

Inside a Real Bathroom

The true cost of transforming a bungalow—and why 60% of the work is hidden behind the walls.

Technical drawing of a bathroom interior showing plumbing fixtures and dimensions. The drawing includes a showerhead, a toilet, and a bathtub. Dimensions are provided for various components and clearances:

- Showerhead: 14" (height), 14" (width)
- Toilet: 14" (height), 14" (width)
- Clearance: 14" (height), 14" (width)
- Showerhead: 14" (height), 14" (width)
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Inside a Real Los Angeles Bathroom Remodel

The true cost of transforming a 1948 Silver Lake bungalow—and why 60% of your budget disappears behind the walls.



A 16-Week Transformation in a Silver Lake Bungalow

Area:
**55 Sq.
Ft.**



Timeline:
16 Weeks
(Extended from 12)



Total
Investment:
\$83,200



Context Panel

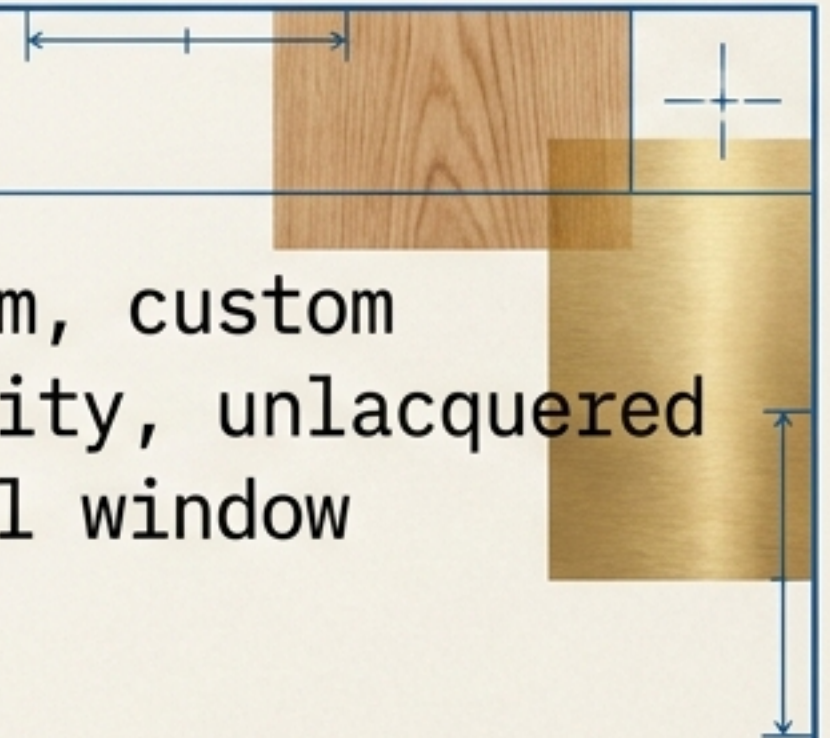


Property: 1,200 sq. ft.
Single-Family Bungalow (Built 1948)

