



The Remodeling Customers Bill of Rights

The Remodeling Customer's Bill of Rights is a guide by which you can set your expectations for any home remodeling project. The standards set forth in the Bill of Rights can be used to measure the performance and the experience you receive from a home remodeling company, whether you hire us or someone else.

- 1 Cost Certainty** - The right to know, before I agree to any project, what the project cost will be upon contract signing, along with a true and accurate understanding of what my project will cost upon its completion.
- 2 The Right to Be Heard** - The right to know that my ideas have been heard and integrated into the process and the design. The right to know that at a project's completion, it will very closely resemble the renderings I was presented with when asked to sign a contract.
- 3 Time Certainty** - The right to have a realistic timeframe of a project's execution from the beginning of construction to the completion of the project - a realistic timeframe that does everything possible to minimize my family's inconvenience during the construction process.
- 4 A Project Built to Code** - The right to know a project will be designed and produced in compliance with city codes and regulations, and that an architect with extensive residential remodeling experience will do the planning for construction and execution.
- 5 The Right to Quality** - The right to quality products and craftsmanship.
- 6 Home Care, Respect, and Safety** - The right to know that my home will be treated with the utmost care and cleanliness during the construction process. The right to know, each day, who will be in my home and what time they will arrive/depart. The right to know my home, my family, and my pets will be safe and secure during the construction process.
- 7 Work Without Interruption** - The right to know that my remodeling project will be performed without unnecessary interruption from start to finish.
- 8 Open Communication** - The right to know I can express my thoughts and concerns freely and openly throughout the remodeling process.
- 9 Economic and Fair Problem Solving** - The right to effective, honest, and economically fair problem solving on behalf of the remodeling contractor.
- 10 Excellent Customer Service** - The right to know that the home remodeling company I choose will stand behind their work long after the remodeling project is completed, and provide excellent customer service.

1

The right to know, before I agree to any project, what the project cost will be upon contract signing, along with a true and accurate understanding of what my project will cost upon its completion.

Project Cost... what a difficult concept for the remodeling industry to grasp. Are we talking about a budget? Are we talking about the actual contract, agreed upon and signed by the customer and the remodeling contractor? Or are we talking about the total cost when the final dollar is paid when the project is 100% complete?

From a consumer's perspective, it is the final number that matters; in fact, it is the only number that matters. Yet, it is highly unusual for the remodeling industry to give a potential customer a realistic view of final project cost before dollars start to flow, before contracts are presented and before binding documents are signed.

There are two terms many consumers will learn to hate: allowances and change orders. Both are techniques used that drive up project cost. So how did these techniques, which seem so undesirable for the consumer, become commonplace in the remodeling industry?

First and foremost, most remodeling companies are unwilling to spend the time and effort to develop comprehensive project scopes without being paid for their services. Of course there are some projects where, to some degree, this makes sense. But, for the most part, the consumer has every right to have a project clearly defined with as many details as possible. There is no need for the use of allowances, which is a method used to speed up the process by leaving some decisions to be made further along in the process.

For example, you may wish to do a major remodel in a kitchen and three bathrooms. A line item for cabinetry could be put in the contract in the amount of \$10,000. This is simply a guess and rarely is that guess ever on target. This is where budgets can get out of control. You may end up choosing a cabinet style and design that costs \$15,000 but this decision will not be determined until after you have no ability to extract yourself from having to pay the increase cost. By making decisions like these at the beginning of the process and with proper planning, many cost increases can be discussed before the consumer is locked in.

In other cases, the consumer will supply certain items as part of the project. These could include appliances, plumbing fixtures, tile, etc. If a clear, realistic budget is not established for these items, and if they are not explicitly documented as part of the overall project cost, the consumer may again face a final cost that is significantly higher than what was originally projected.

Another very common way for cost to escalate during the course of the project is by use of a change order during construction. The change order process is a valuable tool when the customer wishes to change the scope of work after a contract is signed. But the use of a change order on behalf of the contractor should be rare. Certainly with any type of construction, the unknown can occur and in those cases, a reasonable change order should be executed fairly.



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Change orders occur too often in the remodeling industry because of a lack of analysis on the front side and an unwillingness to truly detail the entire scope of work, causing a series of expensive and ongoing change orders. Project costs can quickly escalate and the consumer is then stuck in the all-too-common home remodeling nightmare.

