

CALGARY CONSTRUCTION NETWORK

Kitchen Renovations

Questions about kitchen remodeling, cabinets,
countertops, and appliances

9 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

calgaryconstructionnetwork.com/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. Does anyone recommend a good kitchen designer in Edgemont who actually understands older open-concept layouts?
2. What does a kitchen look like before and after adding a load-bearing beam to open up the wall to the dining room in Canmore?
3. Is quartz or granite better for kitchen countertops in Calgary where we get extreme temperature swings from chinooks?
4. What's the timeline for a full kitchen renovation in Calgary if we order custom cabinets - 8 weeks or more like 12?
5. Can I replace my own kitchen cabinets and countertops without a permit in Calgary, or does that trigger an inspection?
6. We want to add a kitchen to our Panorama Hills basement for a suite. Does that trigger commercial exhaust rules?
7. What is a realistic timeline to completion for a kitchen gut renovation in a 1960s home in Capitol Hill?
8. Does the Builders' Lien Act in Alberta protect homeowners if a contractor abandons a kitchen renovation halfway through in Marlborough?
9. I want to move a load-bearing wall in our kitchen. Does that require a structural engineer, or can the contractor handle it?

Does anyone recommend a good kitchen designer in Edgemont who actually understands older open-concept layouts?

Finding a kitchen designer who truly understands the unique challenges of 1970s-1980s open-concept homes in Edgemont requires someone with specific experience in Calgary's established communities.

These homes often have galley kitchens that open to family rooms, with load-bearing walls that limit renovation options and dated electrical systems that need upgrading.

Edgemont's housing stock presents particular design challenges that not every kitchen designer understands. Most homes in this northwest Calgary community were built in the late 1970s and early 1980s with smaller, compartmentalized kitchens that were "opened up" in later renovations. The original layouts often have awkward sight lines, limited counter space, and electrical panels that need upgrading from 100A to 200A service to handle modern appliances.

A qualified kitchen designer for your Edgemont home should understand **structural limitations** common to this era - many walls that appear non-structural actually carry loads, and opening up spaces requires proper engineering assessment. They should also be familiar with Calgary's **permit requirements** - kitchen renovations typically need electrical permits (especially for new circuits), plumbing permits (if moving gas lines or water supply), and building permits if you're removing walls or adding structural elements.

Calgary-specific considerations your designer should address include working around existing ductwork (these homes often have awkward HVAC runs), dealing with the concrete foundation walls common in this area, and understanding how Calgary's extreme temperature swings affect materials selection. The chinook winds and temperature fluctuations can cause significant expansion and contraction in cabinetry and countertops.

Professional guidance is essential for structural changes - never assume a wall can be removed without consulting a structural engineer. Most Edgemont homes have post-and-beam or conventional framing that requires careful analysis. Your designer should work with contractors who understand the City of Calgary permit requirements and can pull proper permits through the City of Calgary.

Next steps: Look for designers who can show you specific examples of Edgemont or similar-era home renovations, understand structural limitations, and work with contractors familiar with Calgary's permit process. Browse verified kitchen renovation contractors and designers in our Calgary Construction Network directory who have experience with established community renovations. Schedule consultations with 2-3 designers and ask to see portfolios of similar vintage home projects - the right designer will immediately understand your home's challenges and opportunities.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- K&S CHIMNEY SERVICES ?
- Qualitec Distributors ?
- Calgary Custom Concepts ?

Browse all contractors ?

Q2

What does a kitchen look like before and after adding a load-bearing beam to open up the wall to the dining room in Canmore?

Opening up a kitchen wall to the dining room with a load-bearing beam creates a dramatic transformation from a closed, compartmentalized layout to an open-concept living space that's perfect for Canmore's mountain home lifestyle.

Before: Closed Kitchen Layout

The original kitchen would typically feature a **full wall separation** between the kitchen and dining room, creating two distinct, enclosed spaces. In older Canmore homes (1970s-1990s), you'd often see a galley-style kitchen with limited counter space, upper cabinets running along the wall that's about to be removed, and minimal sight lines between rooms. The kitchen feels cramped and isolated, especially problematic when entertaining guests who gather in the dining room while the host is stuck cooking alone in the kitchen.

