



# Tips on Selecting a Contractor

By Paul Kurilla

[paulk@landings.org](mailto:paulk@landings.org)

Public Works/Community Development  
Director

Selecting a contractor is an important decision whether you need a simple repair or more complicated renovation. The Landings Association is here to help and offers the following nine tips:

1. **Do your homework** - There are plenty of sites to research potential contractors. Institutions such as the licensing board (online) can alert you if a contractor has ever had any complaints or disciplinary actions taken against them. The Landings Association keeps a file of contractors that have done previous work on the island that includes other residents' comments. Your neighbors and friends can be excellent sources for determining the best contractor for you. Doing your homework before the work starts oftentimes can help to make the job more successful.
2. **Meet with multiple contractors** - Meet with more than one contractor at your home. Make sure you give them all the same information, and ask questions such as how long have you been in business? Do you have a license to work in Georgia? Do you have a physical business office? Will you guarantee the work performed?

3. **Visit Job Sites** - If your project is large in scope, it often helps to visit other current job sites the contractors may be involved with. By surprising the contractor at another site, you can get a good look at their working conditions and safety practices.
4. **Bid the Project** - Make sure each contractor lists what materials, labor, and other costs will be undertaken during this project. The bid should have a detailed scope of work, to make sure both parties are on the same page. A general rule of thumb is to see a 15-20% overhead and profit margin.
5. **Verify Additional Information** - Once you have narrowed down the contractors and decided which might be best, it is time to get some additional information. How many other projects is he currently working on that might interfere with the progress on your site? Verify that the contractor knows he is responsible to obtain all applicable permits, including those needed for The Landings Association. Finally, make sure you understand all the details the contractor has given you. It is your home, and it is important that you understand what, when, and how things will be accomplished.
6. **Set a payment schedule** - If the contractor has issues with implementing a schedule, this may be a sign that the contractor is in financial trouble and may cut corners on your job. Also, here is where you want

to verify that the final payment will not be made until all work is completed. By agreeing to this, the contractor concedes that the job must be completed to your specifications before he will get paid.

7. **Feel comfortable** - It is important that you not only understand what the contractor will do, but that you feel comfortable having him in your home. The lines of communication should be completely open, allowing you to ask questions or raise concerns during the process.
8. **Put it in writing** - Make sure you have every step, the payment schedule, all products and materials that will be used, and any necessary permits outlined in writing. It is important that you do not sign a contract until the details are agreed upon.
9. **Select contractors before you need them** - Don't wait for any emergency to find a contractor. An emergency is a difficult time to determine if a contractor would be reliable or do quality work.

Following these tips will not guarantee the contractor or the work, but it may help to narrow down your choices. Ultimately, you must feel comfortable with your contractors, and have confidence that they not only know what they are doing, but that they have your wants and needs in mind throughout the job process.