Project Scope: Primary Bathroom
Gut Renovation

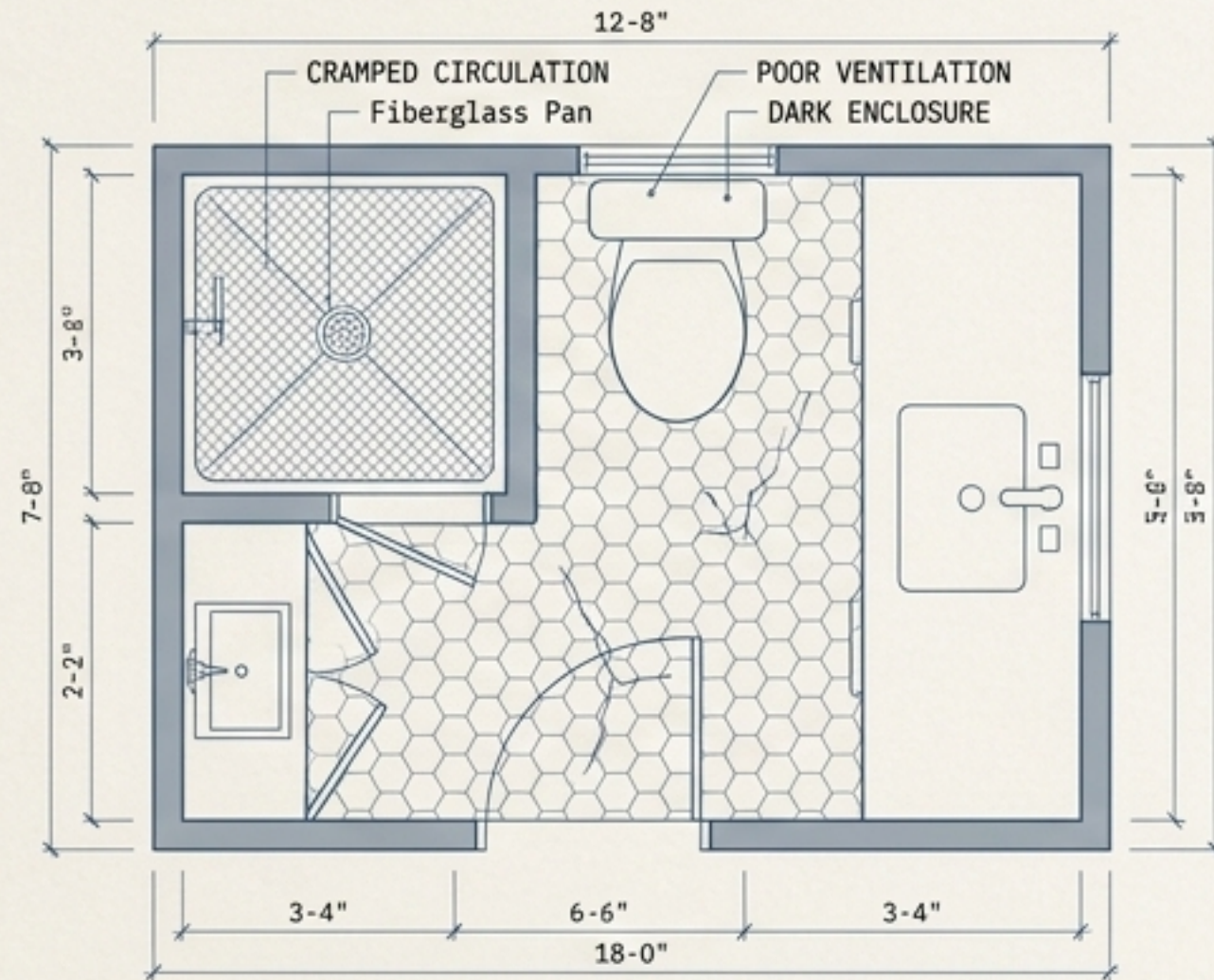
Key Features

- Curbless wet room, custom rift-cut oak vanity, unlacquered brass, structural window expansion.



Escaping Mid-Century Limitations for a “New California” Retreat

The 1940s Baseline



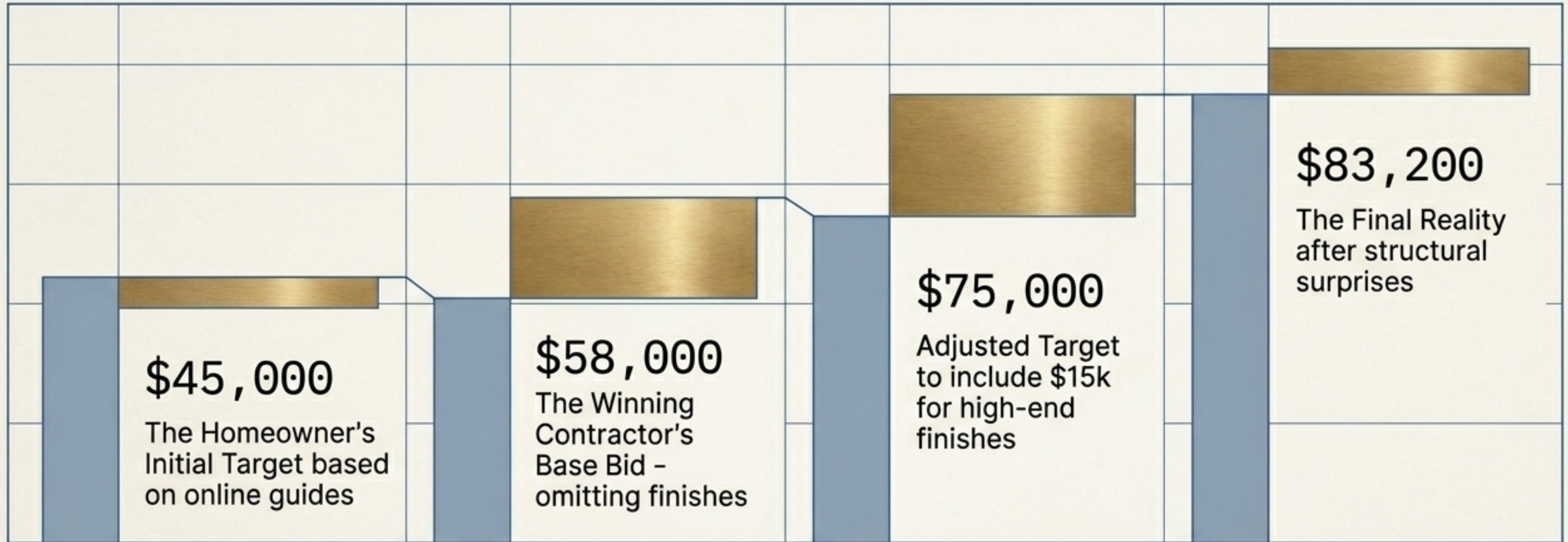
- Tiny, enclosed shower stall with yellowed fiberglass pan.
- Cracked 4x4-inch floor tile and gloomy lighting.
- Bulky vanity and persistent musty moisture issues.

The Brief



- Sun-drenched Moroccan riad meets minimalist Scandinavian spa.
- Texture over color; an abundance of natural, soft light.
- A boundless curbless shower to double the perceived space.

The Collision of Initial Expectations and Market Realities



An initial budget is just a starting point for a conversation. Creating a true wet room with custom millwork in a dense urban market fundamentally shifts the economic baseline.

The Four Geographic Drivers of Los Angeles Renovation Costs



1. Skilled Labor: High prevailing wages for licensed plumbers, electricians, and tile setters in LA County.



2. Aging Housing Stock: Historic neighborhoods require extensive remediation (galvanized pipes, knob-and-tube wiring, dry rot).

