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A house extension can completely transform your living space without having to move. Take this 1920s Lakewood residence, which was renovated and expanded by Maestri Studio with details influenced by the chateaus in the south of France. *Jenifer McNeil Baker*

DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT

6 Important Things to Consider Before Building a House Extension

Architects listed on the AD PRO Directory share tips to smooth your house extension process—from aspiration to reality

By Kyle Hoepner

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Visions of a grand house extension have been filling your daydreams for some time, and now you've decided to make it happen. How best, then, to translate your mental wish list into the built reality of wood, stone, glass, plaster, and luscious upholstery fabrics? Design professionals listed on the [AD PRO Directory](#) have guided clients through this process time and again, and are keen to provide pointers that promise an optimum outcome for your home addition project and minimal hassle along the way.

Decide on the Program

For the uninitiated, the road from fantasy to buildable plan is likely to have more kinks and branches to navigate than you might expect, and many factors can impact the viability of what you want to do. For example, an addition is rarely just a matter of constructing a space that didn't exist before. "Sometimes people think about only the need for a brand-new family room without [considering] how that space should flow and complement the house," says Eddie Maestri of [Maestri Studio](#) in Dallas. "The reality is, it's always much more of a domino effect." Improvements will likely be necessary in the rooms that adjoin an extension, and systems throughout the house—such as air-conditioning and heating—may require upgrades. "Or we might realize that we want to tie in hardwood floors, and to get that to look right we have to redo the floors on the whole first level."

Make Interim Living Arrangements

Many families simply assume that they'll continue to live in their house during construction. Unless the addition is quite small or work is confined to a little-used part of the dwelling, this is not a good idea.

“I always advise clients to move out,” says Maestri. “You’re dealing with interruptions in services like water and electricity. There are nails everywhere, there are people in your yard, there’s dirt—it’s not a great situation. I also find that a lot of contractors don’t want to take on those jobs, either, because they’re really hard to orchestrate.”

Relocating to a rental with a month-to-month option to extend rather than a fixed term is ideal, in case your project completion date slips. “I usually recommend at least a 60-day buffer,” Maestri adds. “At the end of a really big construction project, you want to give yourself time to work through a punch list with the contractor. And it’s no fun for anyone involved doing that while the house is occupied and full of furniture.”