Many Canmore properties, particularly those built during the town's earlier development phases, feature these compartmentalized layouts that were popular decades ago. The dining room sits separately, often with its own lighting and potentially different flooring, creating a disjointed flow between the two most social spaces in the home.

After: Open-Concept Transformation

Once the **structural engineer designs the appropriate beam** (typically a steel I-beam or engineered lumber beam like an LVL or glulam), the wall removal creates a stunning open-concept space. The kitchen now flows seamlessly into the dining area, with the new beam becoming an architectural feature that can be wrapped in wood, drywall, or left exposed for an industrial mountain look.

The transformation allows for **expanded kitchen functionality** - you can often extend the island or add a peninsula that serves as both workspace and casual dining. Sight lines open up dramatically, letting natural light flow between spaces and creating better connection with family and guests. In Canmore's mountain setting, this openness often provides better views of the surrounding peaks through dining room windows.

Canmore-Specific Considerations

Structural requirements in Canmore must account for significant snow loads due to the mountain location - the Alberta Building Code requires higher structural standards at elevation. The beam sizing will be more robust than similar projects in Calgary due to these increased loads. Additionally, many Canmore homes feature **post-and-beam construction** or engineered trusses that may complicate the beam installation.

Heritage considerations may apply in Canmore's older neighborhoods - check with the Town of Canmore (403-678-1500) before starting work, as some properties have heritage designations that restrict interior modifications. The town's development permit process is thorough due to the sensitive mountain environment.

Professional Requirements & Process

This project **absolutely requires a structural engineer** to assess the load-bearing capacity and design the appropriate beam. In Alberta, this work must be done by licensed professionals - the structural engineer stamps the drawings, a licensed contractor installs the beam, and Safety Codes Officers inspect the work at multiple stages.

Timeline and permits: Expect 2-3 weeks for engineering drawings, 4-6 weeks for building permit approval through the Town of Canmore, and 3-5 days for the actual beam installation. The project requires temporary support posts during construction, so plan for kitchen disruption. Total project cost typically ranges **\$8,000-\$18,000** including engineering, permits, beam, installation, and finishing work.

The dramatic before-and-after transformation makes this one of the most impactful renovations for mountain homes, creating the open, social spaces that work perfectly with Canmore's entertaining lifestyle and spectacular views.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- Calgary Home Comfort ?
- One OAK Flooring ?
- PLATINUM Pool & Spa Services Ltd ?

Q3

Is quartz or granite better for kitchen countertops in Calgary where we get extreme temperature swings from chinooks?

Quartz is generally the better choice for Calgary kitchens due to its superior resistance to thermal shock from our extreme chinook temperature swings. While both materials are excellent, quartz's engineered composition makes it less susceptible to cracking from rapid temperature changes that can stress natural stone.

Quartz advantages in Calgary's climate include exceptional thermal stability — the resin binders and engineered structure help it handle sudden temperature fluctuations better than natural granite. Quartz is also non-porous, so it won't absorb moisture that could freeze and expand during cold snaps, and it requires zero sealing or maintenance. The consistent color and pattern won't show stress fractures as readily as natural stone veining.

Granite can still work well if you choose a dense, low-porosity variety and maintain proper sealing every 1-2 years. Darker granites with tight grain patterns tend to be more stable than lighter, more porous varieties. However, granite's natural fissures and varying mineral composition make it more vulnerable to thermal stress cracking, especially near heat sources like cooktops.

Calgary-specific considerations include our indoor heating systems running heavily from October through April, creating significant temperature differentials when you're cooking. Chinook events can swing outdoor temperatures 20-30°C in hours, affecting your kitchen's ambient temperature. Many Calgary homes also have large windows that create hot spots from intense winter sun reflecting off snow.