Just think of the ramifications of multiple change orders. You originally agree to do a remodeling project that matches your budget of \$50,000. You sign a contract and the process begins. Eight months and countless headaches later, your final project cost reached \$80,000. How would that affect you? Would you need to invade retirement savings, college funds, or take out additional loans? Let's face it, some project cost increase is possible, but more than a few percent is just not necessary.

Every consumer has the right to COST CERTAINTY. Just be careful, as that concept is all too elusive in the remodeling industry.

2

The right to know that my ideas have been heard and integrated into the process and the design. The right to know that at a project's completion, it will very closely resemble the renderings I was presented with when asked to sign a contract.

Every industry expert states that the #1 factor in making a decision about a remodeling project is risk. What greater risk could there be than to go into a project with high hopes and dreams, absorb never ending cost increases, never ending timelines, and when all is said and done, the project outcome is not what you expected.

When it comes to home remodeling, consumers should understand it is a process that requires true partnership wherein they must take an active role. It is highly unusual that a family wakes up one morning, decides to remodel their home and wonders who to call. That just isn't how things work. Often times, a family will discuss ideas about changing their home for months or even years. They will look through magazines, watch HGTV, go to home shows, visit different showrooms, and even walk through new home models. People will scan photo after photo looking for ideas and spend countless hours on the internet. At some point during this very exciting and creative process, the consumer will establish a concept of budget and time, and then start to call remodeling companies to determine who they will choose to execute their project.

Once this happens, a whole new set of voices enter the picture - those of the sales/design team from the remodeling companies. Too often at this point, the consumers lose their voice. They will express their initial thoughts and ideas, but will feel less certain when industry professionals enter the process.

It is imperative to remember that this remodeling project is your dream, this is your home, and your home is more than a home - it is a way of life. Your input is not only critical, it is mandatory. You must find the right partner for this project. You must find a true "Trusted Advisor."

As a consumer, you have the absolute right to see a visual representation of the final product. This is certainly available with the high level of technology offered in the remodeling industry today. At minimum, color renderings should be presented and a 3D tour of your new home is often possible. When it comes to remodeling, most consumers just can't "see" the finished product as well as experienced designers and space planners. Therefore, visualization is a critical, if not mandatory, part of the process leading up to a remodeling project.

Remember, this is your dream... one you probably have waited a long time to make come true. The risk of failure must be addressed up front, and the nightmare must be avoided at all costs.

3

The right to have a realistic timeframe of a project's execution from the beginning of construction to the completion of the project - a realistic timeframe that will minimize my family's inconvenience during the construction process.

If cost certainty is the #1 right of any potential remodeling customer, time certainty would follow closely behind. Remodeling a home is by its very nature a large inconvenience to a homeowner. Every day life is disrupted and normal living patterns completely changed. Projects that should take 6 to 8 weeks can often take 6 to 8 months. Much of this depends significantly on the method of execution by the remodeling company. It has less to do with the desire to do the right thing than the business model run by most remodeling companies.

A typical business model in the remodeling industry today is one called "cost control". With the seasonal nature of many remodeling businesses along with the ups and downs of a difficult economy, the best survival method is to keep fixed overhead down to an absolute minimum. Most companies can achieve this by having a sales person/designer work on commission.

Once a project is sold, that sales person will assist a company-employed project manager, who will then work with a series of subcontractors to execute the project. It is not uncommon for subcontractors to work for a wide range of general contractors in order to keep their crews busy. Timeframes on all of these projects can become elusive as the subcontractors jump from job to job, often trying to execute three or four projects at the same time. If you consider that the actual scope of work is rarely complete and definitive, you can see how the home remodeling nightmare will quickly become reality.

A common example would be a project where demolition starts on time, and rough framing begins. Changes occur and time becomes skewed because workmen do not stay on one job until its scope is complete. When framing is finally complete, the electricians and plumbers who were next in line are already off on another job. Word gets back to the project manager that they cannot arrive for at least another week, and the snowball starts rolling downhill. The problem with the timeframe for this project's execution is not really how long it takes to do the work; it is the amount of time that no work is being done at all. The impact on a family that expects work to take 4 to 6 weeks and has a mess of a house or an unusable kitchen and/or bathroom months later goes way beyond inconvenience.

