



**CITY OF CLEVELAND HEIGHTS  
BUILDING DEPARTMENT  
40 SEVERANCE CIRCLE  
216-291-4900      FAX: 216-291-4421**

## **SUGGESTIONS AND INFORMATION FOR CONTRACTING HOME REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS**

### **SELECTING A CONTRACTOR**

1. **GET RECOMMENDATIONS.** Ask friends, neighbors and associates for contractors they have used and found satisfactory. You may use the City's Contractors List (available from the Building Department 291-4900), but remember that the City does **not recommend** or **endorse** anyone.
2. **DO YOUR OWN CHECKING.** Ask contractors for the names of several people in the area for whom they have done work. Call them and ask questions about the quality of the work and the response of the contractor to requests for corrections. Go see the work if possible.
3. **MAKE SURE THE CONTRACTOR IS REGISTERED** in the City of Cleveland Heights if the work to be performed requires any permit(s). Check with The Building Department (291-4900) if there is any doubt or question about this. Registration protects you by ensuring that the contractor has liability insurance and has posted a bond guaranteeing completion of your project. It is illegal for a contractor to even negotiate a contract without being registered.

### **OBTAINING ESTIMATES**

1. It is wise to get more than one estimate, preferably at least three.
2. Always get written estimates. Ask for an itemized cost for each major portion of the job to compare estimates. A detailed, well-written estimate can be used as a contract when the time comes.
3. Confirm that the contractor provides workman's compensation and liability insurance to protect you in case of an accident.

### **THE CONTRACT**

1. It is essential to have a written contract because verbal agreements are sometimes misunderstood. A written contract gives you protection - it is your way of being sure that all items have been discussed and the work to be done is clearly described. Be sure a responsible official of the company signs the contract and that you receive a complete readable copy.

## 2. A CONTRACT SHOULD CONTAIN:

- The name and address of both parties.
- A clear and detailed statement of the work to be performed, the quality, brand or grade, and the weight, color and size of materials and the quality of workmanship where applicable (e.g., scraping to be included as part of painting).
- The cost of materials and labor to be used in performing the work.
- A statement of understanding that the contractor is responsible for any work subcontracted (this is for large jobs with several items to be done).
- Estimated **start** and **completion** dates.
- Person responsible for obtaining necessary permits. **The contractor should be responsible for obtaining permits.** Make sure they are “posted” before the contractor starts work. Contract should also say, “Work to be done to meet all Cleveland Heights’ codes”.
- Arrangements for cleanup, scrap and waste disposal.
- All oral promises made to you, including guarantees, clearly stated in writing. Including a phrase such as “all work to be done in a workmanlike manner,” or “to the standards of the trade,” is also a good idea.

## 3. **PAYMENT SCHEDULE - DO NOT AGREE TO AN INITIAL DEPOSIT.**

Payment should be made only for materials delivered to the site or for work satisfactorily completed. Progress payments are acceptable for major work, usually in the amount of one-third, and the final one-third when all work is completed and **inspected**. Beware of a contractor’s request for payment in full before the work is completed.

### WHEN THE WORK IS COMPLETED

1. Satisfy yourself that the work is fully and properly done. Call the City Building Department for inspections of all permit work, and try to be present to talk to the inspector. Check the work carefully yourself; do not take the contractor’s word that it is finished.
2. Sign an acceptance of work and make a final payment **only** when you are completely satisfied that the contract has been fulfilled.
3. If you had a large job done involving subcontractors, before you make a final payment be sure to have the subcontractors sign an affidavit that all labor and materials have been paid. You could potentially find a lien placed on your property by the subcontractor if payment(s) to them has not been made by the contractor.

**NOTES: \* DO NOT SIGN A CONTRACT UNTIL YOU HAVE FINANCING.**

**\* IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, BE HOME WHILE THE WORK IS BEING DONE. You can know a lot more about the quality of materials and work going into your home repair than if you come home to a completed job.**

**\* Contact the Building Department, Housing Preservation, or a non-profit organization such as the Home Repair Resource Center with questions and for further information. BE AWARE, however, they cannot act as your attorney and are best contacted BEFORE any contract is signed.**

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