Cost comparison in the Greater Calgary market: Quartz typically runs \$80-\$150 per square foot installed, while granite ranges \$60-\$120 per square foot installed. Premium quartz brands like Caesarstone or Silestone cost more upfront but eliminate ongoing sealing costs. Factor in granite's maintenance requirements — professional sealing every 1-2 years costs \$200-\$400.

Professional installation is crucial for both materials in Calgary's climate. Proper support structure and expansion joints help accommodate thermal movement. Your fabricator should understand local conditions and use appropriate adhesives rated for temperature extremes.

Next steps: Visit local showrooms to see samples, but prioritize thermal stability over appearance alone. Get quotes from verified countertop fabricators in our Calgary directory who understand local climate challenges and can recommend the most suitable material and installation methods for your specific kitchen layout.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- [Cam Harris Art Inc ?](#)
- [KMP exterior ?](#)
- [WestAim Construction Ltd. ?](#)

[Browse all contractors ?](#)

What's the timeline for a full kitchen renovation in Calgary if we order custom cabinets - 8 weeks or more like 12?

Custom cabinet orders will push your timeline to 12-16 weeks minimum for a full kitchen renovation in Calgary, not 8 weeks. The cabinet manufacturing and delivery alone typically takes 8-12 weeks, and that's before any installation work begins.

Here's the realistic timeline breakdown for a full kitchen renovation with custom cabinets in Calgary:

Pre-Construction Phase (2-4 weeks) Design finalization, permit applications, and contractor scheduling happen during this phase. The City of Calgary typically processes residential renovation permits in 2-4 weeks for kitchen projects. Your contractor should apply for electrical and plumbing permits through accredited Safety Codes Officers during this time.

Cabinet Manufacturing (8-12 weeks) This is your longest lead time and biggest timeline factor. Custom cabinet shops in Calgary typically quote 8-10 weeks for standard custom work, but complex designs, specialty finishes, or busy periods can push this to 12+ weeks. Many local cabinet makers get backed up during peak renovation season (spring through early fall). Order cabinets as early as possible - ideally before demolition begins.

Renovation Execution (4-6 weeks) Once cabinets arrive, the actual renovation work takes 4-6 weeks: demolition (2-3 days), rough electrical/plumbing (3-5 days), drywall and painting (1-2 weeks), flooring (3-5 days), cabinet installation (3-5 days), countertop templating and installation (1-2 weeks), final electrical/plumbing connections, and final inspections.

Calgary-Specific Considerations Winter renovations can add delays due to material delivery challenges during extreme cold snaps. Chinook temperature swings can also affect drywall compound curing times. Schedule your renovation for May through October if possible to avoid weather-related delays.

Managing the Timeline Order appliances simultaneously with cabinets - high-end appliances can have 6-12 week lead times. Coordinate countertop templating for after cabinet installation but before final plumbing connections. Stone countertops typically take 2-3 weeks from template to installation in Calgary.

Professional Guidance A experienced kitchen renovation contractor will manage these timelines and order sequencing for you. They'll also handle the multiple permit inspections required - rough electrical, rough plumbing, and final inspections through Safety Codes Officers. Budget 12-16 weeks total, and add a 2-week buffer for unexpected delays or change orders.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- Plains Equipment Rentals Corp ?
- UR COWRY CABINETS ?
- Calgary Custom Concepts ?

Browse all contractors ?

Q5

Can I replace my own kitchen cabinets and countertops without a permit in Calgary, or does that trigger an inspection?

You can typically replace kitchen cabinets and countertops without a building permit in Calgary, as this falls under cosmetic renovation work that homeowners can legally perform themselves. However, there are important exceptions and considerations that could trigger permit requirements.

What doesn't require permits: Swapping out existing cabinets for new ones in the same locations, replacing countertops with similar materials, and updating cabinet hardware or doors. These are considered cosmetic improvements that don't affect the structural integrity or safety systems of your home. You're free to tackle this as a DIY project or hire contractors without involving the City of Calgary's permitting process.

