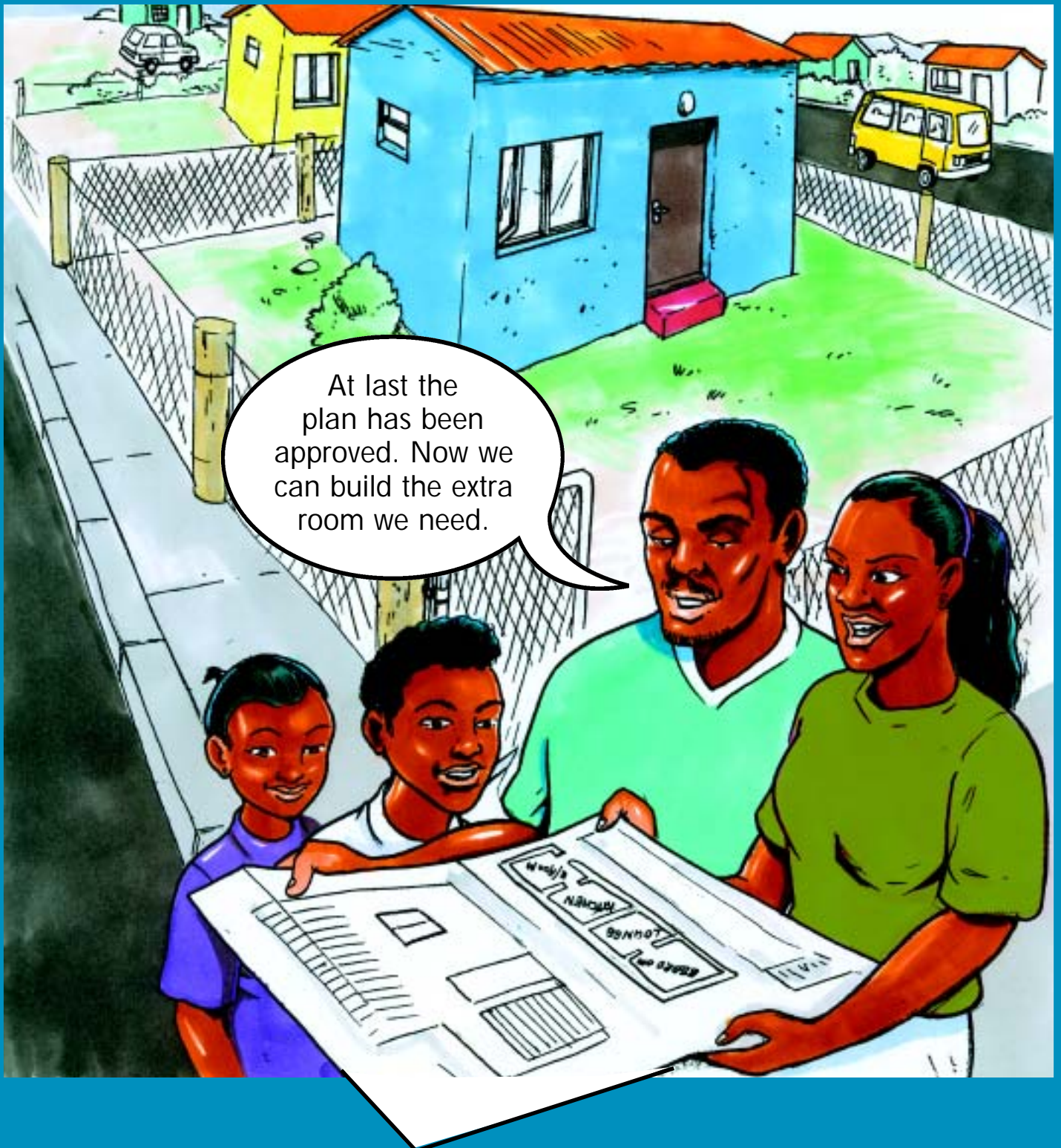


MAKING HOME IMPROVEMENTS: ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS



At last the plan has been approved. Now we can build the extra room we need.

HOAP

HOME OWNERS' ADVICE PAMPHLETS





ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

The house built with your government subsidy will probably not be your dream house. You might want to make alterations and additions so that the house suits your needs. Ask experienced home-owners and builders for advice.



