Planning a Home Addition or Second Story

A side addition and a second story both change how a house is used. Each creates a different set of questions about how the new work meets the original building. Bring the layout you want to test while there is room to adjust it.

Define what you want to add

Show the proposed rooms, number of levels, approximate footprint, and where the addition meets the house. Identify which existing walls, roof areas, openings, and finishes would change. Describe intended uses, unusual loads or equipment, and whether any part of the home needs to remain occupied during construction.

Gather plans and prior alteration records

Bring existing and proposed plans, a survey, past permit records, reports, and notes on earlier renovations. Label photos showing the intended connection area, adjacent grades, and the spaces above and below. Mark what you learned from a record and what you observed directly. Tell the team where plans are missing or where you know the house has changed.

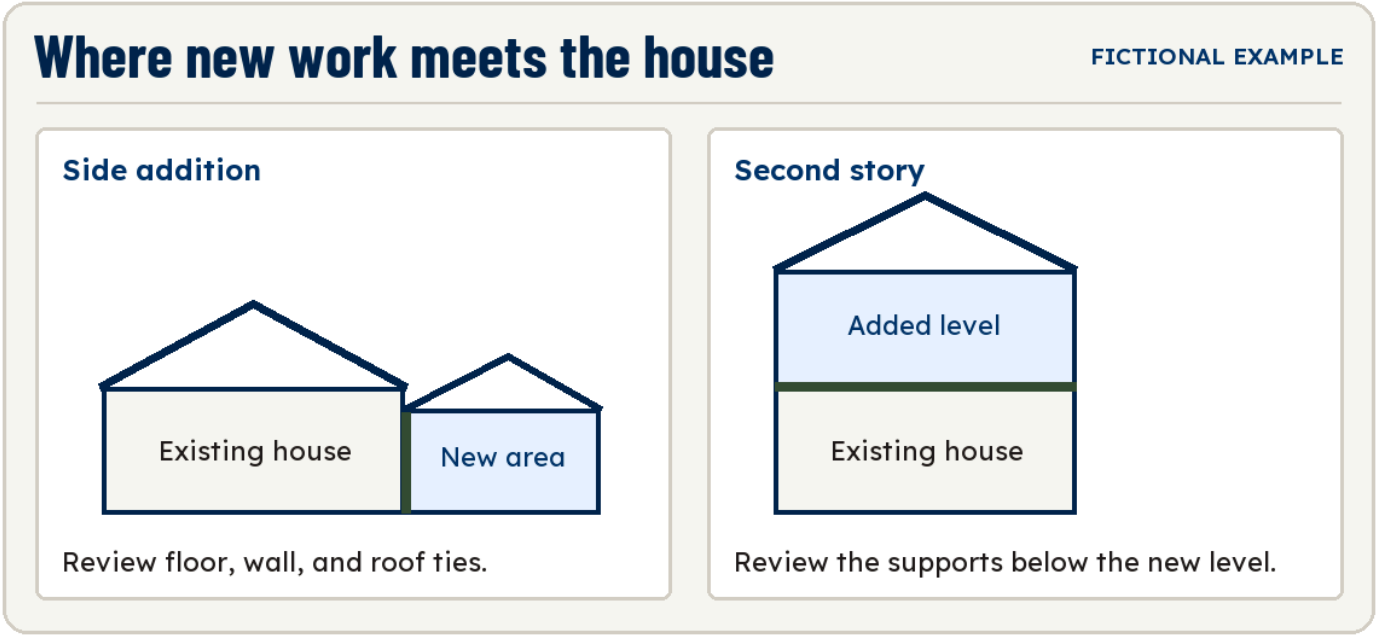


Figure 1. Fictional massing sketches showing where a side addition and a second story meet the existing house. The highlighted edges identify areas for early coordination. RES illustration.

Where new and existing structures meet

For a side addition, ask how the new and existing floor and roof levels will meet, and what grades, access, and foundation information matter. For another story, ask what parts of the existing framing, walls, connections, and foundation need to be evaluated for the proposed work. The engineer can explain which facts come from records and which need field verification. Denver's residential permit guidance

Use early review to shape scope and budget

Ask the designer, engineer, and builder what decisions affect the layout, permit scope, cost, and sequence. Start with the ones that are difficult to reverse, such as where an addition meets the house or where excavation must be accessible. Record what is decided, what assumption it relies on, and who will check it. Ask what survey, site information, or additional investigation is appropriate before pricing or fixing the layout.

Design decision notes

Layout priority and existing conditions to confirm

Person responsible and date needed

What to do next

Planning an opening between old and new rooms? Read Planning a Wall Opening or Wall Removal.

Checking who reviews the project? Read Finding Your Permitting Authority and Applicable Code Edition.