Planning and Pricing Drainage Work in Phases

Drainage work can involve several parts of a property and more than one contractor. If you need to spread the cost or work around access constraints, start with one description of the whole problem. Then ask which parts can function separately and which need to be planned together.

Set the immediate and long-term goals

Put both goals in writing. For example, the immediate goal may be to address reported water at a door. The long-term goal may be to coordinate drainage with a planned patio replacement. Bring dated observations, any available survey, and the work you already intend to do. Tell the engineer or contractor when each decision needs to be made.

Plan around dependencies and access

Ask what each phase relies on, including the intended discharge route, temporary conditions between phases, and who checks each dependency. If later work would use the same access path or remove finished paving, discuss that before scheduling the first phase. Ask when a route, connection, property permission, or local approval needs to be confirmed. Have the people responsible for design and construction agree on which work belongs together.

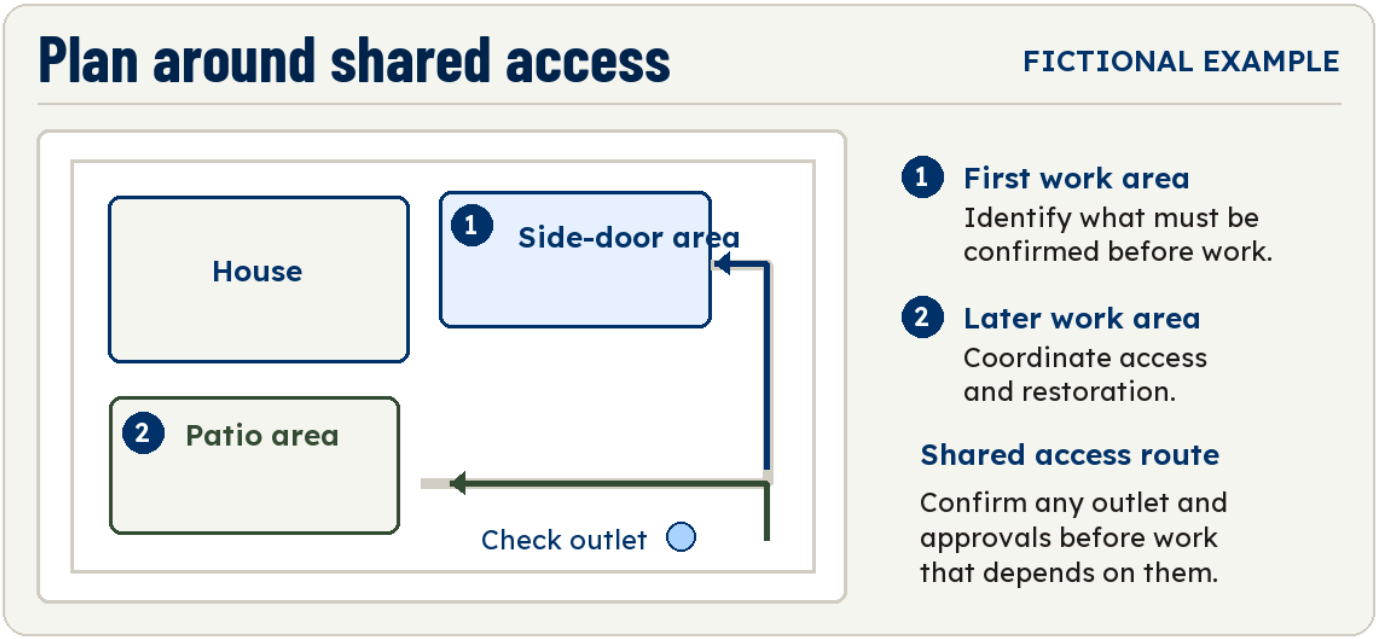


Figure 1. Fictional sequencing example. Both areas use the same access path. The outlet and any required approvals are questions to resolve before committing to work that depends on them. RES illustration.

Give bidders a common scope

Provide the same dated sketch or drawings, written scope, and known constraints to every bidder. Ask for separate prices by phase, what is included and excluded, assumptions about visible or buried conditions, who handles design and permits, and the cost of restoring areas disturbed by the work. Have bidders identify what could change the price and describe who will document each phase before covering it. FTC, How To Avoid a Home Improvement Scam

Fictional bid sheet

Phase	Ask each bidder to price or list as excluded	Record before the next decision
1. Side-door area	Agreed scope at the door, access, protection, and restoration	Dated completion photos and later observations at the original wet area
2. Patio coordination	Work described in the coordinated patio and drainage scope, with restoration priced separately if applicable	Confirmation of the connection or outlet, and any required approvals before scheduling

Decide when to move to the next phase

Agree on what the owner or designated party should record and who should review it. Keep the first phase's completion photos, any specified check results, and an updated sketch. After a comparable event, record where water appeared and how long it remained. If conditions or plans change, ask whether that affects the next scope, price, or schedule before authorizing it.

Phase decision notes

Phase, date, and work location _____

Observations or completion records _____

Open question and who will answer it _____

What to do next

Still defining what the work should address? Start with What a Residential Drainage Assessment Looks At.

Tracking conditions between phases? Use What to Document When Water Collects Near Your Home.