

REMODPOD

THE 2026 HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE

What Your NC Kitchen or Bath Remodel **Actually** Costs

Real North Carolina numbers, the five budget-killers that blow up renovations, and the one planning move that keeps your project on budget — from a licensed NC architect with 20+ years of built projects.

Kitchens: The Honest Numbers

Ask three people what a kitchen remodel costs and you'll get three wildly different answers — because "remodel" can mean new cabinet pulls or moving walls. In North Carolina, the average kitchen remodel runs about **\$21,700**, but the real answer depends entirely on scope:

SCOPE	WHAT'S INCLUDED	TYPICAL NC COST
Refresh	Paint, hardware, lighting, new counters — layout and cabinets stay	\$8,000 – \$20,000
Full remodel, same layout	New cabinets, counters, appliances, flooring — plumbing stays put	\$20,000 – \$45,000
Layout change / high-end	Walls moved or opened, island added, plumbing & electrical relocated, premium finishes	\$45,000 – \$100,000+

Where the money actually goes: labor is 50–60% of the total. Cabinets are the single biggest line item (averaging ~\$7,800 in NC), followed by countertops (~\$3,900) and appliances (~\$4,900). Permits typically add around \$1,000.

The line that changes everything: keeping your sink, range, and refrigerator where they are. The moment plumbing, gas, or venting moves, you're paying for trades, permits, and wall surgery — often \$10,000+ before anything looks different.

Bathrooms: The Honest Numbers

Bathrooms are the most expensive rooms in the house per square foot — around **\$293/SF** in North Carolina — because everything in them touches plumbing, waterproofing, or tile work.

BATHROOM TYPE	NC AVERAGE	TYPICAL RANGE
Powder / half bath	\$4,000 – \$4,600	\$2,400 – \$6,300
Full / guest bath	\$11,700	\$7,300 – \$19,500
Primary bath	\$25,900	\$14,600 – \$37,000
Luxury / spa bath	\$39,000	\$24,400 – \$53,700

Where the money actually goes: the shower or tub area is the most expensive component — a custom tiled shower alone can reach \$7,800. Labor runs 40–60% of the budget. Relocating fixtures (moving the toilet or shower to a new wall) adds roughly \$1,800+ before finishes.

Rule of thumb: a "new everything, same locations" bath is a mid-range project. A "move the shower over there" bath is a premium project — even with identical finishes.

Thinking bigger? Room additions in 2026 run roughly **\$80–\$200/SF building out** and **\$300–\$500/SF building up**. A bathroom addition averages ~\$35,000; an in-law suite ~\$83,000; a full second story can reach \$175,000+. These projects live or die on design and permitting — budget for both from day one.

The 5 Budget-Killers

After 20+ years of renovation projects, we can tell you: blown budgets are almost never caused by material prices. They're caused by these five things — and every one of them is a *planning* problem.

1

Change orders mid-construction

A decision made in the field costs 2–3× what the same decision costs on paper. "While you're at it, can we also..." is the most expensive sentence in remodeling.

2

Moving plumbing, gas, or structure blind

Relocating fixtures without knowing what's inside the wall means discovering the vent stack, joists, or ductwork after demo — when rerouting is at its most expensive.

3

Vague "allowances" in contractor bids

When there's no detailed plan, contractors bid with allowances — placeholder numbers for cabinets, tile, and fixtures. Lowballed allowances make a bid look cheap and guarantee overruns later.

4

Finish creep

Upgrading one selection pulls the others with it. The \$12/SF tile makes the stock vanity look wrong... Set your finish level in the plan, once, and price the whole package.

5

Code & structural surprises found late

Egress, headroom, load paths, electrical capacity — a licensed design catches these before permits. Finding them during inspection means redoing finished work.

The ROI proof that planning wins: in the 2026 Cost vs. Value data, a modest, well-scoped kitchen refresh returns ~96% of its cost at resale, while a sprawling upscale remodel returns ~40%. Disciplined scope isn't just cheaper — it's a better investment.

Budget Like a Pro: 3 Steps

- ✓ **Set an all-in number — then hold back 15–20%.** Your contingency isn't pessimism; it's what lets you say yes calmly when the subfloor has other plans. If the contingency survives, it becomes your furniture budget.
- ✓ **Get real plans BEFORE you get bids.** This is the single highest-leverage move in remodeling. With dimensioned drawings and a written scope, three contractors bid on the same project — and you can compare apples to apples. Without plans, you're comparing three different guesses, and the "cheapest" bid is usually just the most incomplete one.
- ✓ **Bid it to three contractors.** With plans in hand, the bids come back tighter, the allowances get real, and you negotiate from strength. Plans typically pay for themselves in the spread between bids alone.

This is exactly what REMODPOD does — without the \$5,000 architect engagement.

Scan your room with your phone (takes ~10 minutes, free app). Upload it to us. A licensed North Carolina architect turns it into professional renovation plans you can hand straight to contractors — fixed fee, starting at \$499, delivered in days.

No sales calls. No site visits. No surprises behind the wall.

[See plans & pricing → remodpod.com](https://remodpod.com)

Cost figures are 2026 estimates compiled from Fixr North Carolina cost data, national Cost vs. Value 2026 reporting, and Angi 2026 addition data. Actual costs vary with site conditions, finishes, and market timing. This guide is general information, not a quote. © 2026 REMODPOD · GO Architectural Design · New Bern, NC · hello@remodpod.com