



Simple Redo Versus Major Overhaul

What makes the most sense for your kitchen?

By Sarah Coombs



Interior designers are asked this question a lot, especially when it comes to kitchens: “How much can I change it without changing everything?” After all, the renovation of no other room wreaks quite as much havoc on daily life as redoing a kitchen. Thus many people try to avoid a total gut job—to protect their sanity and their wallets.

The good news is that you can change a lot without changing everything. But there are a few guidelines for determining the best course of action for a kitchen redo.

First and foremost: Decide what’s problematic about the space. If it’s the layout that makes you cringe, there’s not much you can do short of a complete renovation. Changing the layout most likely means moving appliances, which requires rerouting supply lines. It also necessitates tearing up your floor and walls, which all adds up to a very big job.

Your best bet in this case? Steel yourself for a rough few weeks (or months), and set up a temporary kitchen in another part of the house. A garage or basement works best; somewhere out of the general fray of daily life. If possible, move your fridge, or purchase a mini fridge and standing freezer. Use your microwave for heating water and frozen meals, and cozy up to your grill, too. Not only will it cook almost anything, cleanup is a breeze. And without a deep sink to do the dishes, you’ll need all the help in that department that you can get.

If your problem is just a dated—rather than nonfunctional—space, then you’re in luck. That issue is largely cosmetic and can be tackled quite easily and for a (relatively) small amount of money.

Your quickest course of action is a new coat of paint for your cabinets. It’s amazing what a can of glossy white—or blue or green or any color you like, really—can do. Kitchens come in a variety of hues nowadays, so feel free to be brave with your palette.

Another easy fix: Play with your upper cabinets. Paint them a lighter shade of the color on your base cabinets. Or remove them entirely, and replace them with open shelving. If that feels too radical, keep the cabinet boxes, and just remove the doors. You’ll be amazed at how much that single change will open up the space, making it feel so much more modern and bright.

If paint won’t fix your cabinets—they sport some outdated carving, say—consider replacing

Go Big or Small

If your layout makes you cringe, you may need a complete renovation, like this one by **Custom Kitchens**. But if that’s too involved, just a new appliance or backsplash or some open shelving in place of an old cabinet, like that by **Berkeley Mills**, right, can freshen up your room.



the doors only. This will set you back more than paint, but it's still a far less costly option than starting from scratch.

With your cabinetry feeling fresh, make sure the rest of your kitchen follows suit. Take a good look at the hardware, lighting, countertops, backsplashes, appliances, and flooring. If any of them needs to be spruced up, best to tackle it now. From a budget perspective, it may be tempting to spread the work out over time. But you'll likely save on labor costs—and certainly on the general upheaval—if you take care of everything all at once.

No matter the scope of the renovation, redoing a kitchen is a difficult, tricky business. So it helps to have a positive mindset. While you're displaced, try pretending that you're on an extended camping trip, only without the insects and pretty scenery. Unlike most vacations, though, the best part of this one comes at the end: A brand new space, that looks—and cooks—like a dream.



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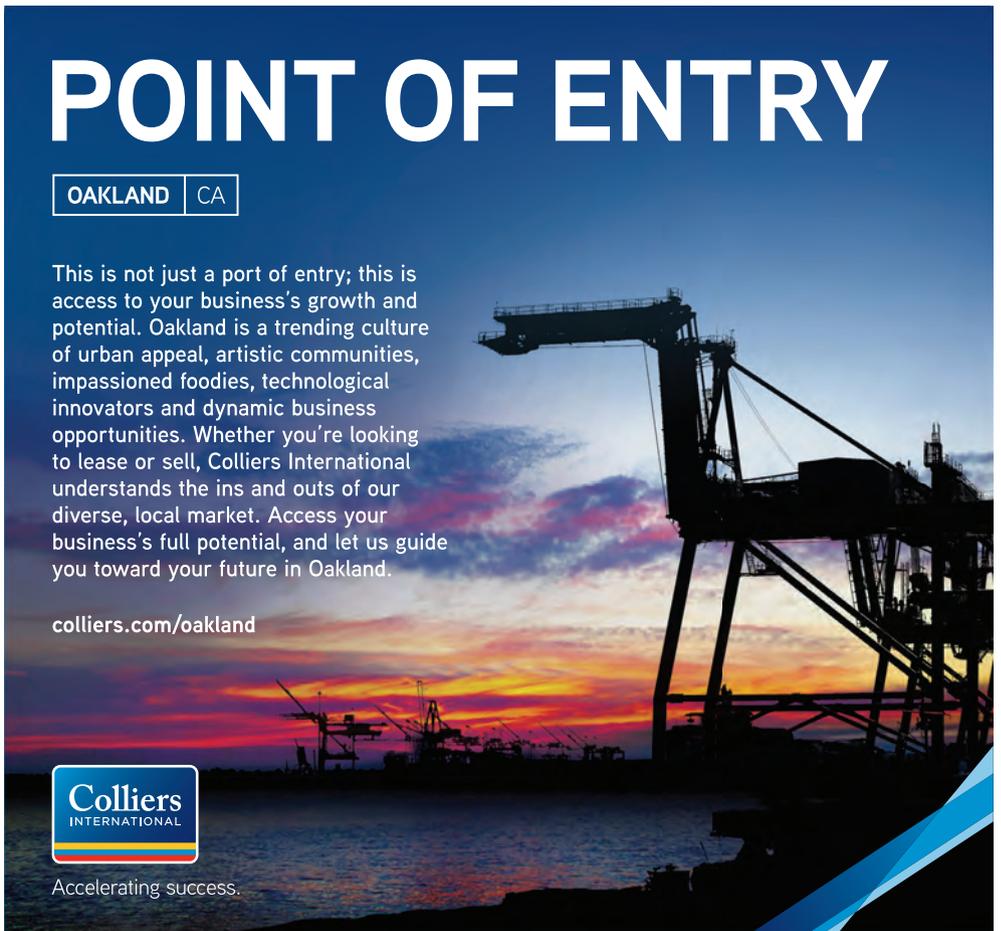
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