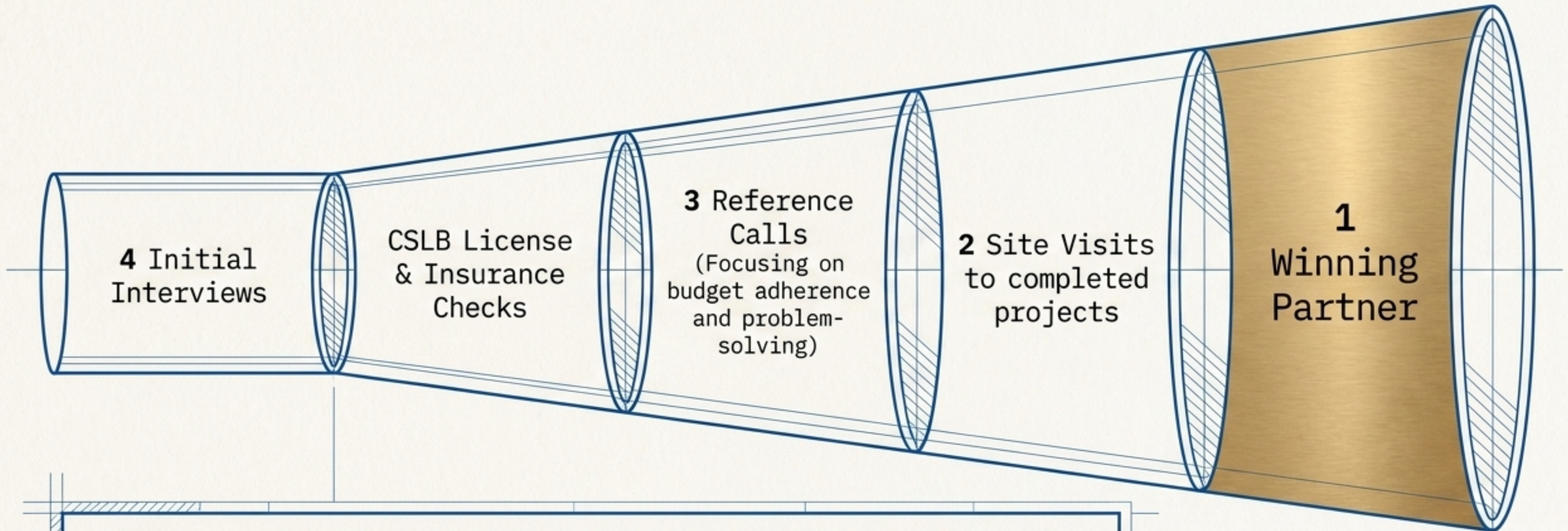


3. LADBS Bureaucracy: Rigorous permitting, multiple inspections, and administrative overhead.



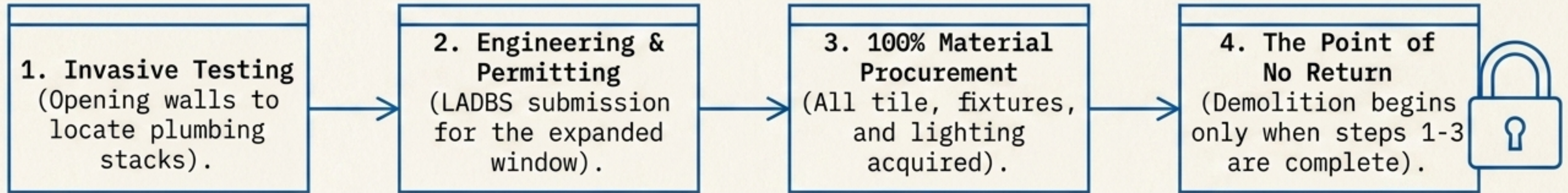
4. Urban Logistics: Dense environment constraints, limited parking, and strict noise ordinances.

A Strategic Blueprint for Vetting a General Contractor



The winning contractor was chosen not for the lowest price, but for a line-by-line bid and proactive problem-solving regarding the older home's subfloor requirements.

The “Scope Lock” Critical Path to Prevent Project Delays



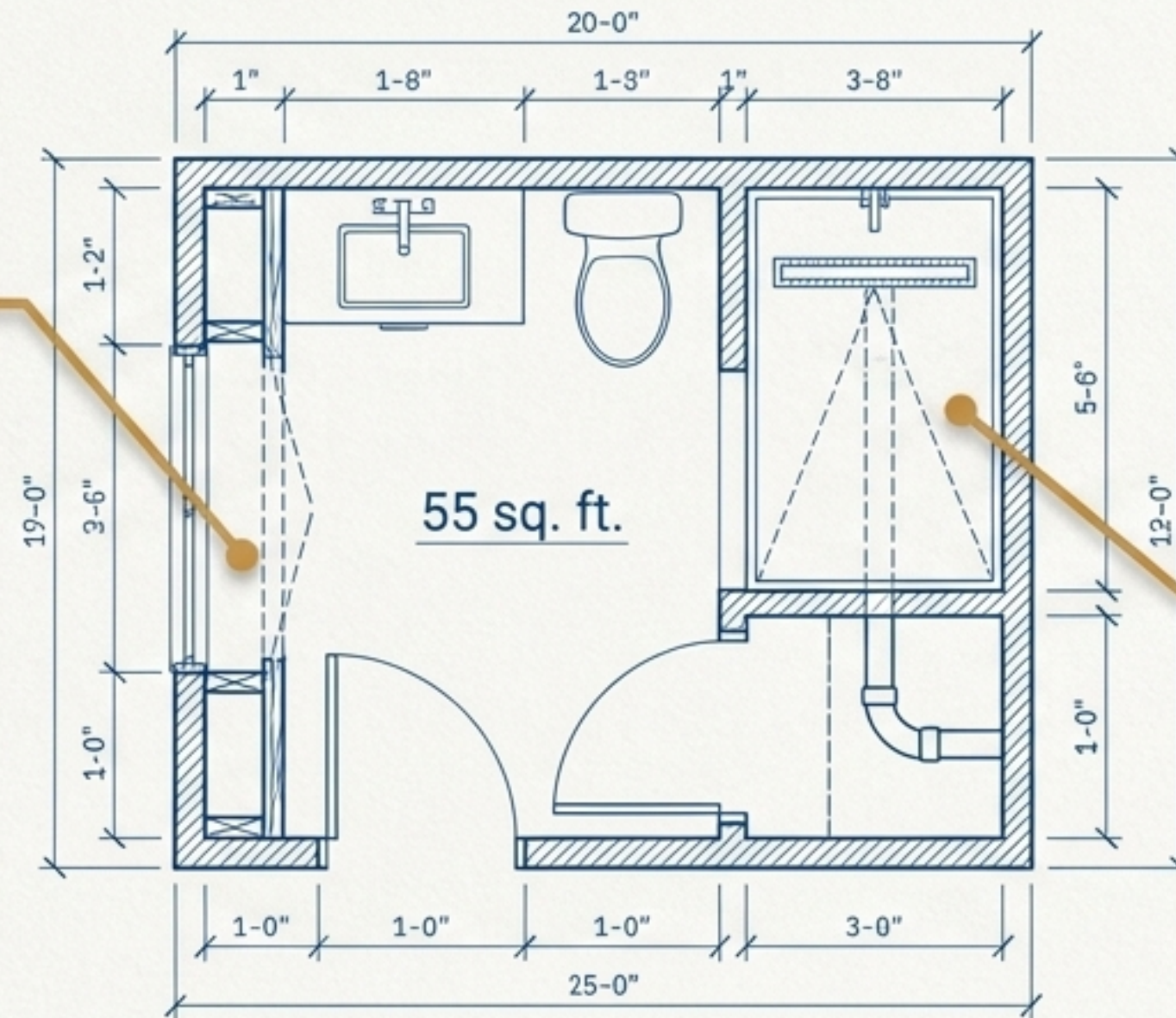
Having all materials on-site before swinging a hammer is a non-negotiable rule for seasoned contractors. This 4-week planning phase saved countless schedule headaches.

