

PROJECT CONNECTIONS / PLANNING SERIES 02

Understand the house before you commit.

Fixer-Upper Purchase & Renovation Planner

Evaluate the purchase and renovation together. Make essential repairs, financing conditions and transaction dates visible before commitments.

PRINT-READY WORKBOOK / 14 PAGES

Illustrative scene; not an identified SJBA member project.

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Define what must work

A low purchase price does not establish an affordable project. State the intended use and the limits that would make you investigate, change the plan or stop.

STARTING POINT / Exploring • Assessing • Under agreement • Planning work

Measurable outcome and intended use of the home

Decision owner, target decision date and advisers

Maximum disruption / uncertainty you can accept

Use the workbook in three passes

Gather facts and constraints / pages 3-6

Compare and coordinate / pages 7-10

Confirm next steps / pages 11-14

Track progress in the action plan on page 13. Keep completed worksheets private; no online submission is required.

Separate facts from unknowns

Keep the property information and assessment record together. Do not treat a listing description, informal estimate or inaccessible area as a completed professional assessment.

Topic	Evidence / report date	Unknown / next assessor
Current use / occupancy		
Structure / roof		
Moisture / drainage		
Mechanical systems		
Electrical / plumbing		
Areas not inspected		

Most important unresolved question / next action

For each unknown, name the professional who can evaluate it and the date needed.

Triage before designing finishes

Have qualified professionals identify urgent concerns and safe-occupancy questions. This worksheet records their findings; it is not a buyer inspection or a DIY diagnostic checklist.

Professional finding	Priority / reason	Next step / owner / date
Safety concern		
Habitability question		
Structural concern		
Moisture / system issue		
Optional improvement		

Most important unresolved question / next action

Do not make optional finish choices dependent on unresolved essential repairs.

See the combined commitment

Separate purchase price from the cash required now and the longer renovation cost. Avoid counting the same closing item twice when using lender documents.

Cost / responsibility	Estimate	Confirmed	Source / date
Acquisition cash / closing costs	$	$	
Essential repairs	$	$	
Design / assessments / permits	$	$	
Optional improvements	$	$	
Temporary housing / moving	$	$	
Carrying costs during work	$	$	
Contingency / reserves	$	$	

Decision owner / spending limit / next review date

Also record purchase price $_____; financing $_____; funds needed before reimbursements $_____.

Ask how renovation funds work

Bring the actual property and work scope to the lender. A financing product may have conditions that change what work can begin, who can perform it and when money becomes available. [S3]

Which acquisition and repair expenses may be financed, and which need separate cash?

What property conditions, contractor approvals or inspections must be met?

When are funds released, and who pays while a draw or reimbursement is pending?

What happens if scope, cost or completion timing changes?

Record lender, written source, date and unresolved conditions. No program eligibility or loan approval is implied.

Track the purchase deadlines

Use dates supplied by your agreement and advisers. Work backward from each decision so that inspection findings, estimates and financing information arrive while they can still inform it.

Milestone / source	Due date / owner	Dependency / decision
Assessment access		
Specialist reports		
Repair proposals		
Financing conditions		
Contract decision		
Closing readiness		

Most important unresolved question / next action

A calendar reminder is not a substitute for legal advice about a contract deadline.

Compare renovation scope

Classify each task as essential, optional or later. Ask each contractor to price the same scope and identify allowances, exclusions and conditions that cannot yet be priced.

Option / provider A: _____ B: _____

Comparison point	A / evidence	B / evidence
Essential work included		
Optional / later work		
Allowances and exclusions		
Unknown conditions		
Materials / procurement		
Schedule and change process		

Recommendation / information needed before choosing

Request revised written proposals when the scope changes; do not compare an old scope to a new one.

Make the feasibility decision

Choose one direction: proceed with a defined next step, revise the project, investigate a missing fact or pause. The evidence should support the decision without assuming resale profit.

