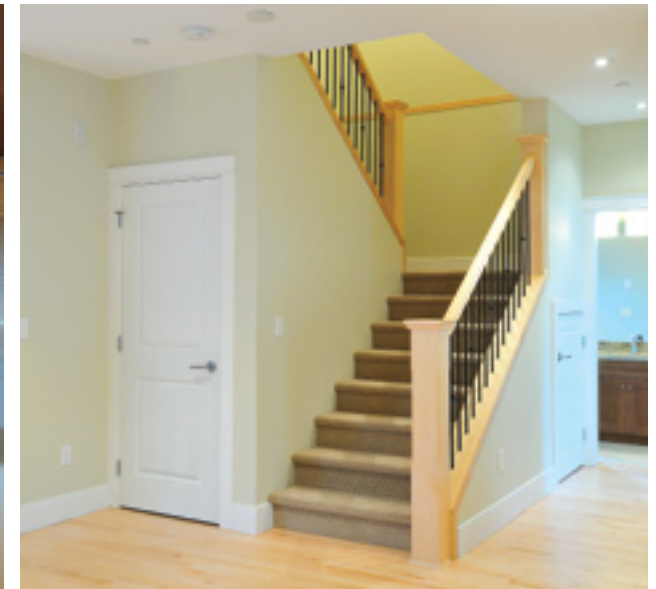
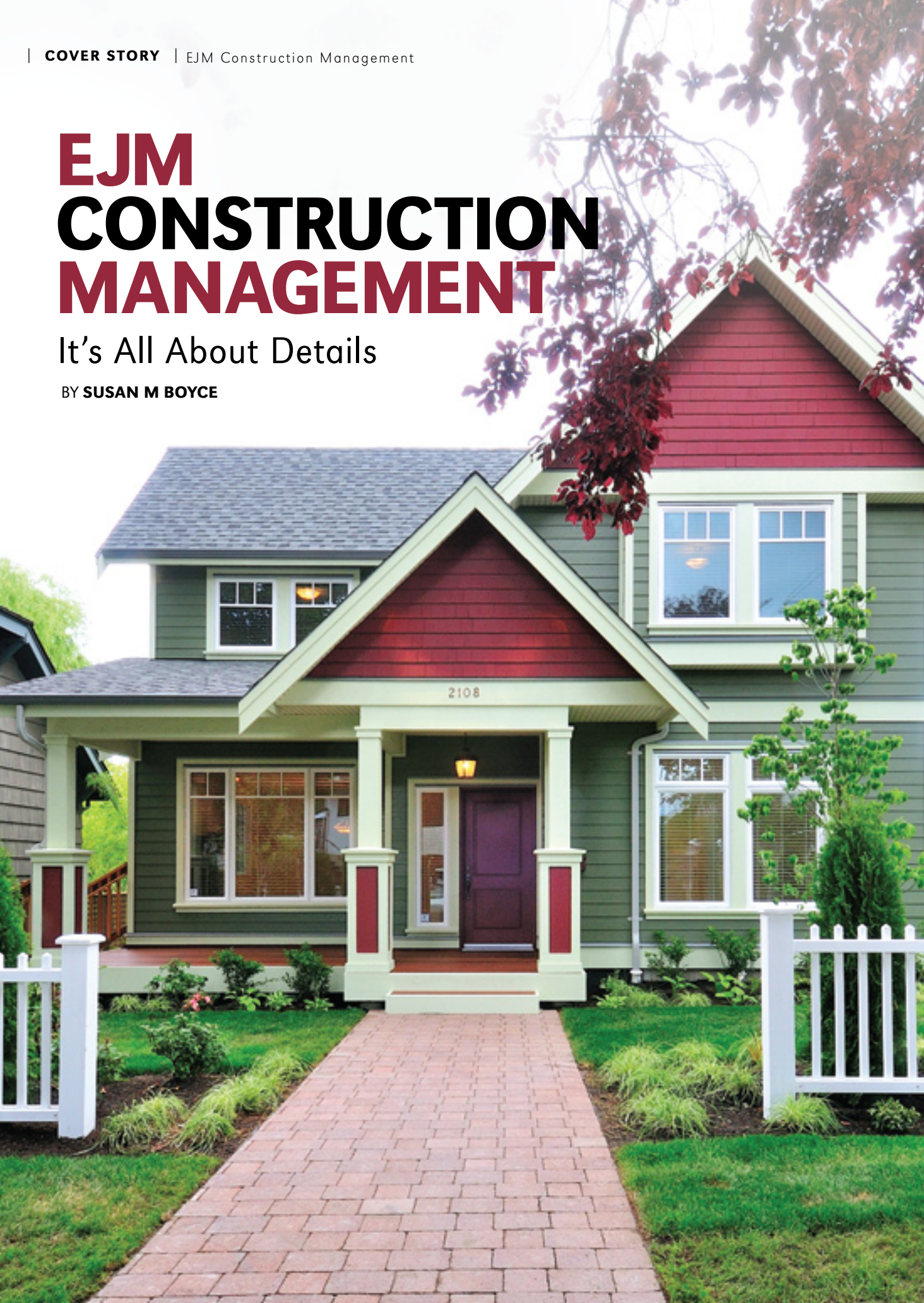