When permits become necessary: The situation changes if your renovation involves moving or adding electrical outlets, relocating plumbing lines, or making structural modifications. Installing new electrical circuits for under-cabinet lighting, adding a kitchen island with electrical service, or moving the sink location all require permits and inspections by accredited Safety Codes Officers under Alberta's Safety Codes Council system. Similarly, if you're removing walls (even non-load-bearing ones), adding new walls, or making changes that affect the home's layout, you'll need building permits.

Calgary-specific considerations: If you live in a condominium or townhouse, check your condo corporation bylaws before starting any work. Most condo boards require written approval for renovations, proof of contractor insurance, and may charge damage deposits. Even cosmetic changes can affect common property elements like plumbing stacks or electrical systems that serve multiple units.

Professional guidance recommendations: While cabinet installation might seem straightforward, consider hiring professionals for the countertop installation, especially for materials like quartz or granite that require precise

measuring, cutting, and support. Heavy stone countertops may need additional cabinet reinforcement. If your project involves any electrical work beyond plugging in appliances, you must use a licensed electrician - this isn't optional under Alberta's Safety Codes system.

Next steps: Plan your project timeline carefully, especially if you're doing this yourself. Order cabinets and countertops well in advance (6-12 weeks lead time is common), and arrange for proper disposal of old materials. If you discover any electrical or plumbing issues during the removal process, stop and consult licensed professionals before proceeding. For complex installations or if you're unsure about any aspect of the work, browse verified contractors in our Calgary directory who can ensure the job is done safely and to professional standards.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- [AROUND THE CLOCK GLASS SERVICE LTD. ?](#)
- [PLATINUM Pool & Spa Services Ltd ?](#)
- [YYC CABINETS INC ?](#)

[Browse all contractors ?](#)

Q6

We want to add a kitchen to our Panorama Hills basement for a suite. Does that trigger commercial exhaust rules?

Adding a kitchen to a basement suite in Panorama Hills is considered residential use and follows residential exhaust requirements under the Alberta Building Code, not commercial exhaust rules. However, you'll still need proper ventilation and multiple permits for this project.

For a **secondary suite kitchen**, you'll need a range hood that exhausts directly to the exterior (not recirculating) with minimum 100 CFM capacity. The exhaust must terminate outside with a proper wall or roof cap, and cannot exhaust into the basement, crawl space, or attic. This is standard residential ventilation - much simpler than commercial kitchen exhaust systems with fire suppression and grease management.

Key permit requirements for your Panorama Hills basement suite kitchen include a development permit (since you're creating a secondary suite), building permit for any structural changes, electrical permit for new circuits and outlets, plumbing permit for water supply and drainage, and HVAC permit for ventilation modifications. The City of

Calgary requires secondary suites to have separate entrances, proper egress windows in bedrooms, fire separation between units, and interconnected smoke alarms throughout.

Calgary-specific considerations include ensuring your basement has adequate ceiling height (minimum 1.95m/6'5"), proper drainage for potential flooding (Panorama Hills has some areas with clay soil drainage challenges), and compliance with the R-CG zoning that now allows secondary suites city-wide. Your kitchen will need GFCI outlets, proper spacing of receptacles, and potentially a dedicated 20-amp circuit for appliances.

Professional guidance is essential here - while you might handle some finishes yourself, the electrical, plumbing, and gas work (if adding a gas range) must be done by licensed contractors and inspected by Safety Codes Officers. A mechanical contractor should design your ventilation system to ensure proper makeup air and integration with your home's existing HVAC system.

Next steps: Apply for your development permit first through calgary.ca/development, then coordinate with licensed electrical, plumbing, and HVAC contractors who can pull the necessary permits. Budget \$25,000-\$45,000 for a complete basement suite kitchen including appliances, depending on finishes and any structural modifications needed.

Find verified contractors experienced with Calgary basement suites in our directory at Calgary Construction Network.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- [YYC CABINETS INC ?](#)
- [Turnbull masonry ?](#)
- [One OAK Flooring ?](#)

[Browse all contractors ?](#)

What is a realistic timeline to completion for a kitchen gut renovation in a 1960s home in Capitol Hill?

