

Contractor Bid Comparison Analysis

Bathroom remodel | Pasadena, CA

1. Executive Summary

All three bids cover the same hall bathroom gut remodel at 1234 Example St, but they price very different amounts of work. Budget Bath Example Co. looks cheapest at \$25,800, Sample Bath & Tile Inc. comes in at \$29,200, and Placeholder Design-Build LLC is highest at \$37,700. Once you equalize the scope so each bid is paying for the same finished bathroom, the picture changes: Budget Bath Example Co. is missing permits, the dumpster, tile material, fixture material and the shower door, which adds \$7,250 back into its number for an adjusted total of \$33,050.

After that adjustment, Sample Bath & Tile Inc. at \$29,200 becomes the lowest bid, Budget Bath Example Co. moves to \$33,050, and Placeholder Design-Build LLC stays at \$37,700 because its bid needed no adjustment at all, it already prices permits, PM, design, and every material allowance inside its stated figure. The remaining gap between Placeholder and the other two is mostly a genuine difference in finish level and service (design support, a dedicated project manager, upgraded waterproofing and a heated floor), not a missing-scope problem.

Some of the adjusted figures here rest on numbers borrowed from a competing bid rather than a quote from that contractor. Treat those as placeholders to get confirmed, not promises of what Budget Bath Example Co. would actually charge once allowances are finalized.

2. Headline Totals

RECONCILED TOTALS

CONTRACTOR	AS BID	ADJUSTMENTS	ADJUSTED TOTAL
Budget Bath Example Co. Lic #0000001	\$25,800	\$7,250	\$33,050
Sample Bath & Tile Inc. Lic #0000002	\$29,200	\$0	\$29,200
Placeholder Design-Build LLC Lic #0000003	\$37,700	\$0	\$37,700

As bid: Budget Bath Example Co. \$25,800, Sample Bath & Tile Inc. \$29,200, Placeholder Design-Build LLC \$37,700.

Adjusted for equal scope: Sample Bath & Tile Inc. \$29,200, Budget Bath Example Co. \$33,050, Placeholder Design-Build LLC \$37,700.

- Budget Bath Example Co. is \$3,850 above Sample Bath & Tile Inc. once adjusted; as bid it looked \$3,400 below. The order flips.
- Budget Bath Example Co. is \$4,650 below Placeholder Design-Build LLC once adjusted; as bid the gap was \$11,900. The gap narrows sharply.
- Sample Bath & Tile Inc. stays \$8,500 below Placeholder Design-Build LLC both as bid and adjusted, since neither of those two bids needed any change.

3. What's Driving the Differences

The main driver of the spread is what's actually inside each stated price. Budget Bath Example Co.'s \$25,800 is a labor-heavy number: it installs tile, fixtures and accessories the owner has to buy separately, and it leaves out permits, the dumpster, and the shower door altogether. Sample Bath & Tile Inc. and Placeholder Design-Build LLC both fold permits, dumpster, tile material and fixture material into their totals, so their headline numbers already reflect a more complete project.

The remaining difference between Sample Bath & Tile Inc. and Placeholder Design-Build LLC is a finish and service-level difference, not a scope gap: Placeholder adds a dedicated project manager, design drawings, Schluter Kerdi waterproofing, a curb-less shower pan with linear drain, a heated floor mat, frameless glass, a new solid-core door, and a richer \$14/sf tile allowance versus Sample's \$8/sf. Those are real upgrades a homeowner can choose to want or skip, rather than something missing from Sample's bid.

4. Key Scope Items to Normalize

Budget Bath Example Co. - the equalization walk

- As bid: \$25,800
- + \$1,850 permits and one re-inspection (borrowed from Sample Bath & Tile Inc.'s priced line, Budget Bath Example Co. has not priced this)
- + \$950 dumpster, haul-away and disposal (borrowed from Sample Bath & Tile Inc., unpriced in this bid)
- + \$800 tile material for 100 sf at the \$8/sf allowance Sample Bath & Tile Inc. states (Budget Bath Example Co.'s allowance is undetermined)
- + \$2,400 toilet, vanity, faucet, trim and accessories material at the allowance Sample Bath & Tile Inc. carries (Budget Bath Example Co. prices labor only)
- + \$1,250 framed glass sliding tub door, supplied and installed, at Sample Bath & Tile Inc.'s priced figure (excluded in this bid)
- Adjustments total: +\$7,250
- Adjusted total: \$25,800 + \$7,250 = \$33,050

Sample Bath & Tile Inc. and Placeholder Design-Build LLC

Neither bid needed an adjustment. Sample Bath & Tile Inc.'s \$29,200 already carries permits, dumpster, tile and fixture allowances, and the glass door. Placeholder Design-Build LLC's \$37,700 already carries all of that plus design, project management and its upgraded finishes, so each stays at its as-bid figure.