Demolition Discoveries and the Mandatory 15% Contingency

WARNING LABEL 1

Unbraced Cripple Wall

Expanding the window revealed framing that failed modern seismic codes.
(Required: \$2,200).



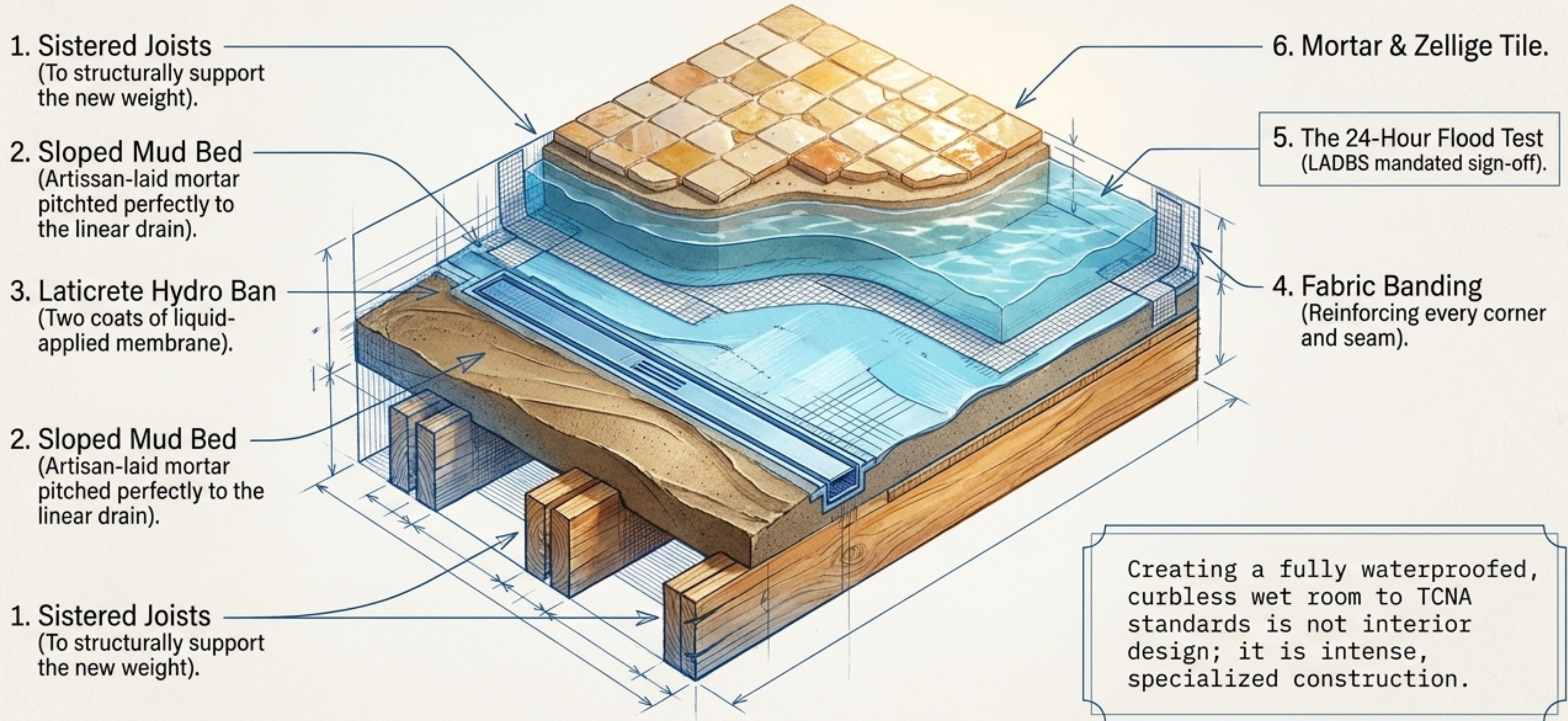
WARNING LABEL 2

Insufficient Waste Line Slope

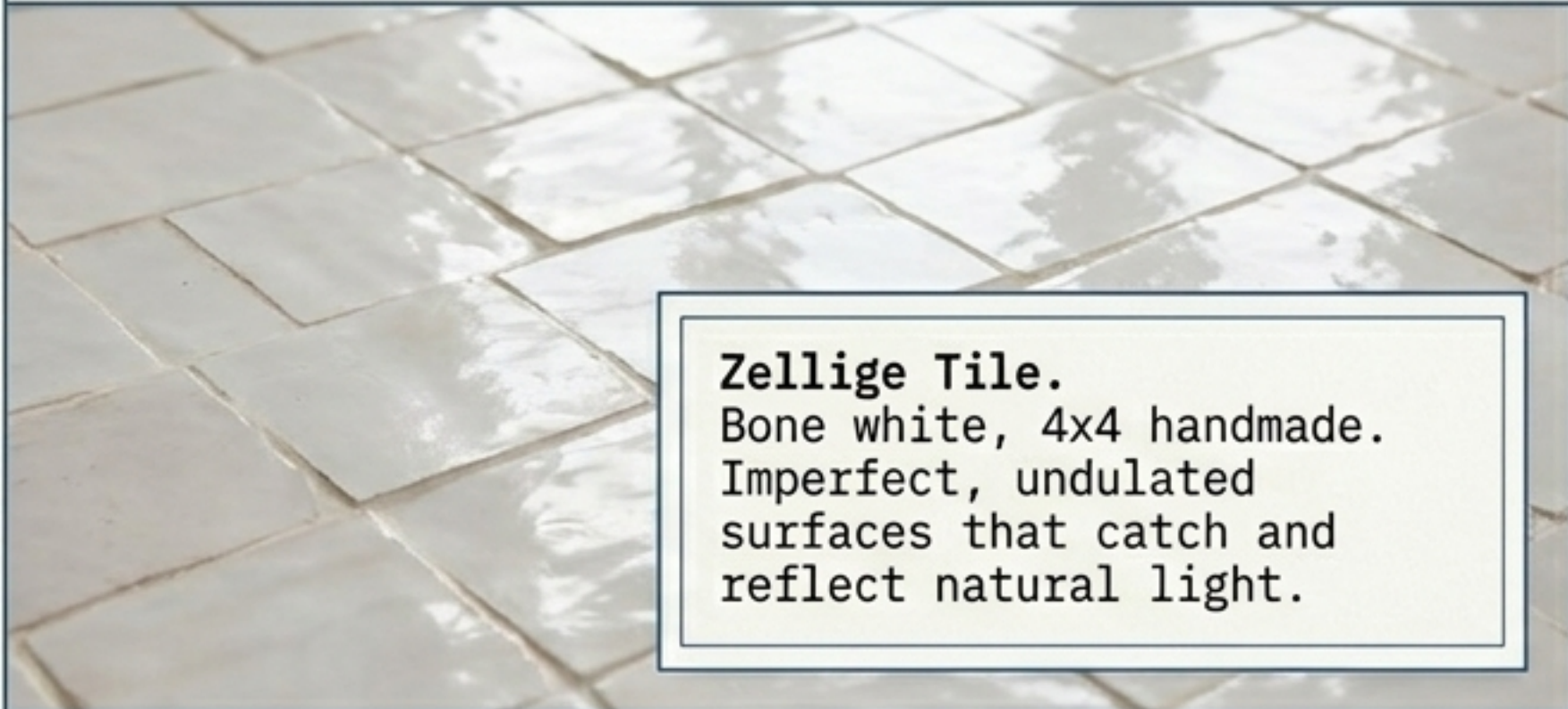
The existing main line couldn't support the new linear drain, requiring a dirty, under-house re-routing. (Required: \$3,500).