PREPARATION

Get a copy of your house plan

The municipality has a copy of the approved plans for your house. To get a copy you need to give them the erf number, or street address and a small fee. Use the existing plans to discuss and draw the plans for your improvements. If your house has no plans, you need to measure your house and draw new plans showing your planned improvements.



Sketch out what you want

- Think carefully about the best, most affordable way to add to your existing house. You might have to break down walls and make new openings.
- If your house was built for future additions, get a copy of the recommended additions to see if they suit your needs and your budget.
- Corner pegs in the ground show the boundaries of your plot. Your house must be set back the correct distance from your plot boundaries, usually 1.5 to 3 metres from the street and 1 to 2 metres on the other sides. If you are not sure where the corner pegs are, ask the municipality to find them.

GETTING IT DONE

Step 1: Get plans drawn



- Once you have an idea of what changes you want to make, you will need help in preparing the plans. Consult a reliable architect, technician or draughtsperson. Ask him /her to inspect and measure your house and site. Discuss your ideas and plans with the architect and agree exactly what must be drawn in the plan and how much money you have to spend.
- Plan your site carefully. Allow outside space for all your needs, such as place for rainwater to drain away. Make sure connections to sewer, water and electrical pipes or cables are short and easy to reach.

Step 2: Get your plan approved by the municipality



- Your plans must be submitted to the municipality for approval before you build.
- You need to submit three or four copies and pay a scrutiny fee. Approval can take up to six weeks.
- Use copies of your approved plan to get prices from builders and suppliers.
- Keep a copy of the approved plan in a safe place to show the building inspectors when they visit your site.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ADVICE IS

- PLAN YOUR SITE CAREFULLY.
- MAKE SURE THE GROUND IS FIRM AND DRY ENOUGH TO BUILD ON.
- ASK AN EXPERIENCED BUILDER TO CHECK THAT THE EXISTING STRUCTURE IS STRONG, ESPECIALLY IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE FOUNDATIONS, WALLS, OR ROOF, OR IF YOU WANT TO BUILD UPSTAIRS.



NEVER PAY ANY MONEY TO A BUILDER IN ADVANCE



Step 3: Work out your budget and get quotes



- Take your plans to a building materials supplier. Ask about the cost, quality and availability of the materials that you will need.
- Some suppliers can give you a free estimate about the amount and cost of materials. They can also give you advice on transporting materials, and recommend good, reliable builders.
- In some areas, there may be a Housing Support Centre that offers advice, and copies of plans.
- You could ask a builder to draw up a list of the materials you will need.
- Ask a builder to check the estimated cost for your planned improvements. It is useful to add 10% extra for unexpected costs.
- Add your savings to the amount of money you can afford to lend from a finance company (if you are going to take out a loan). This will give you the budget amount you can spend on your house improvements.
- Look out for bargain prices even before building begins.

Step 4: Choose a builder



- Ask for references from people they have worked for regarding the quality of their work, the time taken to complete and if they kept to the budget.
- Get quotes and compare different builders. Remember, though, the lowest price is not always the best.

Step 5: Sign a contract with the builder



- Negotiate with your builder and draw up a written contract to protect your interests.
- The contract should include the following details:
 - details of the work to be done and a description of the materials to be used;
 - who is responsible for ordering, delivery and payment for materials and equipment;
 - start and finish dates for the construction period;
 - how and when payments will be made;
 - how the contract can be cancelled.
- Do not sign any documentation if you do not understand any of the clauses or wording.
- The contract must be signed by you and the builder as well as witnesses. Both your names and addresses must be included.

Step 6: Supervising and controlling the building operations



- It is very important to agree on a work programme with the builder before the contract is signed. You can measure the work progress against an agreed work programme.
- Protect your furniture and belongings carefully.
- Keep track of progress to make sure that the difficulties are as short and trouble-free as possible.
- In small jobs, payment is usually only made when the job has been finished as agreed. Otherwise, you can agree to make progress payments once a week or every two weeks. Always make sure that there is enough money left in the budget to complete the remaining work.



ALSO SEE OTHER PAMPHLETS ABOUT:

- Using a building contract
- Making the best use of your plot
- Working smart with credit and loans



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