A reference letter once provided at a job interview for a remodeling designer certainly proves the point. The customer spent two paragraphs praising the work of the sales person and how supportive he was throughout the entire project. The next several paragraphs detailed a litany of complaints about the subcontractors and the execution of the project, stating that during a project that took over 3 ½ months, workmen were only on the job site 26 days. The complaints continued until the very end, wherein the customer must have remembered that this was a referral letter for the sales person. So, the customer ended up providing a referral for the company despite the nightmare they went through. What a sad commentary on the remodeling profession.

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It is the absolute right of the remodeling customer to have some agreement of time certainty before a project is to begin. If a scope of work is clearly detailed and well planned, a comprehensive timeline can be written and executed. This cannot be used as a contract, but as a plan to work with and follow through. Missing a 6-week projected timeline by a few days or even a week is not a nightmare. Missing it by several months certainly is.

With a project manager, company-employed and trained craftsmen, and the use of carefully selected trade partners, a day-by-day plan can be executed and followed. If the work is set for demolition day 1 and 2, rough-in electric and plumbing day 3, etc. it is the customer's right to expect that to happen. Agreements with the varying parties involved in execution should be made and signed before a project even starts. It is the right of the customer to expect work to be started on time, and workmen stay within that scope of work until completed. Jumping from job to job is absolutely unacceptable.

The home remodeling process includes major construction and issues may arise, but without a detailed plan and the personnel to execute that plan, time will become the next phase in the remodeling nightmare that is all too common. TIME CERTAINTY is the absolute right of every remodeling customer.

4

The right to know a project will be designed and produced in compliance with city codes and regulations, and that an architect with extensive residential remodeling experience will do the planning for construction and execution.

The transition from a project “sold” to a project “ready for execution” is an incredibly significant step. Unfortunately, most business models used by home remodeling companies give this step minimal attention. The sales/design person is continually involved in working on the details that were never defined during the sales process. The project manager and the team of subcontractors are ready to execute that which is sold. The amount of actual planning and preparation is minimal, usually tied to the permitting process if one is actually procured. The lack of real, detailed planning before construction actually begins is the first step that triggers the remodeling nightmare to follow.

It is imperative that during the planning process there is confirmation that exactly what was designed and sold can actually be executed. A single measurement of a wall, off two or three inches, can completely disrupt the design itself. If caught too late, time falls apart, costs fall apart, finger pointing becomes the norm, and the nightmare is in full swing.

The attention to detail in planning a remodel cannot be left to just anyone. If during the sales process you chose and found your “Trusted Advisor,” that relationship must be handed off to the person responsible to plan and prepare your project. This new trusted advisor should be one with an architectural background and extensive experience in residential remodeling. This is the person who will be responsible for confirming what was sold can be executed. This is the person who will be responsible for ensuring everything will be done in compliance with city codes and regulations. This is the person who will be responsible for planning and preparing every detail, procuring all products needed to execute your project.

Most importantly this is the person who will write your detailed timeline, putting together the construction plan and giving you the best chance for real TIME CERTAINTY. This is not a role that should be taken lightly nor practiced by someone with minimal experience. It should not be done by the person who sold the project nor should it be done by the person responsible to execute the project. A completely different set of eyes and skills is crucial to have the checks and balances in place and ensure that what is sold is planned properly, and what is planned is executed properly. Without an efficient, highly skilled team, the only certainty we can expect is the certainty of a project nightmare.

The right to quality products and craftsmanship.

The right to quality does not have to be purchased. Too often we are led to believe that quality is an economic decision one must make when considering a remodel project. While it is clear that different levels of quality have different price points, the remodeling customer should expect quality products and quality craftsmanship during the course of their remodel.

Too often the customer is led to believe that “you get what you pay for” and this serves as an excuse for the issues being presented. This is not necessary. The difference between unacceptable and acceptable quality is typically not the choice one needs to make. A cabinet so poorly constructed that it will not stand up to daily use should not even be in the considered set. Choosing between different cabinet choices of reasonable quality is not as economically challenging as one is led to believe. Choosing between different levels of quality has much more to do with preference and style.

