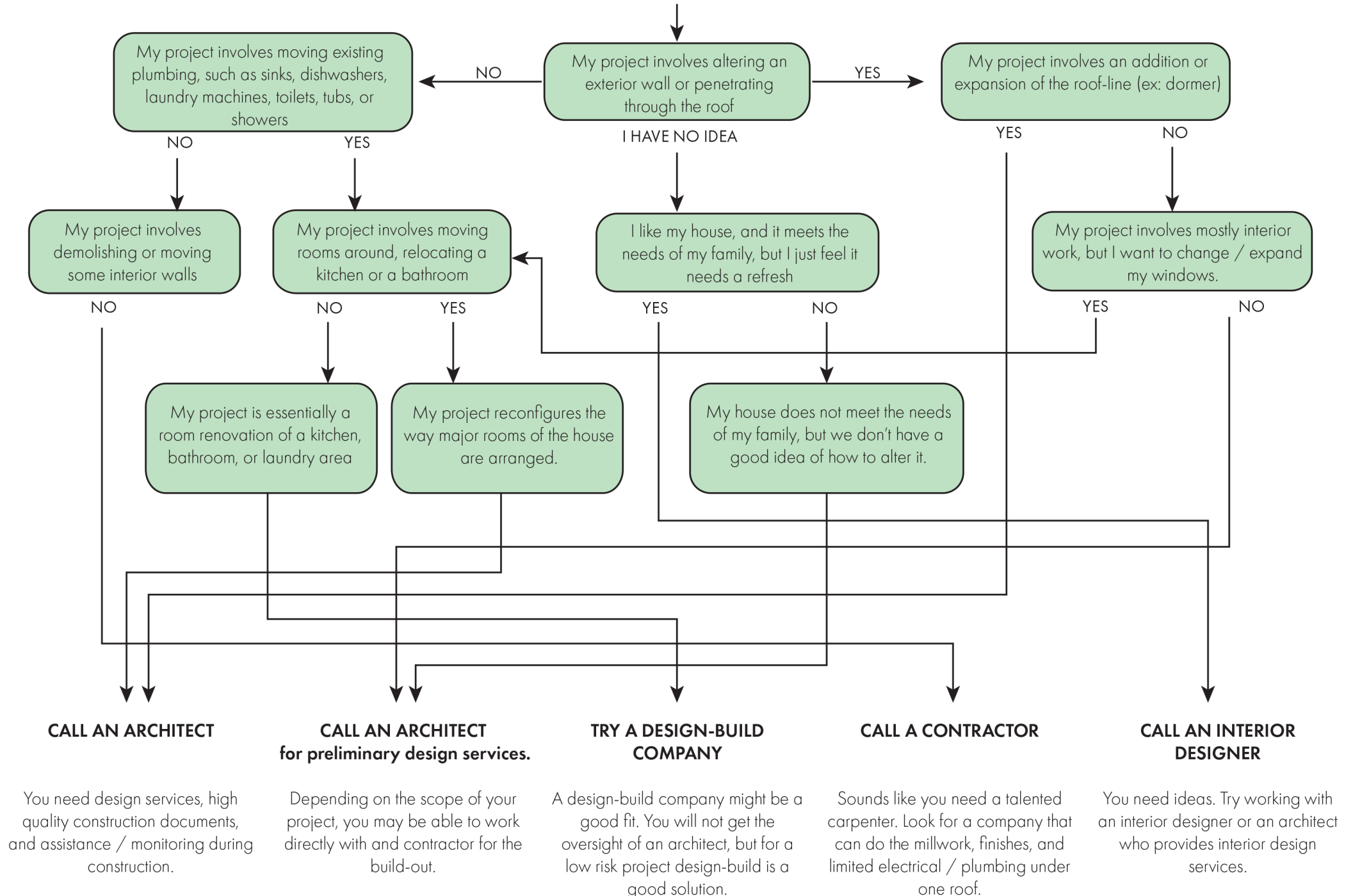


DO I NEED AN ARCHITECT?

a helpful flowchart
for residential construction

START



CALL AN ARCHITECT

An architect has a fiduciary responsibility to their client. This means that because you pay them a fee for their advice, they must act in YOUR best interest. This is the primary difference between paying an architect for guidance, and paying a contractor for a product. If your project involves any exterior water-proofing, complex construction, or structural maneuvers, you are best served with an architect coordinating, managing, and monitoring these elements. If your wall leaks a year and half after your project, who will have installation pictures showing what went wrong? Your architect. When your contractor asks to substitute a material because it "costs less" who will know if it costs you 10% less and the contractor 50% less? Your architect. There is no substitute for a professional paid to act in your best interest. If you think a professional is expensive, try an amateur.

CALL AN ARCHITECT for preliminary design

If you don't know where to begin, it is worth working with an architect on a fixed fee or hourly rate to help guide your project. A contractor will be limited by what they have done before or what is good for them. An interior designer may be overly constrained by existing conditions. Once you know what you want, you may be able to simply work with a contractor or an interior designer from there, without engaging further services from the architect.

TRY A DESIGN-BUILD

A design build company is a one-stop shop for design and construction services. Usually, this is a contractor who has folded in some design services. Design Build offers convenience and some time savings. You will lose the oversight of the contractor. Many people will advocate design-build because it limits "finger-pointing" between professionals. It does. Essentially, the contractor is operating with little-to-no oversight. Working with a Design-Build company is not recommended for any new-construction, or projects that involve a lot of work to your exterior wall or roof. When it comes to your building envelope, you need oversight and documentation of the construction process. Design-Build is a great option for low-risk projects that are larger than a typical interior redecorating, especially if you already have a good idea of what you want. They can quickly get their team in-and-out, and provide the convenience of working with just one company.

CALL A CONTRACTOR

If you know what you want, and don't touch your exterior envelope or any major plumbing or electrical, you can likely work directly with a contractor. (Check with your local building department to find out if you need permit drawings from a licensed architect or engineer.) Ask around for good recommendations, and then get references of projects they have completed recently. Ask if you can go see their past work. Don't be lured in by a low number quote. Generally, with contractors you get what you pay for. Feel free to ask the contractor to break down their quote so you know exactly what you are getting for their fee. Lastly - ALWAYS GET AT LEAST THREE QUOTES. You will learn a lot in comparing them, even if you already know who you want to use.

CALL A INTERIOR DESIGNER

Interior Designers can help transform a room. They are well versed in different wall and finish types, local suppliers and craftsman, and have a good sense of what things cost. Be honest with them about your budget, and bring images of things that you have seen and liked.