

Planning and Design

We are not advocates of jumping into the waters head first without looking at where we are going. We strongly recommend taking the necessary time to do a thorough plan for your project, which includes:

Site inspection and analysis

Review infrastructure

This will determine what changes may be necessary, including but not limited to plumbing, electrical, structural integrity, etc. Depending on your project, we may also need to solicit the services of a surveyor and/or structural engineer.

AutoCad drawings

Next we create an architectural plan of your existing house and land, with complete and accurate measurements. This is essential in order to begin the design process; furthermore, the drawings are required for acquiring permits.

Preliminary planning

Create program

In an interview session, we discuss with you the vision you have for your new property. How will you use it? How many bedrooms/bathrooms do you want? What is your aesthetic sensibility, etc.? What is your budget and deadline? The data from this session is then compiled into a written document known as the program that serves as a road map for the entire project. The document also includes findings from the infrastructure review.

Design

Initial design

Working with the current plan as above, we create sketches that illustrate the new layout of walls, pool, etc. These are presented first as rough sketches to scale.

Revisions

After a meeting in which we present these sketches, we do a round of revisions based on your input. Once the general plan is approved, we commission final accurate architectural drawings and electrical plans suitable for the masons and other workers to follow.

Renderings

Finally, we generate 3D renderings of a few views in order to illustrate what the “real” finished project will look like. Both CAD drawings and 3D renderings are outsourced to third parties. Any change orders requested by the client will be billed additionally.

Permits

Permits with the city (Ayuntamiento) and/or INHA (the national historical preservation board) will be acquired as needed. While fees for this are small, we do require the services of third party expeditors to handle the layers of paperwork.

Costing

Once the design is completed and approved, we will begin costing the project. We include virtually everything that we possibly can in a cost analysis, in order to give a line-per-line price. The costing analysis is completed in Excel. The spreadsheet is periodically updated to include new items or revisions. The costing analysis is revised and refined until you agree to the costs outlined, at which point it becomes the official budget for the project.

Construction

Once all the preliminary plans have been firmly laid and are accepted by the client, we can confidently proceed with the construction.

Infrastructure

In most cases of renovation in Mérida’s historic center, electrical cabling and plumbing are antiquated and in need of updating. Often, electric cords are insufficient for today’s electrical needs, and are stapled to wall surfaces. The first step in most renovation projects, then, is to upgrade the electrical and plumbing systems. This may entail chipping away existing stucco and burying the utilities within the walls and/or floors, as well as increasing capacity by installing additional wells or cisterns, and 220v breaker boxes.

At the same time that this work is being completed, all old stucco that displays water damage is chipped away and removed, so that repairs in the stone substrate can be made and new stucco applied.

Finally, any structural weaknesses (including the roof) are examined and repaired as needed.

New construction

New rooms, closets, cabinets, countertops, bathrooms, etc. are completed after the basic infrastructure improvements have been completed. These are most typically constructed nowadays of either poured cement or cement block, then covered with a thin cement coating. This surface may then be painted, or stone or tile may be applied.

Lighting

Lighting throughout Mérida’s colonial Centro Histórico is generally provided by fluorescent strips. This is an economical solution, since electricity in Yucatán can be quite expensive. However, this is hardly the most aesthetic solution. New warm tone fluorescent bulbs that fit standard sockets are a welcome and cost-saving improvement. We usually recommend a 3-part strategy for lighting: uplighting, to provide general ambient light; spot lighting, to illuminate special features or artwork; and task lighting, such as lamps and undercounter fixtures.

Natural light is also important. Depending on your property, we may recommend skylights or sheltered expanses of windows to maximize daylight.

