



MULTIFAMILY RENOVATION BUDGETING

Make the assumptions behind the budget as clear as the total.

Planning aid only; not a proposal, technical assessment, final scope or agreement. Confirm the requirements for your property and proposed work.

WHAT SHOULD A PLANNING BUDGET INCLUDE?

Record the property, work areas, scope version, date and intended use. List the information behind the estimate: field observations, measurements, finish selections, reports and stated assumptions. Separate confirmed items from those still awaiting review.

A planning budget helps organize choices while the scope develops. A proposal should state the work and price basis being offered. The signed agreement establishes the project commitments. Moving from one stage to the next requires resolving open scope questions; changing the heading on a spreadsheet does not resolve them.

For a portfolio, keep each property's assumptions visible before combining totals. A shared finish standard does not establish that every building has the same condition or access.

BUILD QUANTITIES AROUND THE ACTUAL WORK.

Identify what is included by building, elevation, unit type or common area. State the unit of measure and its source. Distinguish measured quantities from owner-provided counts and quantities still to be verified. A price per apartment is difficult to interpret unless the included rooms, materials and preparation are also defined. To discuss apartment renovation cost per unit, group units by the same finish package and existing-condition assumptions first. Keep building-wide roofing, exterior repairs and shared amenities separate from unit-interior totals. Dividing every property expense by the apartment count can hide what the unit renovation actually includes.

For unit renovations, separate finish packages and retained items. Identify whether cabinetry, flooring, appliances, fixtures and associated repairs are included. Our Austin apartment interior photographs show individual kitchen, bathroom and living-area details that can help frame a finish discussion. They do not provide a cost benchmark or a standard package for every property.

For exterior work, distinguish surface preparation, repairs, coatings and adjoining features. The Dallas facade project record documents painting, facade mesh work and awning removal as separate activities. It illustrates why "paint the building" may not describe every work item; the record does not establish pricing or final completion.



MULTIFAMILY RENOVATION BUDGETING

WHICH ASSUMPTIONS CAN CHANGE THE BUDGET?

- Existing conditions: record known repairs and unresolved findings separately. Identify investigation needed before defining concealed work.
- Materials and preparation: state product selections, retained finishes, removal and preparation expectations. Record proposed substitutions as decisions.
- Access and occupancy: describe unit entry, available work windows, equipment access, staging and areas that must remain available.
- Phasing and coordination: show the proposed work sequence, dependencies with other trades and approvals needed before repeating a scope.
- Scope boundaries: identify who provides each supporting task, including protection, cleanup, temporary arrangements and closeout information.

Discuss how each assumption affects the proposed scope before assigning a price. Use the occupied-property planning checklist to identify access and coordination questions with the property team.

KEEP ALLOWANCES, ALTERNATES AND CONTINGENCY SEPARATE.

An allowance is an amount carried for a stated item whose selection or detail is not fully resolved. Record what it covers, the assumed quantity or quality, and how the actual selection will be reconciled. Confirm the proposal's definition; an allowance is not evidence that all unknown work is included.

An alternate describes an optional addition, omission or different approach. Show its scope and price separately from the base work. Identify whether selecting it changes preparation, adjacent work or the sequence, so the decision can be evaluated as a whole.

Contingency is a budget provision for uncertainty. Identify who holds it, what it is intended to address and how its use will be approved. Do not count the same provision both in the contractor's price and the owner's budget without explaining the distinction. The appropriate amount depends on the project; this guide does not prescribe a percentage.

An unresolved condition still needs an investigation or decision. Keep it visible even if money has been set aside. Record the next action and responsible person rather than treating a reserve as a completed scope.



MULTIFAMILY RENOVATION BUDGETING

READ EXCLUSIONS ALONGSIDE THE INCLUDED WORK.

An excluded item can still be necessary to the owner's overall plan. Identify who will evaluate and provide it, whether there is a separate cost, and whether it must happen before the included construction. Examples to discuss include specialist assessments, owner-supplied materials and work assigned to another contractor; inclusion varies by project.

Keep requested upgrades separate from work needed to address a documented condition. If a finish change creates additional removal or adjacent repairs, request a revised scope instead of carrying only the finish price difference.

WHAT SHOULD YOU BRING TO A BUDGET DISCUSSION?

- Property locations, affected buildings or units, and the decision the budget should support.
- Available drawings, measurements, existing reports, maintenance history and dated photographs.
- Desired work, retained items, finish standards and alternatives under consideration.
- Occupancy, entry arrangements, staging restrictions and desired sequencing.
- Known scope gaps, pending assessments, owner-provided items and other planned work.
- Budget goals, target timing, decision-makers and the person responsible for updating assumptions.

Mark missing information as unknown. A property walk can help organize observations and follow-up questions when the starting information is incomplete.

KEEP A CLEAR RECORD AS THE SCOPE CHANGES.

Give each budget revision a date and scope reference. Summarize what changed: a measured quantity, selection, access assumption, newly documented condition or added work area. Keep the previous version available so an increase or decrease can be explained.

Before requesting bids, resolve the inputs that can be defined and disclose the remaining assumptions consistently. The renovation RFP checklist helps organize that request. Once proposals arrive, use the bid comparison worksheet to reconcile differences before comparing totals.

Keep approved changes and current scope with the project record during construction. Discuss the reporting and document access your team needs; the client portal overview explains T-Rock's owner-facing visibility.