Planning a Wall Opening or Wall Removal

Start with the space you want to create. The opening, the parts of the room you want to keep, and the structure around the wall all help frame the engineer's work.

Sketch the opening and finished room

Mark the wall and the desired opening on a floor plan or simple sketch. Give preliminary width and height if known and show what sits on either side. Record preferences such as a flush ceiling, an exposed beam, or a route that needs to stay clear. Mark nearby stairs, windows, cabinets, ducts, and fixtures. Identify which dimensions are measured and which are estimates.

How the engineer traces support

An engineer looks at how forces travel through the roof and floors, through supporting members and connections, and into the foundation. This route is called the **load path**. For an opening, questions can extend to what the wall supports, how the building resists sideways forces, and what would support any new loads below. The engineer may compare drawings with accessible framing to see what can be verified. [Denver's interior remodel permitting checklist]

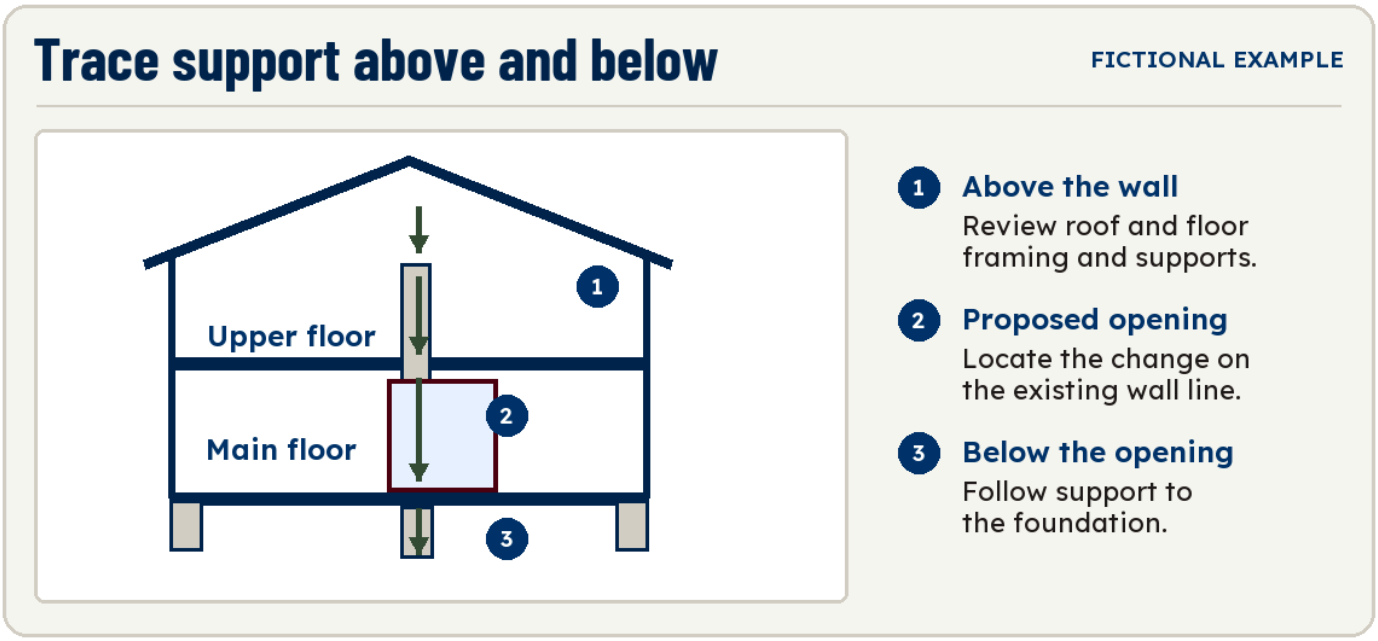

Figure 1. Fictional section. The marked opening is the owner's goal. Arrows identify parts of an example support path the engineer would trace. RES illustration.

Document accessible framing and available plans

Share plans with their issue dates and note any earlier changes or partial demolition. Photograph the whole wall, the rooms on each side, and framing already visible from accessible positions. Mark where each photo was taken. Ask the engineer whether more access is needed before removing finishes. RES Project Photo Guide



Figure 2. Separate gallery example. The doorway below locates the exposed beam and wall framing. RES Media gallery, RES-M0160.

Coordinate drawings, temporary support, and construction

Confirm what the drawings will cover, including any supports or connections outside the room. Before demolition, identify who is responsible for planning, designing if needed, installing, and checking temporary support. Ask the contractor and design team how they will coordinate the sequence, verify concealed conditions, and handle differences from the drawings. Confirm permit and inspection requirements with the authority.

Design decision notes

Opening dimensions and finish priorities

Drawing, access, and support questions

What to do next

Weighing different framing arrangements? Read Choosing Structural Materials and Reviewing Substitutions.

Adding floor area too? Read Planning a Home Addition or Second Story.