A complete kitchen gut renovation in a 1960s Capitol Hill home typically takes 8-12 weeks from demolition to final completion, though this can extend to 14-16 weeks if you encounter structural surprises or permit delays.

The timeline for your Capitol Hill kitchen renovation will depend heavily on what you discover once walls come down. These 1960s homes often have galvanized plumbing that needs replacement, outdated electrical panels requiring upgrades from 100A to 200A service, and sometimes asbestos-containing materials in flooring or drywall compound. Capitol Hill's character homes frequently have load-bearing walls that complicate layout changes, requiring structural engineering and additional permits.

Week 1-2: Permits and Demolition - Your contractor will pull building, electrical, and plumbing permits through the City of Calgary (typically 2-4 weeks for residential permits, though simple kitchen renos can be faster). Demolition reveals the true scope - expect to find galvanized water lines, knob-and-tube wiring remnants, or structural modifications from previous renovations. If asbestos is discovered in flooring or joint compound, add 1-2 weeks for professional abatement.

Week 3-6: Rough-In Work - This phase involves framing changes, electrical rough-in (likely a panel upgrade), plumbing rough-in (probably replacing galvanized with PEX), and HVAC modifications. Each trade requires separate inspections by accredited Safety Codes Officers under Alberta's safety codes system. Structural changes requiring engineered beams can add 2-3 weeks to this phase.

Week 7-10: Installation Phase - Drywall, flooring, cabinetry installation, countertops, and fixture installation. Custom cabinets typically have 6-8 week lead times, so order early. Quartz countertops require field measurement after cabinet installation, then 1-2 weeks fabrication.

Week 11-12: Final Details - Painting, trim work, final electrical connections, plumbing fixture installation, and final inspections. The electrical final inspection must be completed before occupancy.

Calgary-specific factors that can extend timelines include winter weather delays for material deliveries, the city's busy permit processing during construction season (May-September), and the challenge of matching heritage character details in Capitol Hill's older homes. Many contractors book 3-6 months ahead during peak season.

Budget for contingencies - 1960s homes commonly need electrical panel upgrades (\$2,500-\$4,000), plumbing stack replacement (\$3,000-\$6,000), and structural modifications (\$5,000-\$15,000). These discoveries can add 2-4 weeks to your timeline.

Professional guidance is essential for this scope of work. All electrical, plumbing, and gas work must be done by licensed contractors with proper permits and City of Calgary inspections. Find verified kitchen renovation specialists familiar with Capitol Hill's heritage homes in our Calgary contractor directory.

Start planning 4-6 months ahead, especially if you want completion before winter. The best window for major renovations in Calgary is May through October when material deliveries are reliable and crews can work efficiently.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- Always Affordable Locksmiths ?
- Wise Abatement ?
- Chems & Sons Construction/Cleaning Services Inc ?

[Browse all contractors ?](#)

Q8

Does the Builders' Lien Act in Alberta protect homeowners if a contractor abandons a kitchen renovation halfway through in Marlborough?

Alberta's Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act (PPCLA) actually creates obligations for homeowners rather than direct protection when contractors abandon projects. The lien legislation primarily protects contractors and suppliers by allowing them to place liens on your property for unpaid work, but it doesn't provide remedies when contractors walk away from unfinished jobs.

Understanding Alberta's Construction Lien System

The **Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act (PPCLA)** replaced Alberta's old Builders' Lien Act and focuses on ensuring contractors get paid promptly (within 28 days of proper invoicing) and provides mechanisms for them to secure payment through property liens. When a contractor abandons your Marlborough kitchen renovation, you're dealing with breach of contract rather than lien law.

Your actual protections come from different sources. If you paid by credit card, you may have chargeback rights for services not delivered. If the contractor is bonded or insured, those policies might provide coverage. For contracts over \$1,000, Alberta's Consumer Protection Act requires written contracts and provides some remedies

for breach.