EJM CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

It's All About Details

BY SUSAN M BOYCE



Ed Mocnik is a firm believer in the importance of detail. After almost two decades in the construction industry, the president of EJM Construction Management has got his fair share of in-the-trenches, horror stories about renovations gone awry, and he knows many of them could have been avoided with some smart planning and attention to detail.

“Renovating and home building is about far more than choosing cabinets, windows, and paint colours,” he says. “Sure those things are important, but first and foremost you need to educate yourself so you are an informed consumer.”

Know what you want

It sounds simple, but Ed notes it's an initial part of the process that's often overlooked. “Ask yourself what the purpose of your renovation is,” Ed says. “Do you need more space or more efficient use of existing space? Is your reno primarily for aesthetics or so your home will function better and feel more open? Understanding what you want to achieve will help you make better decisions about where you spend your money.”

Know what you can do

Once you've got your priorities set, Ed recommends talking to your municipal building department. “People think they can do anything they want to because it's their property and their house,” he says. “But there are limits to things like the size of an addition. Even windows are often subject to regulations regarding their size and placement — for example, many consumers aren't aware there are restrictions on windows in walls that face a neighbour's home because of fire issues.”

Budget too needs careful and realistic scrutiny. And it's not just the bottom line homeowners need to understand. “Every lender has different rules about how they will — or won't — finance a renovation project,” Ed says. “It's critical to maintain open lines of communication with your financial institution at all times.” He adds that considerations including whether a project is taken on as cost plus (the contractor bills hourly and adds costs of all material as they are purchased) or on a flat fee basis can impact how a renovation loan is structured.

“I also caution people that the cheapest estimate may not be the best,” Ed says. “If you deal with a contractor who runs his business out of the back of a pickup, you have no idea whether you're dealing with a professional or not. And if something does go wrong, you likely won't have any recourse. I've seen it happen, and the results were disastrous and expensive.”

Know when to get help

Ed's final tip for taking care of the details is to consider hiring a designer. “It may appear to be just another additional expense, but often it will save you money in the end,” he says, adding that EJM has a designer on staff. Designers, he explains, are specialists who can often accomplish these details of a renovation better and faster than the builder can — which then allows the contractor to get on with what they know best, building. “Everybody wins.”[®]

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“CHOOSING CABINETS, WINDOWS, AND PAINT COLOURS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT FIRST AND FOREMOST YOU NEED TO EDUCATE YOURSELF SO YOU ARE AN INFORMED CONSUMER.” ED MOCNIK



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