



RENOVATE OR DETONATE

threebirds
RENOVATIONS

SHOULD YOU RENOVATE OR DETONATE?

The bad news is we can't answer that question for you (sorry), but the good news is YOU CAN! And we're going to hold your hand on that journey. Let's start by running through the following questions. Keep in mind this isn't the time for wishful thinking. You need to be brutally honest with yourself (and us) and keep an open mind as to what the outcome may be.

AM I EVEN ALLOWED TO KNOCK DOWN MY HOME?

Great question! I mean, are you going to be arrested if you take a wrecking ball to the joint? Sounds a bit dramatic, I know, and I have exaggerated slightly to get the blood flowing, but answering this is a matter of top priority. Call your local council and ask if there are any regulations or planning restrictions that may prevent you from demolishing your home. For example, if your home is heritage listed, knocking it down might be illegal and your Knock-down Rebuild (KDR) journey could be over before it's begun. And even if you are allowed to knock it down, there may be restrictions on the type of house you can build in its place — you might find your new build has to be a single storey. #surprise!

Tip: MOST LOCAL COUNCILS HAVE A PROPERTY PORTAL WHERE YOU CAN ENTER YOUR ADDRESS AND SEE A LOT OF THE INFORMATION YOU NEED, SUCH AS THE ZONING AND SOME OF THE RESTRICTIONS, IF ANY.

SHOULD I EVEN CONSIDER A KDR?

The answer to this really depends on how big your reno dreams are. If you can achieve the look on your vision board with just a cosmetic remodel (i.e. fresh paint, new fixtures and fittings, and limited structural work), then demolishing your home may be overdoing things a little. However, if you're thinking of making major structural changes, like gutting the inside, adding a second-storey or a major extension, then a KDR is definitely worth considering. You should also invite a builder, architect or structural engineer to view your house, and your #homegoals and share their thoughts on whether or not you can achieve your vision via a renovation or rebuild.

Tip: IF YOU'VE GOT LESS THAN \$350K TO SPEND, YOU SHOULD PROBABLY RULE OUT A KDR.



CAN I MAKE BETTER USE OF MY BLOCK?

The answer is probably yes. Many older homes were built smack-bang in the middle of their blocks with the same sized yards at the front and the back. This just doesn't suit modern living, where the rear of the home has become a mecca for family interaction and indoor/outdoor living. Ideally, many of us would like a pool, a deck, BBQ area and patch of grass for backyard cricket. Those things are more important than having a large and decorative front garden – who's hosting a party out there? The benefit of a rebuild is the ability to start from scratch and make the block work for you.



Watch Out! Depending on your streetscape, there may be restrictions about how far forward on your block you can bring your house. Often, you're not allowed to push beyond where your neighbours' houses sit.

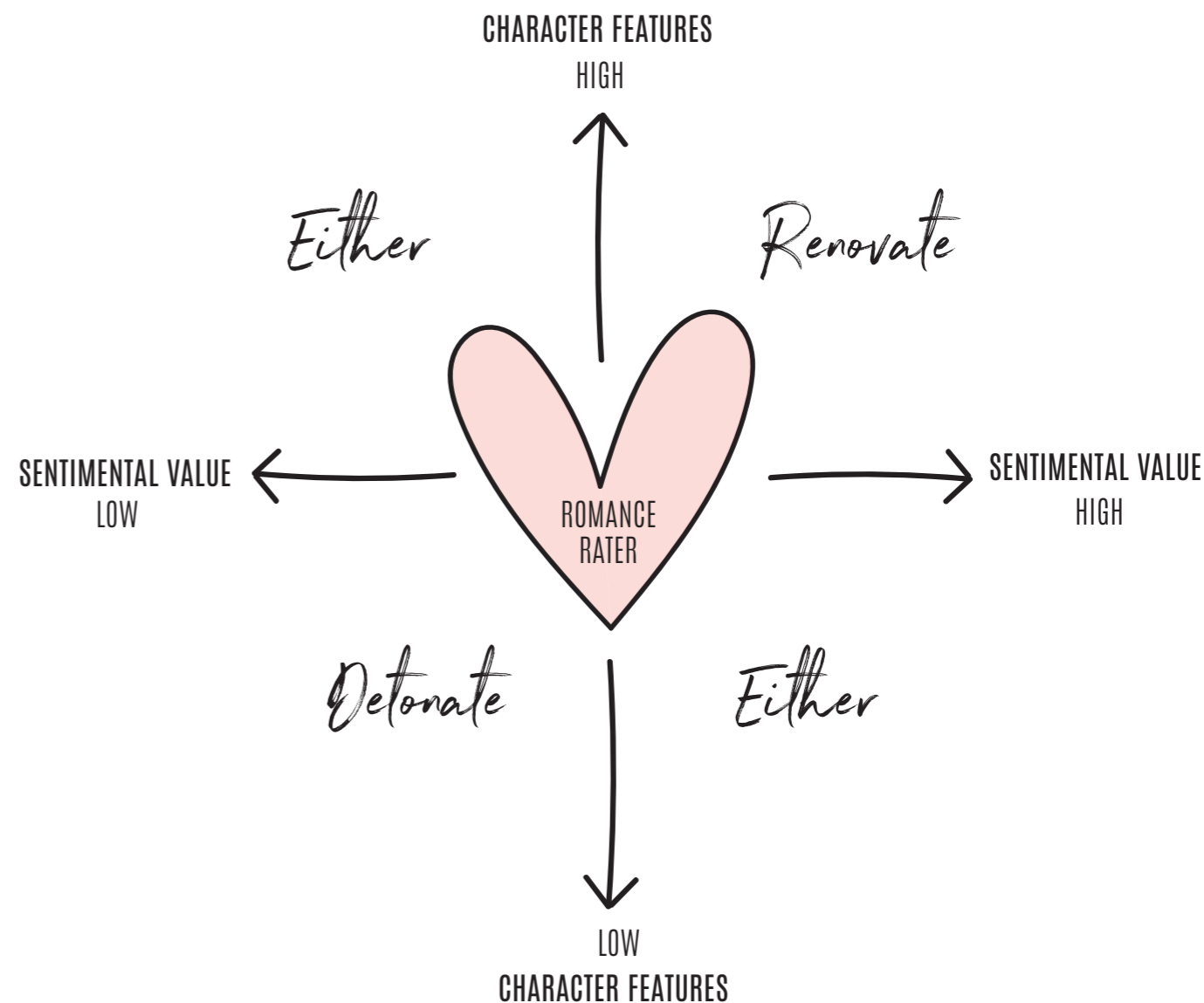
HOW'S THE ROMANCE RATING IN MY HOME?