A few items in Sample Bath & Tile Inc.'s bid were left unpriced rather than adjusted, because they're upgrades only Placeholder Design-Build LLC offers and the homeowner may not want them: design and selections support, a dedicated project manager, a heated floor mat, a recessed medicine cabinet and shower niche, and a new solid-core door. These are service and finish choices, not gaps in Sample's base scope, so no dollar figure was added for them.

THE EQUALIZATION WALK

Every adjustment used to reach the adjusted totals is listed below, with where each figure came from.

Figures marked ASSUMED are not quotes from that contractor. Where a figure is taken from another bid, it is that contractor's price for their own scope and may be higher or lower than what this contractor would charge. They have not priced the item at all. Treat every assumed figure as a placeholder until the contractor gives you a real number. The follow-up questions are written to get you those numbers.

Budget Bath Example Co. (Lic #0000001): \$25,800 as bid

ADJUSTMENT	AMOUNT	BASIS
City building, plumbing and electrical permit fees plus one re-inspection ASSUMED	\$1,850	Assumption: Lic #0000002 prices permits and plan check at \$1,850.00. Lic #0000001 excludes permits and has not priced them; actual fees may run higher or lower.
Dumpster rental, debris haul-away and disposal ASSUMED	\$950	Assumption: Lic #0000002 prices dumpster and haul-away at \$950.00. Lic #0000001 excludes it and has not priced it.
Tile material (100 sf) at the allowance another bid states ASSUMED	\$800	Assumption: Lic #0000002 states a tile allowance of \$8.00/sf over 100 sf = \$800 of material inside its price. Lic #0000001 has no tile allowance set and may price it differently.
Toilet, vanity with top, faucet, tub/shower trim and accessories (material) ASSUMED	\$2,400	Assumption: Lic #0000002 carries a \$2,400 fixture allowance for the same items. Lic #0000001 lists labor only with the allowance to be agreed after signing.
Framed glass sliding tub door, supplied and installed ASSUMED	\$1,250	Assumption: Lic #0000002 prices a framed sliding glass tub door at \$1,250.00. Lic #0000001 excludes the shower door entirely.
Total adjustments \$7,250. Adjusted total: \$25,800 + \$7,250 = \$33,050.		

100% of that adjustment value is assumed rather than quoted by this contractor. Treat the adjusted total as indicative until they price the items themselves.

WHAT NONE OF THESE BIDS COVERS

These costs are missing from every bid, so they are not part of any adjusted total above. Adding them would move all the numbers equally and tell you nothing about which bid is better. You will still need to budget for them.

ITEM	AMOUNT	NOTE
Asbestos or lead testing and abatement	\$500-\$5,000	No bid covers hazardous material testing or abatement. In a pre-1980 Pasadena home this is a real possibility; budget for testing at minimum.
Repair of hidden rot, water damage or concealed conditions found behind the walls	\$500-\$4,000	All three bids handle this by change order or exclude it outright. Hold a contingency of roughly 10% of the contract price.
Tile and fixture selections above the stated allowances	\$0-\$3,000	Lic #0000001 has not set allowances yet, Lic #0000002 sets \$8/sf tile and \$2,400 fixtures, Lic #0000003 prices fixtures outright at a higher spec. If you want premium tile or fixtures, that upgrade is on you with any of them.

Budget roughly \$1,000-\$12,000 on top of whichever bid you choose.

5. Finishes & Materials

The tile allowance differs meaningfully: Budget Bath Example Co. hasn't set one yet and bills overages at cost plus 20%, Sample Bath & Tile Inc. sets \$8.00/sf, and Placeholder Design-Build LLC prices porcelain large-format tile at \$14.00/sf with a heated floor mat underneath. The fixture package follows the same pattern: Budget Bath Example Co. installs owner-supplied fixtures with no allowance set, Sample Bath & Tile Inc. carries a \$2,400 allowance for a standard toilet and vanity package, and Placeholder specifies a wall-hung vanity, comfort-height toilet and brushed-nickel Delta fixtures by model with no allowance cap.