The National Association of Home Builders recommends a 10-15% contingency. For homes built before 1980 in Los Angeles, 15-20% is required to protect long-term structural integrity.

The Invisible Eight-Thousand-Dollar Investment



Defining the “New California” Material Palette

A close-up photograph of Zellige tiles, which are handmade, bone white, and have a slightly irregular, undulating surface that reflects light in a shimmering, organic way.

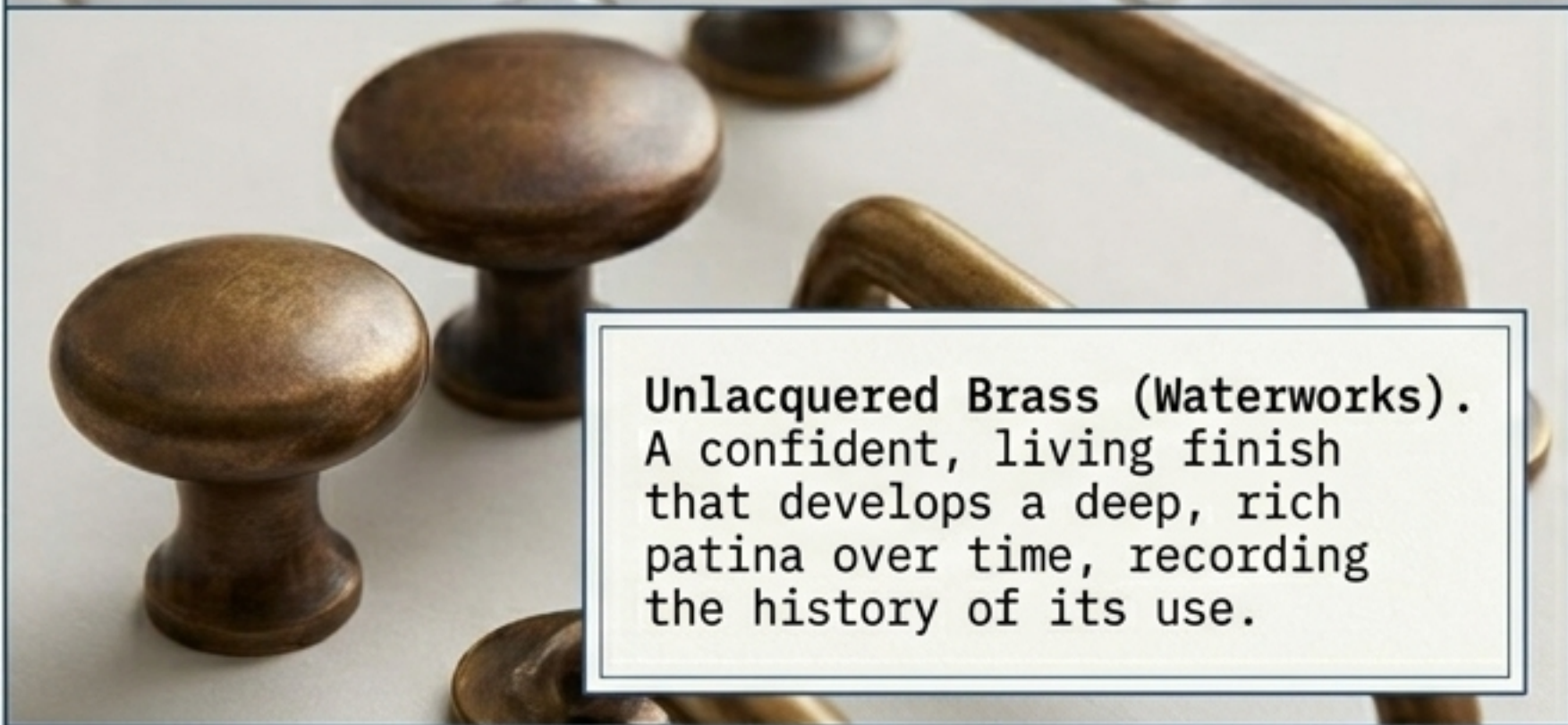
Zellige Tile.