☐ Essential condition findings understood

Evidence / reviewer: _____

☐ Funding and release timing workable

Evidence / reviewer: _____

☐ Total costs and reserves reviewed

Evidence / reviewer: _____

☐ Required approvals investigated

Evidence / reviewer: _____

Decision: proceed / revise / investigate / pause. Reason and limits:

Decision owner / date / evidence still needed

What new finding would cause you to revisit this decision?

Confirm the local requirements

Ask the local construction office and appropriate zoning authority about the actual scope and intended use. New Jersey requirements depend on the work; do not infer approval from a prior owner’s use. [S1]

Question	Authority / response date	Required evidence / owner
Intended use / zoning		
Design documents		
Construction permits		
Trade qualifications		
Inspection stages		
Occupancy / closeout		

Most important unresolved question / next action

Record the authority, written response and remaining conditions before relying on an answer.

Sequence work and living arrangements

Ask the contractor to describe handoffs and inspection points before concealing work or installing finishes. Resolve occupancy questions with qualified professionals and authorities.

Designer / engineer if needed

Resolve scope and condition-related design questions.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Contractor / trades

Confirm work sequence, access and procurement.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Local enforcing agency

Confirm permits and required inspection stages.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Lender / contractor

Coordinate documented milestones and fund releases.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Household / contractor

Confirm safe access, living arrangements and changes.

Owner: _____ Due: _____ Received by: _____

Change record: request, reason, cost, timing impact and written approval before changed work.

Close the work with records

Collect the documentation needed to understand what was done and what remains. Treat a contractor’s completion claim and required authority approvals as separate confirmations.



BETTER QUESTIONS. CLEARER NEXT STEPS.

Bring the relevant worksheets to your professional conversation. Record the recommendation, who owns the next action and when to follow up.

Illustrative scene; not an identified SJBA member project.

Contractor: which punch-list items, warranties and manuals remain?

Authority: which inspections or occupancy documents are required and completed?

Lender / insurer: what completion evidence or coverage update is needed?

Role / contact / meeting date and documents to bring

Recommendation received / assumptions to confirm

Next action / owner / deadline / follow-up date

Keep approvals, reports, paid invoices and change orders together.

Keep the purchase and work aligned

Assign a next action for every evidence gap. Recheck available funds and the household plan before a commitment or scope change increases the exposure.

READINESS CHECK / mark confirmed or name the unresolved issue

☐ Essential work has evidence and a budget

☐ Contract dates and financing reviewed

☐ Municipal questions have documented answers

☐ Work sequence and household plan agreed

Decision: proceed / revise / investigate / pause | Date: _____

PRIORITY 1 / Action: _____

Owner: _____ Due: _____

Dependency / evidence needed: _____

Progress / next review: _____

PRIORITY 2 / Action: _____

Owner: _____ Due: _____

Dependency / evidence needed: _____

Progress / next review: _____

PRIORITY 3 / Action: _____

Owner: _____ Due: _____

Dependency / evidence needed: _____

Progress / next review: _____

Review weekly; also review after each report, revised quote, financing change or missed milestone.

Sources and your next connection

Use these primary resources with the relevant professional. Source checks: October 14, 2026. Blue underlined titles are clickable; [S#] references point to this list.

[S1] NJ DCA | Construction permit resources

Confirm project-specific permits and inspection questions with the local enforcing agency.

[S2] NJ Consumer Affairs | Hiring a contractor

Compare written bids and check relevant registration, credentials and references.

[S3] CFPB | Loan Estimate explainer

Review mortgage costs and ask lenders to explain the terms and assumptions.

General educational planning information, not individualized legal, financial, insurance, clinical, engineering or construction advice. Requirements vary. Qualified professionals and relevant authorities should confirm applicable decisions.

Need professional guidance?

Explore current professionals in the SJBA directory. Bring the relevant worksheet and explain the decision you need help making. Not every role listed is necessarily represented; verify scope, credentials and availability.

About the South Jersey Business Association

Founded in 1994, SJBA is a structured, performance-driven, category-exclusive referral network for serious South Jersey business owners. Its trust-based professional relationships can help residents and business owners identify relevant expertise. SJBA does not guarantee member work or results.

Established business owner? Explore a meeting visit.
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