Waterproofing is worth asking about directly. Budget Bath Example Co. only says "waterproofing as needed" without naming a product, while Sample Bath & Tile Inc. specifies RedGard and Placeholder specifies the Schluter Kerdi system with a curb-less pan. Lighting, ventilation and the shower enclosure also step up noticeably from Budget Bath Example Co. (vanity light and fan wiring only, no recessed cans, no glass door) to Sample Bath & Tile Inc. (4 recessed lights, vented 80 CFM fan, framed glass door) to Placeholder Design-Build LLC (5 recessed lights, 110 CFM humidity-sensing fan, frameless glass, heated floor).

6. Red Flags

- **50% deposit exceeds California's legal limit (Lic #0000001):** Budget Bath Example Co. asks for a \$12,900 deposit at signing, 50% of the contract. California caps home improvement deposits at 10% of the contract or \$1,000, whichever is less. This deposit is well above that limit and should be renegotiated before signing.
- **Open-ended material allowances with a markup on overages (Lic #0000001):** Budget Bath Example Co. leaves both the tile and fixture allowances undetermined until after the contract is signed, and bills any overage at cost plus 20%. That 20% markup on uncapped allowances is worth negotiating down or fixing in writing before you sign.
- **Bundled design/permit/PM line can't be broken out (Lic #0000003):** Placeholder Design-Build LLC's \$4,200 line combines design, permits and project management into one figure, so there's no way to see what the

permits alone cost compared with the other two bids. Ask for an itemized breakdown.

7. Follow-Up Questions

FOR ALL CONTRACTORS

- Before you sign: ask each contractor for their license number in writing and confirm it at [cslb.ca.gov](https://www.cslb.ca.gov).
- Before you sign: get the warranty term and what it covers in writing, since none of the three bids state one.
- Ask each contractor what waterproofing product they'll use and get the brand named in the contract.
- Confirm how asbestos/lead testing and any hidden rot or water damage found during demo would be billed, since all three bids exclude this.

FOR BUDGET BATH EXAMPLE CO. (LIC #0000001)

- Ask Budget Bath Example Co. to set firm dollar allowances for tile and fixtures before signing, rather than leaving them to be determined after the contract is in place.
- Ask whether the 20% markup on allowance overages is negotiable or can be capped.
- Ask who supplies the exhaust fan unit and what model, since the bid only wires to the fan location.
- Ask whether permits and the dumpster can be added to the contract price now, since both are currently the owner's responsibility.
- Ask what waterproofing product will be used, since the bid only says "waterproofing as needed" without naming one.
- Before you sign: ask Budget Bath Example Co. to lower the 50% deposit to meet California's legal limit of 10% or \$1,000.
- Ask whether new shut-off valves are included with the supply line work.
- Ask whether a final construction clean is included, since the paint and finish line doesn't mention one.

FOR SAMPLE BATH & TILE INC. (LIC #0000002)

- Ask Sample Bath & Tile Inc. whether protection of adjoining rooms and dust control is included during demo.
- Ask what happens if the main drain needs to move more than 3 feet, since that's explicitly excluded.
- Before you sign: confirm the payment schedule and deposit amounts in writing.

FOR PLACEHOLDER DESIGN-BUILD LLC (LIC #0000003)

- Ask Placeholder Design-Build LLC to itemize the \$4,200 design/permits/PM line so you can see the permit cost on its own.
- Ask whether towel bar, paper holder and other small accessories are included, since the bid doesn't list them separately.
- Before you sign: ask how long this price holds beyond the stated 30 days.

8. Closing Summary

Once scope is equalized, Sample Bath & Tile Inc. is the lowest bid at \$29,200, with Budget Bath Example Co. close behind at an adjusted \$33,050 and Placeholder Design-Build LLC highest at \$37,700. The big move is Budget Bath Example Co.: its as-bid price looks like the deal of the three, but \$7,250 of that gap is permits, dumpster, tile material, fixture material and the shower door that the owner would otherwise have to cover separately.

What's left to settle is less about missing scope and more about service level and finish. Placeholder Design-Build LLC's extra cost buys a dedicated project manager, design drawings, upgraded waterproofing, a curb-less shower pan, a heated floor and frameless glass, all of which Sample Bath & Tile Inc. doesn't offer. Whether that's worth the premium depends on how much hands-on help you want during the job and how much you value those specific upgrades. Before signing anything, get firm allowances and a waterproofing spec from Budget Bath Example Co., ask Placeholder Design-Build LLC to break out its bundled design/permit/PM line, and bring every contractor's deposit and warranty terms in writing.

This comparison was written by AI, using a method built from real GreatBuildz bid comparisons and tested for accuracy, and no person reviewed this particular report. Check every figure and conclusion against the original bids before you make any decisions.