How do you feel about your current home? How much do you love it? Answer these two questions and then plot your position on the 'Romance Rater' on the next page.

- 1. Does your home have any character features that you love?** E.g. high and/or decorative ceilings, period details, sash windows, wainscoting, hardwood floors, original fireplaces, wrap-around verandah, wrought iron, original sandstone etc. You can also include here 'quality' features, like double brick.
- 2. How much sentimental value does your home have?** Was it your parents' home? Did you raise your kids in it? In general, how positive are your feelings towards the home?



Based on your answers, work out which quadrant you fall into.



Watch Out! A home that rates high on character and sentimental value (top right quadrant) could break the bank. These homes can sometimes be more costly to renovate due to old wiring, plumbing, foundation issues, etc. You need to consider all the other factors in this topic before making a final decision. Vote with your head, not JUST your heart.



HOW'S MY (HOME'S) HEALTH?



This is where you get honest about the condition your house is in. If it's ill – riddled with pain (termites), arthritis (mould) and a weak immune system (poor foundations and old services) – you might be better off putting it out of its misery and knocking it down rather than spending thousands on a renovation that can't cure those underlying issues.

PS Don't assume that termites is a death warrant for your home reno. We've renovated loads of homes with termites, you just need to ensure the termite-affected areas are within the 'scope of work' for your reno so that it is dealt with. Make sure steps are also taken to prevent future termite problems. All of this comes at a cost so you'll need this line in your budget if you choose to reno.



HOW IMPORTANT IS ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY TO ME?

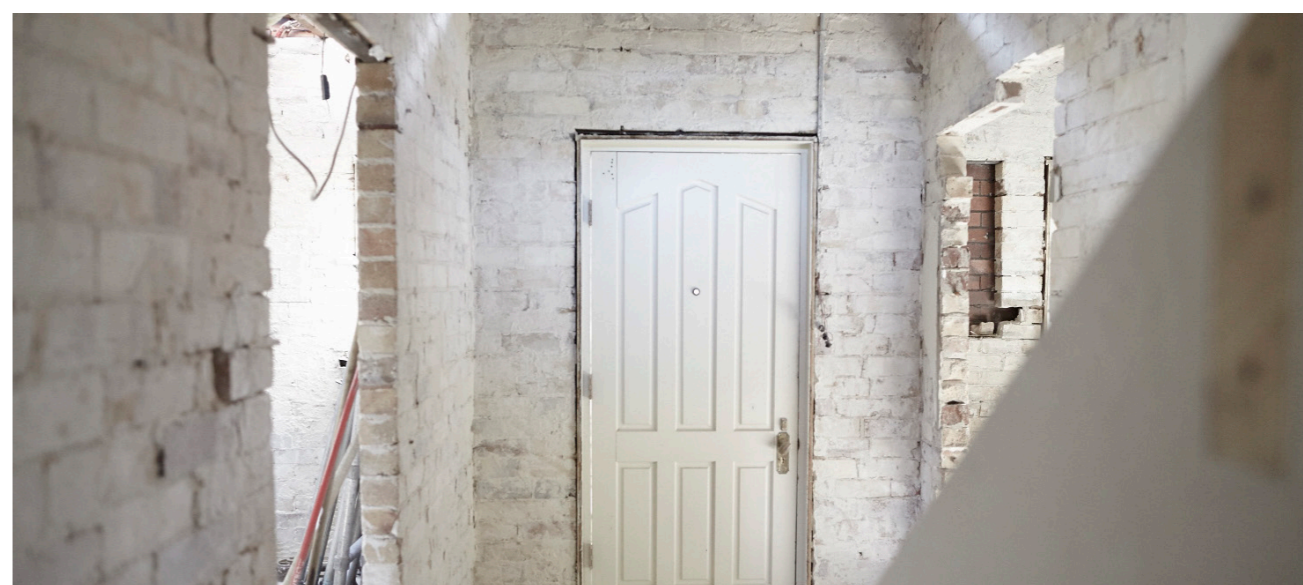
Many older homes built around the war years are solid and have passed the test of time, but they didn't have the luxury of the technology we have today. If they are insulated at all, it's often with newspaper! #nojoke And those beautiful timber windows are very likely to have nice, big gaps in them that allow the cold air in and the hot air out.