It is when the industry chooses to mask very poor quality products as acceptable that the remodeling nightmare can present itself. The remodeling customer has a right to know what products they are being presented with, what level of quality they can expect, and at what price point they are available. It is one of the reasons why it should be mandatory for a detailed scope of work, with choices clearly defined and presented before a contract is signed and the execution process begins.

The right to quality craftsmanship is equally as important. Too often, the remodeling company has a built-in conflict of interest with the customer themselves. Many companies bid based on a poorly defined scope of work utilizing a square footage basis. Bidding will typically be aggressive with the hopes of building up margins through the never ending change order process. Worse than that is the reality that the profit margin for the remodeler becomes a factor of the difference between the price bid for the sale of the project and how inexpensively the company can execute the project. That feels very much like a conflict of interest.

The lack of quality workmanship can affect a project in any numbers of ways. The end result may not be what the customer envisioned. Time can become an absolute nightmare when quality issues finally present themselves. Let's use framing as an example. A general contractor hires the cheapest framer he can find, maybe even one he has worked with before. This framer is used to working new construction and speed is more important than quality, especially when juggling multiple jobs. The framer changes walls in a home, built to the remodeling plan. The problem is the walls are not exactly to spec, not exactly square and straight. The electricians come in as does the plumber. Insulation is added and drywall is installed to close up the space. Once the finish work begins, cabinetry does not fit because the wall was not built correctly. Tile will not lay straight because the wall is not built correctly. Work stops, fingers are pointed, dollars become a focus, things need to be torn apart and in some cases the project must be restarted at the beginning. The weeks turn into months. The economic and other disruptions to the family become an absolute nightmare. If the remodeling customer dealing with this type of execution thinks that he can avoid the economic reality of this, it is probably unlikely.



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The remodeling customer should choose a company whose pricing model has built-in levels of quality. The cost for electrical work should only be based on a chosen company's ability to do the work with standards of quality that meet or exceed any defined code, compliance, and workmanship standard. This should be the case with every item and every trade working on a project. Quality workmanship should not be a choice for the remodeling customer. It is a right and one that should not be forfeited easily.

6

The right to know that my home will be treated with the utmost care and cleanliness during the construction process. The right to know, each day, who will be in my home and what time they will arrive/depart. The right to know my home, my family, and my pets will be safe and secure during the construction process.

One real problem presented to potential remodeling customers is that they often talk to new construction builders who are looking to offset slow times with remodeling work. That in itself is terribly risky as the process could not be more different. Why? Because a thing like cleanliness is not an issue on a new construction site. Safety and security, at least for much of the project, is not an issue on a new construction site. Home remodeling is a completely separate type of business and should only be done by companies whose area of expertise is in residential remodeling. At the very beginning of a remodeling project the initial focus is on product and price. The two things customers remember most at the end of a remodel project are timeliness and cleanliness.

Most often the remodeling customer is living in the home during the course of the remodel. This naturally creates a level of stress and discomfort for the family. Some dirt and dust is probably to be expected, but it is the absolute right of the remodeling customer to use a company that will do everything in its power to keep the home as clean as possible during the course of construction.

Home protection is also critical. Protecting existing floors, countertops, bathtubs, etc. are part of what a remodeling customer should expect. Procedures should be in place to protect not only against the known but the unknown. Cleanliness is not a service that adjusts the budget. It is the absolute duty of the people you choose to work in your home.

Safety is also the absolute right of the remodeling customer. It is typically not possible or desirable to be home every minute while people are working in your house. Discussions should be had during the planning process, and again with your project manager about how you want your home secured, how you want your pets secured, etc. It is imperative that all factors affecting your home and your family are discussed and understood. This is a large part of the partnership you should come to expect.

Communication should be a major factor during construction. All aspects of the project do not start at exactly the same time each day. Different trades have different requirements. Drying times could affect the process for that particular day. It is the absolute right of the remodeling customer to know who is scheduled to be in your home that day, what time they are expected to arrive, and about how long they are projected to be there. This should be a daily discussion with your project manager, aka the "Trusted Advisor," and your project foreman.

You should never underestimate the emotional stress of a remodel. Adding concerns about cleanliness, safety, security, time, and communication is simply unacceptable. It is the remodeling customer's right to feel safe and secure in his home at all times.