Painting

If you have chosen traditional painting to finish your rooms, you may also wish to consider the customary format in Yucatán: a wainscoting, or *guardapolvo* – a line established somewhere between 1 and 1.5 meters from the floor. The lower portion is typically painted in a darker shade than the wall above. The purpose of the *guardapolvo* (literally “dust guard”) is to hide smudges and fingerprints that are most likely to happen at that level or below. Further, since all walls are cement and/or limestone, resting on a bed of limestone, highly mineralized water can leach up from the ground and leave light patches or stains on the lowest portion of the wall. *Guardapolvos* help mask this event, and make repainting easier. Finally, you may also wish to consider decorative trim painting – a traditional style in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Finishes/built-ins

Finally, new floors, finishes and built-ins are installed. The process of installing *mosaico de pasta* floors is simpler than it may seem. The floors are laid one tile at a time by the masonry crew, then a separate crew enters with buffing machines that polish the floors to a soft glow.

Supervision

Site visits

We personally visit your site 1-2 times weekly during the first phases of construction. Toward the end of construction we are there daily to check up on details and job progress. The rest of the time your site is visited every day by your Project Expeditor who is in charge of managing the workers, inspecting materials, preparing orders and generally expediting the smooth flow of the project. The Project Expeditor may spend anywhere from 1-8 hours at your site per day, depending on need. He reports directly back to us several times a day.

Accounting

Through the course of our involvement in renovation and remodeling in Mérida, we have developed an excellent, transparent method of bookkeeping.

Fees

The Fees for Design services are 15% of the project total. Design services include all architectural and interior design, as well as custom cabinetry or furniture design requested by the client and subcontracted by Worldstudio International.

The Fees for Supervision are 15% of the project total. Supervision Fees include regular site visits, ordering and purchase of all appliances and furnishings, oversight of all custom labor, client meetings, accounting and other administrative work.

Deposits

We request a deposit of \$10,000 to \$20,000 US to initiate the project, depending on the scale of your project. As monies are spent, we send you an *informe* (see below) and alert you that another deposit should be made. Typically all subsequent deposits are in increments of \$10,000, but if work is going fast – especially toward the end of the project – larger increments may become necessary. Many of our clients have banks in the

States, in which case they simply mail checks periodically to our office in New York City. You may also wire the money to our New York bank. Of course you can also give us a check drawn on your Mexican bank account or wire money to our Mexican bank account. Naturally, late deposits can result in slowed down or impeded progress to your project.

Retainer

Of the first deposit, we hold \$5,000 to \$10,000 as a retainer, depending on the scale of the project. The purpose of the retainer is to cover all of our initial work, since we don’t really start “earning” until we begin purchasing materials and paying for laborers. It also serves as a “cash reserve”, allowing work to continue as you prepare to make another deposit. The retainer is deducted from the final balance at the end of the project.

Receipts

You will be given a copy of every receipt we collect for your project – down to the last nail! We can also arrange to collect *facturas* (official government receipts) for you if desired. (*Facturas* are only necessary if you established a corporation that officially owns your house.) We keep the originals in case we have any issues with returns. Then at the end of the project we turn over to you a binder containing all of the original receipts or *facturas*, as well as every *informe* (an accounting of expenses) for your permanent records.

Informes

Periodically, our accounting assistant records every expense for the week, as well as any deposits you have made. This document is known as an *informe* and maintains a running total of expenses and your account balance. Periodically, *informes* are reviewed by a licensed CPA, as is the last and final *informe*. You may also wish to hire your own CPA to review the accounting. *Informes* are typically sent when coffers are low and we are requesting another deposit. Your review of each periodic *informe* and your submission of another deposit are tacit acknowledgement that you have approved all expenses shown in the *informe* made on your behalf during the previous accounting period.

Delivery of the property

Also known as *la entrega* in Mexico, this represents the moment when your home is complete and we no longer continue to work on the project.

Prior to that moment, you will have two opportunities to do a “walk-through” of the home with the designers and/or contractor in order to find any outstanding details that need to be taken care of. These are added to a “punch-list” and one by one each item will be checked off as addressed. Once all items from the final checklist have been completed, your home will be “delivered” to you with one final walkthrough. This “ritual” marks the end of our involvement in and responsibility for your project. (As noted elsewhere, we guarantee certain materials and workmanship for a period of 30 days after the *entrega*.) You will be asked to sign a release document, stating that all work has been completed to your satisfaction. The delivery process takes anywhere from one week to one month, depending on the complexity of the project or if there are any major revisions requested.