Today, building regulations encompass things like energy star ratings, thermal efficiency, solar aspects and the like – all of these contribute to a more comfortable home, one that is cheaper to heat and cool and, of course, more energy efficient. A new home also has more flexibility in design. For example, in a newly designed home you can place windows to suit the orientation of the site and make the most of the sunshine. Generally speaking, new homes are also easier to maintain and less susceptible to termites. (That's a lot of pros!)



CAN I HANDLE THE HASSLE OF A RENO?

Renovating can be a complex, messy beast. Especially if you're planning to live through it. If you choose to stay in the house, you're gonna have to be ready to [reno] rumble. This means being prepared for noise, dust and cooking in the garage. Just ask Bonnie how difficult it can be to escape the tornado of tradie-questions that come thick and fast at 7 am each morning. She was often spotted on site at lunch time still in her pyjamas and ugg boots ... sans bra or brushed teeth! This chaos can be avoided if you move out during your reno, but even still, there are a lot of moving parts to managing a reno and it can end up being more overwhelming than a KDR. With a KDR, you'll still have to put in some serious hard yards up front to make all your design choices, but once the build commences you'll be shielded from the daily grind of the worksite.



Tip: DON'T ASSUME A KDR IS A MASSIVE SHORTCUT COMPARED WITH A RENO. IT STILL REQUIRES TIME TO DO THINGS PROPERLY. WE SUGGEST YOU ASSUME TWO YEARS FOR THE WHOLE SHEBANG: ONE YEAR TO PLAN + ONE YEAR TO BUILD.



WHAT DOES MY REAL ESTATE AGENT RECKON?

Whether you're renovating or building new, it's ALWAYS a good idea to know what's going on in the local property market, and the good news is you can trim hours off your own research time by making a beeline for the local real estate agent. Invite them over to look at your house and ask their opinion on whether you should reno or rebuild – specifically if they have any concerns regarding the resale value and/or risk of overcapitalisation of either option. Ask them which styles of homes are increasing in value or selling well in your area. Would your home need to be architecturally designed, or would a project home work? If a project home would do the trick, which companies have they seen building houses that attract buyers? They should be able to provide you with some comparable examples of homes that have sold nearby.

Watch Out!



If you live in a high-income area, your agent will probably tell you architect-designed homes are the way to go. However, we have seen plenty of project homes going into some of the most expensive areas over the past five years, and they can look ah-mazing!

PS Don't feel uncomfortable about asking a real estate agent for some free advice. They're always looking to build relationships with locals in the hope that you'll call them first if/when it comes time to sell your house.

THE BIG BANG THEORY (AKA WHERE WILL I GET BIGGEST BANG FOR MY BUCK?)



When deciding between a renovation or rebuild, the most important consideration is arguably simple return on investment (ROI). So which renovation option will give you the biggest bang for your buck? Industry research shows that the cost-per-square-metre of a new build is cheaper than the cost-per-square-metre of a reno. This is because the materials and labour required to seamlessly join a new house to an old one can be more expensive. Reno costs can also be harder to predict, so there's more room for nasty surprises.

That's the theory anyway, but trust us when we say that this is not enough information for you to base your decision on. There are hidden costs with both options, and the only way you can properly evaluate the ROI on renovating vs. rebuilding is to roll up your sleeves and do some research work upfront. You'll need to get a complete cost estimate for both options. But don't stress, we'll show you how to do that.



IF YOU ENJOYED THIS LITTLE CANAPE OF RENO GOODNESS YOU WILL LOVE OUR ONLINE RENO SCHOOL.

[The Reno School](#) is an online course created by us to teach you everything we know about how to design, renovate, or build your dream home. We will help you create a vision for your project, understand who you need to work with, how to handle tradies, and how to manage a budget. We'll show you where to spend versus where to save and how to avoid basic mistakes that can chew up your time, money, and happy reno vibes. Whether you're renovating, doing a new build or simply styling a space, you need vision and know-how to get what you want. The Reno School can fast-track your knowledge, build your confidence and get you ready to reno!

Join the thousands of students from all over the world who have already completed the course.

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