Bone white, 4x4 handmade. Imperfect, undulated surfaces that catch and reflect natural light.

A close-up photograph of custom rift-cut white oak wood, showing a straight, tight grain pattern with a warm, natural tone.

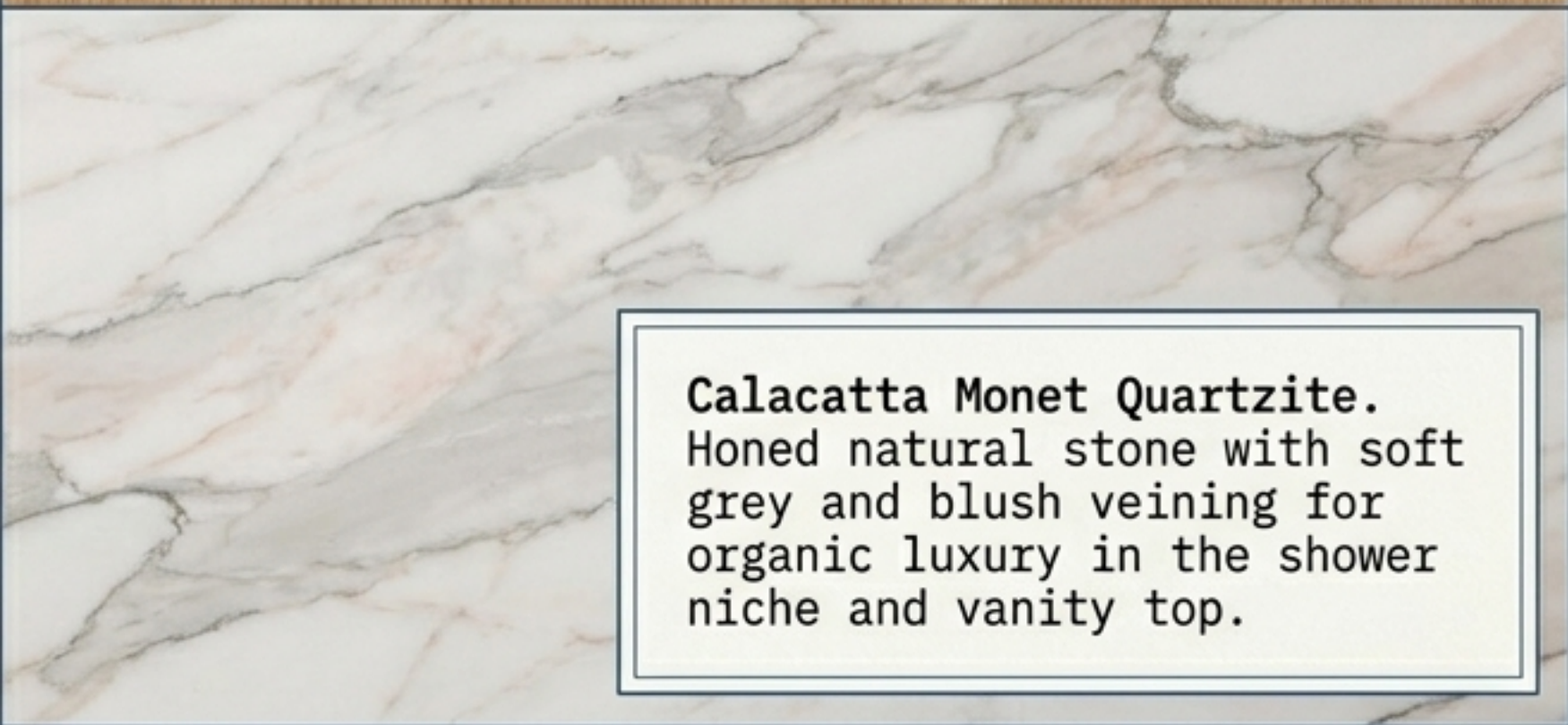
Custom Rift-Cut White Oak.

Straight, tight grain. The modern replacement for painted shaker vanities, providing texture without looking rustic.

