

Sweet secondary suites can add value to a home



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More from Jacqueline Louie, for the Calgary Herald

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Thinking out efficient use of space, such as having laundry in a closet in the bathroom, helps with planning out a secondary suite. *LINDSAY NICHOLS PHOTOGRAPHY / CALGARY HERALD*

If you're planning to buy or renovate a home for rental income, how the space looks and feels will play a significant role in how much rent it can bring in.

Natalie Fuglestveit, principal interior designer at Calgary-based Natalie Fuglestveit Interior Design, recommends designing an inviting and comfortable secondary suite that offers broad appeal.

“Keep it simple. Ensure that interior selections are neutral so that the space will appeal to the majority of potential renters, who'll be able to easily picture their furnishings in the space. Make sure the space is welcoming and comfortable. They'll feel like they can make it their own home and are going to respect the space,” says Fuglestveit, who designed and built a secondary suite with her husband in a 1,250-square-foot, two-storey walkout. It was one of her early design projects, and the renovated space included a 700-square-foot basement suite as well as a suite on the home's main and upper levels.

When designing a secondary suite, Fuglestveit says, keep the following considerations top of mind.

Sound proofing

Consider adding additional insulation and include sound-dampening materials to ensure maximum privacy. If you go this route, it will cost more, so whatever you decide to do will depend on your goal for the space. Do you want to keep the space for you and your family's use or would you like to earn extra income by renting it out? Sound proofing will make it a more private space for the tenants who live there. Even if it remains family space, insulation provides sound-proofing to contain rec room noise, such as a loud movie night, or maintain quietness for a guest room.

Maximize light

Take advantage of all available natural light, and ensure the space is bright and well lit with appropriate fixtures and location lighting. If it's a basement, lighting becomes that much more important, Fuglestveit says.

“Lighting is really important, especially in the winter time. If you're in a basement suite, you want a well lit space so it doesn't feel dark and gloomy.”

Storage

Maximize every inch of space, and ensure that every item can perform a dual function whenever possible.

Durability

Select materials that will withstand high traffic, yet still look good five years or more down the line. For long lasting flooring, consider using materials such as vinyl hardwood or tile. While tile is cool underfoot, if people need additional warmth, they can always bring in their own area rugs.

Tile baseboards are a design option offering long lasting appeal, as are half walls in the bathroom, where the wall is tiled half way up, instead of being completely drywalled.

“It will keep everything looking better for a longer period of time,” Fuglestveit says. “You want all your materials to be durable. It's more beneficial to you to put down something like tile, vinyl hardwood or engineered hardwood – these are more durable hard surfaces that are easier to clean with tenants moving in and out.

“You want to think about the best bang for your buck, and how that suite is going to look after maybe three renters have been living there. By designing the space properly and using good materials, it can help reduce future maintenance.”

Heat

In a basement suite, consider including a controllable zoned heat source in the design.

Use and function

Consider how people will be using the space. Questions to ask yourself while planning out the space could include: Where are all the electrical outlets located? Will you require additional outlets for TV, phone chargers and small appliances? Could a pocket door work better than a standard door in a particular location? Should you add additional backing material, in case a renter would like to wall mount a TV instead of placing it on a stand? Will a cabinet door hit an adjacent wall?

Calgary Flyers



The image displays four overlapping flyer thumbnails. From left to right: 1. Ashley Furniture HomeStore flyer featuring a living room scene with a sofa and the text 'this is home'. 2. RONA Home & Garden flyer with a 'WALL TO WALL SAVINGS' banner and a '50% OFF' discount. 3. Sears flyer with a 'HAPPY RENEW YEAR' banner and a woman with luggage. 4. The Home Depot flyer with a 'PAINT SAVINGS' banner and various paint cans. Each flyer has a 'HOVER FOR FLYER' label and a corresponding logo below it.

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