Practical Steps for Abandoned Kitchen Projects

Document everything immediately - take photos of the current state, gather all contracts, invoices, and communication records. Calculate what percentage of work was completed versus what you've paid. In Marlborough kitchen renovations, typical costs run \$30,000-\$80,000, so the financial exposure can be significant.

Check if permits were pulled through the City of Calgary at 311 or calgary.ca. If electrical, plumbing, or gas work was started, you'll need licensed contractors to complete inspections before the kitchen is safe to use. the City of Calgary requires all rough-in work to be inspected before covering with drywall.

Verify the contractor's WCB Alberta coverage at wcb.ab.ca - if they had employees working on your project without coverage, there could be additional liability issues. Also check if any suppliers or subcontractors might place liens on your Marlborough property for unpaid materials or labor.

Legal Remedies and Next Steps

Small claims court through Alberta Court of Justice handles construction disputes up to \$50,000, which covers most residential kitchen renovations. You can sue for breach of contract, seeking damages for completion costs above the original contract price, plus any additional expenses like temporary kitchen arrangements or storage.

Get completion estimates from three licensed contractors to establish your damages. Many Calgary kitchen contractors are familiar with abandoned project completions - they'll need to assess what work meets code, what needs to be redone, and what permits are required.

Consider hiring a construction lawyer if the project value exceeds \$25,000 or if lien issues arise. The PPCLA's lien holdback provisions (10% for 60 days after substantial completion) become complex when projects are abandoned mid-stream.

Find verified, licensed kitchen renovation contractors in our Calgary directory to get your Marlborough project back on track safely and legally.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- Coral Stucco&Exteriors Ltd ?
- A Green Future ?
- Johnny B's Painting ?

Q9

I want to move a load-bearing wall in our kitchen. Does that require a structural engineer, or can the contractor handle it?

Moving a load-bearing wall absolutely requires a structural engineer in Alberta — no contractor can legally approve this without proper engineering calculations and stamped drawings.

When you remove or modify a load-bearing wall, you're changing how your home's structural loads are distributed. This affects the safety and integrity of the entire structure above that wall. In Alberta, any structural modifications must be designed by a Professional Engineer (P.Eng.) registered with APEGA (Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta). The engineer will provide stamped drawings showing how to safely redistribute the loads, typically with a beam, posts, or other structural elements.

The process involves several steps: First, your structural engineer will assess the existing structure and calculate the loads that wall currently carries. They'll then design a solution — often a steel or engineered lumber beam supported by posts or columns. The engineer provides stamped drawings that show the beam specifications, connection details, and any temporary support requirements during construction. Your contractor uses these drawings to obtain building permits and complete the work safely.

Calgary's building department requires these engineered drawings before issuing permits for load-bearing wall modifications. The Safety Codes Officer will review the plans and inspect the work at key stages — temporary support installation, beam installation, and final completion. Skipping this process isn't just unsafe; it's illegal and will cause problems when you sell your home or file insurance claims.

Costs typically range from \$1,500-\$3,500 for engineering (depending on complexity), plus \$8,000-\$25,000 for construction depending on the beam size, access challenges, and finishes required. The engineering fee is a small price for ensuring your family's safety and your home's structural integrity.

Your contractor's role is crucial but different — they handle the actual construction, temporary support systems, beam installation, and finishing work. However, they cannot determine what size beam you need or whether the wall is load-bearing without an engineer's assessment. Even experienced contractors must follow the engineer's specifications exactly.

Next steps: Contact a local structural engineer first to assess your wall and provide stamped drawings. Once you have those drawings, find contractors experienced with structural modifications through our Calgary directory. The

engineer and contractor should coordinate on the temporary support plan and construction sequence to ensure your home remains safe throughout the project.

Find a Kitchen Renovations Contractor

Calgary Construction Network connects you with experienced contractors in the directory:

- [Cupboards Express ?](#)
- [Aloko Construction Group ?](#)
- [Wise Abatement ?](#)

[Browse all contractors ?](#)

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Calgary Construction Network. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of April 5, 2026 and may change. Visit calgaryconstructionnetwork.com for the latest answers.