary value to the property. However, "whenever you build an addition, you also add value," says Scopelieti.

But you also need to consider the extra costs of the new space. For example, when your municipality does its next assessment (to determine properties' taxable value), your home's increased worth will raise your taxes. Your homeowner's premiums will go up, too. Then there's more space to heat, cool and maintain. Include these costs when budgeting for the project, to be sure you can keep up when the work is done.

The good news is, that the investment can pay off in the future. "If it's a seller's market, and you've done an addition and done it well, when prices go higher, you'll recoup more of the cost," says Kussmaul. A bathroom, kitchen or master suite should return a little over half of your original investment, according to a 2010 national survey done by the National Association of Realtors. And about the same for a deck or garage addition. □

Additional Concerns

Of course, it almost goes without saying that the architect and contractor you hire must first submit plans and obtain permits. So, what's unusual about these projects?

For one thing, some extra safety precautions are driven by the special work conditions that building an addition can bring. For example, putting up protection walls between the new space and the main house, and securing the existing ceiling and walls so they remain stable while, say, a neighboring load-bearing beam or wall gets relocated.

The electrical, gas and water lines must also be identified and protected. "Before anything gets started, we call utilities to mark the lines—underground and hidden in the walls," says Geno Scopelieti. Sometimes, utilities will be shut off temporarily to protect workers from live wires and a generator will be run. Normally, though, the crew will use your utilities. If the job's very large and the costs will run high, you may want to keep track and bill the contractor later.



If the project will take several months or more, it may be cheaper to pay for periodic dump runs than to rent a dumpster.

Other topics to discuss with your contractor:

- **Fencing off the site.** At least an 8-foot fence should be set up, to keep out intruders.
- **Preventing damage.** Steps should be taken to protect the existing home and landscaping from equipment and debris.
- **Access to the house.** Discuss whether workers will be permitted use of a

bathroom or if a temporary toilet will be required. Ask when they'll need to enter the house, so you can secure valuables.

- **Trash.** Learn the arrangements for disposal and fees. "Some stuff might need to be disposed of in a particular way," says Reva Kussmaul. Habitat for Humanity can be a good place to send usable building debris, such as windows and doors.