A close-up photograph of unlacquered brass hardware, specifically round knobs and a curved handle, showing a rich, aged patina.

Unlacquered Brass (Waterworks).

A confident, living finish that develops a deep, rich patina over time, recording the history of its use.

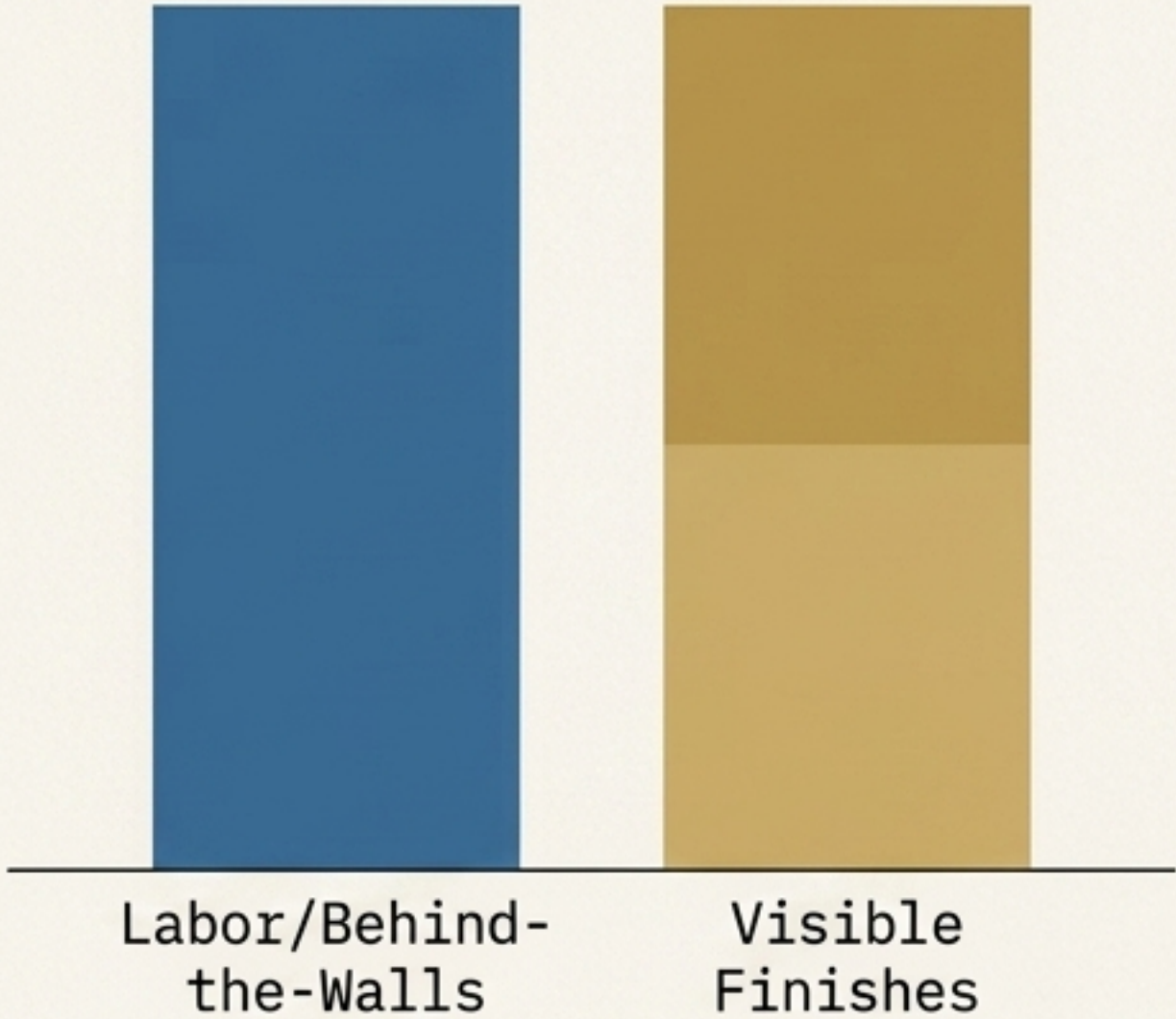
A close-up photograph of Calacatta Monet quartzite, a honed natural stone with a light background and soft, flowing grey and blush veining.

Calacatta Monet Quartzite.

Honed natural stone with soft grey and blush veining for organic luxury in the shower niche and vanity top.

The Final \$83,200 Balance Sheet

Permitting & Engineering:	\$2,800
Demolition & Hauling:	\$3,500
Framing & Seismic Upgrades:	\$4,200
Plumbing (Rough & Finish):	\$11,500
Electrical (Rough & Finish):	\$6,800
Waterproofing & Tiling:	\$14,200
Custom Vanity & Millwork:	\$8,500
Drywall, Paint & Carpentry:	\$7,200
Contractor Overhead/Profit (20%):	\$10,000
Subtotal (Construction):	\$68,700
Fixtures, Finishes & Tile (Owner):	\$14,500

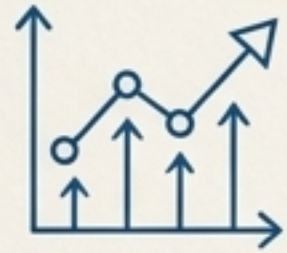


Labor represents nearly 60% of the construction cost, driven by the intense craftsmanship required for zellige and wet room systems.

Contextualizing Costs in the 2026 Los Angeles Market

The Condo Refresh (\$38,000)	The Bungalow Gut (\$65,000+)	The Luxury Suite (\$135,000+)
Profile: 1990s Studio City condo (60 sq ft). Scope: Keep existing layout. Replace vanity, fixtures, tile. Reglaze tub. No major plumbing moves.	Profile: 1920s-1940s Highland Park home (50 sq ft). Scope: Full layout change. Replace all plumbing/electrical. New windows. Mid-range materials.	Profile: Santa Monica expansion (120 sq ft). Scope: Move walls. Separate water closet, steam shower, freestanding tub, natural stone slabs.