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The right to know that my remodeling project will be performed without unnecessary interruption from start to finish.

So much of what has been discussed revolves around the right to have a project start at an agreed upon time and completed on schedule. The remodeling nightmare stems from constant project interruptions that can occur because of all the reasons discussed above. It is the work not being done that adds so much of the frustration to the process. Workers not showing up, delays for reasons that you cannot understand, or reasons that have not been adequately explained all add to the nightmare.

The inconvenience to the customer is real, the disruption to the family is real, and the stress is real. What puts most people over the edge, in many cases, are the things that seem to be uncalled for. It is the expectation of work to be done and no one shows up. It is the expectation of quality from one phase to the next and finding out that corners were cut and after several steps forward, one must now take several steps back.

Poorly defined scopes of work, poor planning and preparation, poor quality and workmanship, poor communication, poor scheduling, and the juggling of multiple jobs all play a role in the very real nightmare.

The remodeling customer has the right to a project that will be performed from start to finish without unnecessary interruption. Some things may not be perfect, and others may not go exactly as planned, but minor interruptions can be tolerated. It is the transition from days to weeks, and weeks to months, and in some cases months to years that make the nightmare become reality.

The following is an extreme case, but a true story. A potential customer had worked with an architect in planning a complete remodel for a new home the customer had purchased. At one point, this customer had spent over \$80,000 with the architect and still only had a rough set of plans. We worked through a few months of real discovery work and scope preparation, presented a proposal for \$1,000,000 and estimated the work to take about 4 months. After this initial planning, we determined the architect was not compatible with our vision and declined to work with him further. The customer, having already invested \$80,000, decided to stay with the architect. 3 ½ years later, the architect has long been fired, two general contractors went bankrupt during construction, the project budget went over \$3,000,000 and the project was still incomplete.

The lesson to be learned here is that this customer gave up every right he had. Time certainly was lost, cost certainty was lost and because of the route chosen, the customer endured a project with years of delay. The right to have work continue to completion with minimal interruption was given up from the very beginning. This customer never had a chance for a great home remodeling experience.

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The right to know I can express my thoughts and concerns freely and openly throughout the remodeling process.

The remodeling process can be very intimidating. As discussed earlier, many customers lose their voice early in the process. As difficult as it feels at times to express their vision during the design process, most customers feel it is even more difficult to express concerns during construction. There are many reasons for this.

Probably the most common is the feeling that there is no longer a “Trusted Advisor.” The feeling of having a trusted advisor by one’s side was present during the sales / design process, but that feeling can quickly dissipate once construction begins. Most customers don’t understand the construction process and don’t feel qualified to express their opinions. Often a customer will just make a series of notes addressing concerns, but keep it to themselves, possibly waiting until the end to address them. Of course, this only compounds the problem as things addressed in a timely manner are the easiest to reconcile and fix.

Much of this issue continues to center on the relationship between the customer and the remodeling company chosen to execute the work. The concept of Trusted Advisor is one that should be taken seriously because it affects the comfort level of each party during the process.

Communication is always productive and respectful when it feels safe. Regardless of the level of knowledge of the construction field, every question and every concern should be voiced and answered. It certainly works best when all communication is addressed with the project manager - your Trusted Advisor. Too often people will voice concerns to someone they trust when the person that can have the most impact is unaware of the problem. That is why the relationship with the Project Manager is so critical. Constant communication impacts the ability and desire to speak freely and openly.

9

The right to effective, honest, and economically fair problem solving on behalf of the remodeling contractor.

It is without question that home remodeling is not painless and the construction process is not perfect. If every customer could be guaranteed the perfect remodel, the process of choosing the right partner to execute the project would be easy. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Problems occur and must be solved. Every consumer deserves the right to effective and fair problem solving. This does not mean looking at a problem as an economic opportunity to increase project cost and profit margins. It also does not mean having an excuse for endless delays by pointing the finger at others, including the customer.

Effective problem solving requires a team approach. It starts with real and open communication that allows for problems to be addressed at their discovery, not at a stage where the fix is devastating from both a time and cost standpoint. It continues with a set of ethics that mandates all parties accept responsibility. If a contractor overlooked something that should have been clear up front, the problem should be viewed as theirs to fix.

