

FROM UNUSED STORAGE SPACE TO DELUXE LIVING AREA

This renovated lower level showcases natural materials and fine finishes



Rachel Lincoln Photography

Crown mouldings and a built-in entertainment unit create a lower-level living area that is tailored yet comfortable.

Many finished basements are an afterthought, a place to locate a seldom-used ping-ping table or a daybed for overnight guests. For Brian and Sandy McGorman, however, their lower level is an extension of their main floor.

The couple, who live in Old South London, made a deliberate attempt to continue a theme from their formal main floor to their more casual lower level. Crown mouldings, built-in cabinetry, and natural slate and cherry finishes create a living area that is tailored yet comfortable.

Brian McGorman says homeowners shouldn't think of their lower level as a secondary area. "Spend the money on finishes and take the time to do it like you would the rest of your house and then it becomes part of your house as opposed to a basement."

Brian and Sandy had several reasons for undertaking the renovation, including the need to accommodate a casual family room where they could watch television with their two young children. A wine cellar and a den - two elements Brian missed from the couple's previous home - were other priorities.

The McGormans, who purchased their stone-and-stucco home in 2007, undertook a four-month renovation, which was completed in mid-March. Interior designer Gary Nicholls reconfigured the previously finished space into a practical floorplan.

Marcus Plowright, owner of Anden Construction, carried out the renovation, which entailed redirecting the ductwork to make the area warmer, upgrading the electrical panel and resolving other electrical problems by eliminating junction boxes in the ceiling - a requirement under the Ontario Building Code for enclosing a ceiling with drywall.

In accordance with Nicholls' floorplan, Plowright created an office, spa bathroom and laundry room for Sandy, a den and a temperature-controlled wine cellar for Brian, a playroom for the children and a central family room. The staircase leading to the lower level was also updated with custom-built oak railings, painted spindles and side trim. A 1,300-square-foot of finished space, was large enough to accommodate multiple functions.

"It's very unlike a basement," Plowright says. "The McGormans have created a retreat at home."

Sandy says she's grateful for the fact the lower level includes separate rooms, as well as one large area where family members can come together.

"It basically doubled our living space. When we lived here for that first year and a half, it was largely unused other than storage."

Key design elements include a built-in entertainment unit that conceals a home theatre system in the central family room; a white spa bathroom that incorporates two art niches, as well as crown mouldings, marble finishes and a heated floor; maple engineered hardwood flooring throughout the living areas; and cherry woodwork and traditional built-in cherry cabinetry in the den.

The McGormans believe it's important for homeowners to consider their future needs before they undertake a renovation.

"Spend the time and money on an excellent floorplan," Sandy says. "It will help define the spaces and help you really think more about how you're going to use the space."

Brian says he and Sandy are delighted with the results of their renovation. "The one thing about Anden that we really, really appreciated was the fact it was so obvious that their priority was to make sure that we were thrilled with the outcome."