Navigating California Title 24 Compliance and Resale ROI



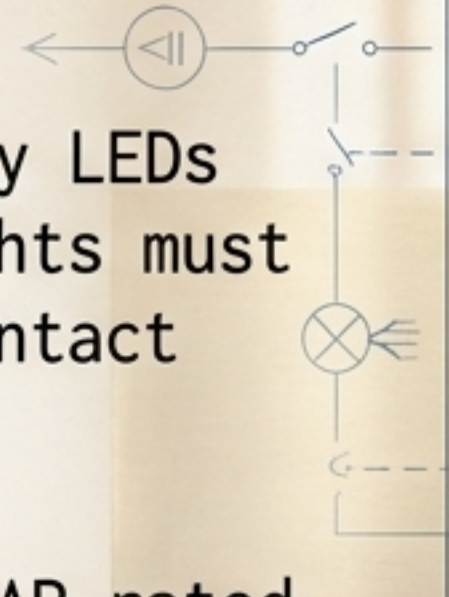
Value & ROI

- Expect to recoup 60-70% of costs at resale in the Pacific region.
- Value Drivers: Correcting dysfunctional layouts, universal design (curbless showers), and high-quality waterproofing out-perform trendy cosmetic choices. Keeping the plumbing layout saves thousands.

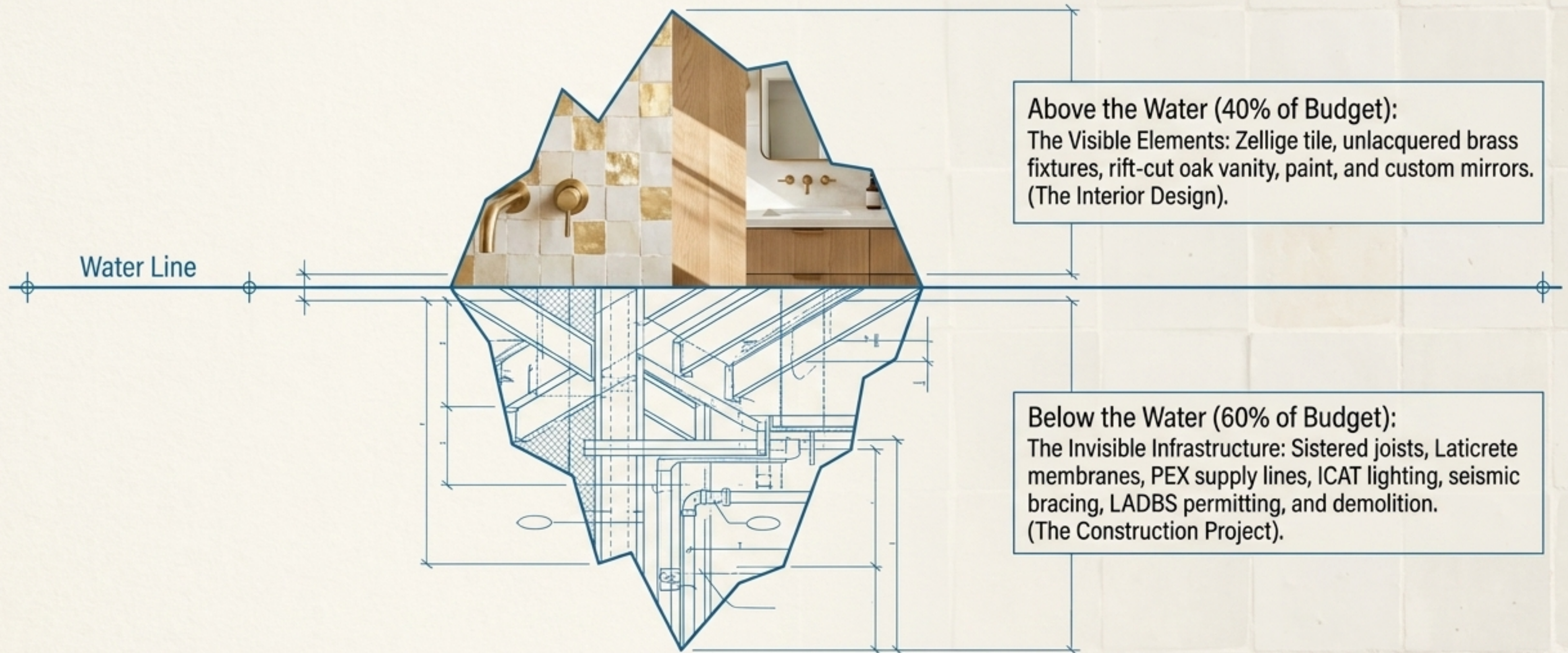


Title 24 Mandates

- Lighting: High-efficacy LEDs required. Recessed lights must be ICAT (Insulation Contact Air-Tight) rated.
- Ventilation: ENERGY STAR rated fans, ducted outside, controlled by mandatory humidity sensors to reduce state energy consumption.



The Renovation Iceberg: A Highly Technical Reality



A bathroom remodel is fundamentally a technical construction project. The safety and long-term value of the home depend entirely on the quality of the work beneath the surface.

A Restorative Retreat Born from Structural Integrity

The final space feels boundless and serene, flooded with soft afternoon light. The unlacquered brass is already developing a subtle patina, a testament to embracing living materials.

By accepting the technical realities of an older home and investing heavily in unseen infrastructure, the homeowners didn't just build a beautiful room—they secured the long-term integrity of their home while completely reshaping their daily rituals.