It also is critical to have a team that views quick and effective problem solving as at the core of the vision of time certainty, and the goal of minimal inconvenience to the customer. Having company-employed personnel who understand the benefits of happy customers is extremely beneficial in the problem solving process. The business model of a project manager with a series of subcontractors just, by its own nature, leads to finger pointing and rejection of responsibility. Time creep and cost creep are the logical results.

Remodeling is a difficult undertaking and problems will occur. It is how they are handled that will determine whether the remodel will be viewed as a good experience or not.

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The right to know that the home remodeling company I choose will stand behind their work long after the remodeling project is completed by providing excellent customer service.

There are 2 factors that will greatly impact your right for excellent customer service, before, during and after your remodel. The first, as discussed above, is the business model run by the company executing your project. If it is a company focusing on low overhead, with a sales/designer and a project manager using a parade of subcontractors, the likelihood of getting fast and efficient customer service both during and after the project becomes much less likely.

Subcontractors come and go, moving from one general contractor to the next; always looking for the most work and the best price for their work. This lack of consistency creates an adversarial relationship with the general contractor and with the customer whose home they worked in. If a sub-contractors relationship with the general contractor is not strong and long lasting, the motivation to correct and service workmanship is almost non-existent. It is easier to point the finger at someone else than go back and do the right thing. The remodeling industry does not have a stellar record for achieving high rates of repeat customers looking for additional work, nor does it enjoy referred customers from happy customers.

Therefore, it comes down to a company's vision. The benefits of having an incredibly satisfied customer base cannot be underestimated. When an entire team buys into the concept of true customer satisfaction, providing excellent customer service becomes a mandate. Having in-house personnel to service customers and having carefully selected trade partners who buy into the vision of true customer satisfaction, makes the quality guarantee the only logical choice.

It is the remodeling customer's right to have customer service available before, during and long after a home remodeling project is complete. Every remodeling company you talk to will tell you this is the case. Dig deeper. Look into rates of previous customers and referral work. Look at the longevity of employees and trade partners. Look at reference letters and look for the kind of raving fans that you hope to be at the completion of your remodel. It is a company's belief system that a customer must ultimately choose.

It is your right - actually your responsibility - to do your homework and understand the company with whom you are choosing for a remodeling partner.

Everyone at Republic West Remodeling takes this Bill of Rights very seriously and it is extremely personal to us. Our company's philosophy is based on these ideas and continues to provide the foundation on which we operate. We want you to know that you have options and the absolute right to a superior remodeling experience. Republic West Remodeling is committed to uphold your rights as a consumer and making that experience a reality for you.

Thanks for taking the time to review the Remodeling Customer's Bill of Rights. We look forward to the opportunity to earn your business.

Sincerely,

Jim Weisman
President and Owner
Republic West Remodeling LLC

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At Republic West Remodeling, we are proud of the more than 15,000 home remodeling projects that have added sophistication and style to our clients' homes, as well as countless kitchen and bath remodels, outdoor living spaces and room additions.

Let Republic West Remodeling transform your house into your dream home through an exclusive home remodeling process that focuses on The Dream Assurance Plan.

What is The Dream Assurance Plan?

The Dream Assurance Plan is built on a vision – an idea. The team of professionals at Republic West Remodeling has developed, through their years of experience and a passion for excellence, an exclusive home remodeling process that strives to deliver a pleasant experience for their customers. Many homeowners have come to expect the nightmare remodeling project that is so prevalent in today's market place. We would like to change that.

With Republic West Remodeling, you can be assured that your home remodeling project will be a *dream come true* throughout the entire process – from creative design to detailed planning to execution and construction.

We do what we say we will, for the price and on the timeline you expect.

Republic West Remodeling specializes in:

- Home Remodeling
- Kitchen Remodeling
- Bathroom Remodeling
- Room Additions
- Outdoor Living Spaces

Contact Republic West Remodeling for the highest quality luxury home remodeling services.

Call 480-478-8700 for your free consultation or visit our website at <http://www.RepublicWestRemodeling.com> today.

Republic West proudly serves all residents in the East & West Valley, the Phoenix Metro area, Scottsdale and Paradise Valley