



BASEMENT TRA

How to turn this storage space into the den of your dreams

Tired of walking down the steps to your basement and seeing stacked boxes of storage and clutter surrounded by cold, concrete walls? **What an eyesore.**

Home organization projects have massively increased in the past year. With all of the time people have spent inside their houses, they noticed the peeling wallpaper in the top corners of the ceiling, or realized that the overall feng shui of the room isn't quite "feng shui-ing" as well as it used to.

While bathrooms and kitchens are popular renovation areas, basements are the underground underdogs.

"Basements are the fun area of the house," Lucia Palmeri said. "It's where the family will gather and spend a lot of their time together." Palmeri and her partner, Lauren Woods, are the principal interior decorators of Decorating Den Interiors in Ramsey. "When you have a finished basement, it adds more value to the home and it makes for more usable space, so if you have a decent amount of square footage, why not use it!"

The duo is currently working on a 3,000-square-foot basement project that will function in many ways. "We are planning for a home gym, a wine cellar, storage and utility sections, two guest rooms, each with their own bathroom, an entertainment living area and a full bar." (The entire house is about 15,000 square feet, for size comparison.)

Basements are perfect for personalization, whether it be something as simple as decorative elements or as complex as a home theater setup. 🏡




TRANSFORMATIONS

This type of setup is considered a high-tier basement renovation due to its multifaceted elements and the intricacy of building out a gym and wine cellar. These types of premium executions can run anywhere from \$100,000 and up, in total, but it depends on the scope of the project.

"It all starts with conversation," Palmeri said. "Our initial consultation is always about requirements of functionality, and then we get to the aesthetics." The family went back and forth on whether to go with a traditional home theater, but they agreed the room

would better serve as more of a living room setting — used as a combination of entertainment space, lounging and gaming.

Palmeri pointed out that basements are perfect for personalization. "They are more casual spaces, so you could hang a few candid family photos and save the posed portraits for lining the hallway upstairs. Displaying sports memorabilia on shelves is also a great way to showcase team pride. From games to puzzles to favorite hobbies, there are hundreds of small ways to inject each person's unique interests."

Experts recommend **warm, neutral colors** to create a soothing environment. 



If you're working with a midrange budget, remember that you don't have to sacrifice all your decorating dreams. "It's doesn't always need to be 'sky's the limit,'" said Judy King, owner of Judy King Interiors. While a state-of-the-art home gym is nice, she pointed out, "You can create a similar effect just by adding a Peloton, a yoga mat, which can be rolled away and stored out of sight when not in use, a few free weights and a large mirror installation. It's that simple."

King said that when considering spatial constraints, there may be compromises here and there, but it's certainly doable. She emphasized that space saving is key. "We've implemented built-in TV units with a sliding barn door to conceal wires and electronics, and used murphy beds, which fold away into the walls, for overnight guests to use."

The Princeton-based interior designer has expansive knowledge in antiques and collectables and incorporates it into her various projects to add a touch of historical significance. Echoing Palmeri's sentiments of creating a basement that reflects the family's interests, King uses antique accents to serve as a rich reminder of the past and highlight the family's cultural ties.

In terms of color, King recommended warm, neutral colors. "I like descending into a basement that has a nice, soothing vibe — unless, of course, you're a family with small children, and it ends up being more of a playroom."

Christina Kim, of Christina Kim Interior Design, specializes in warm, soft and modern residential interiors and uses her keen eye to liven up a space that can often easily be dismissed as cold, dark or

Photos courtesy of Getty Images

Photos courtesy of Judy King Interiors



Judy King of **Judy King Interiors** uses antique accents and art elements to serve as a rich reminder of the past and highlight familial ties.

Whether it be an entertainment room, home office or kids' craft area, **basements are incredibly versatile** and can be transformed at almost any budget level into multifunctional spaces.



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Lucia Palmeri, co-principal, interior decorator, Decorating Den Interiors

Lucia Palmeri and Lauren Woods of **Decorating Den Interiors** use a software that creates 3D models to help clients visualize what their project could look like.

damp. "Most basements get a bad rep for being 'less than' the rest of the house," Kim said. "I like to go the extra mile in these spaces by adding little touches, like picture frame moldings, ceiling treatments and framed art, which does not have to be expensive."

For those opting for a lower-tier basement renovation and have under 1,000 square feet of space to work with, Kim suggested trying to make bolder design choices, noting that a brass faucet or deep paint color can go a long way.

"The key to effectively knowing where to save and spend your budget is to begin with a strong design concept." In other words, pin down the color palette, finishes and vibe of the space before you begin your renovation. "If you have to scale back on a wood ceiling treatment, for example, then bring that wood element out somewhere else such as in floating wood shelves. When I'm working with a tight budget, I know

I've got to take a few bold design risks to carry the concept throughout the rest of the space."

Her firm, which is located in Manasquan, generally services Monmouth and Ocean counties — regions where flooding is particularly prominent. If you live near the coast, Kim advised against attempting to finish a basement until you are sure that it is flood-proof (or as best it can be). "Water issues may be corrected with sump pumps or French drains, however, some homes will never be able to have a finished basement without the threat of water seeping in downstairs." Make sure you know what you're up against before you start swinging hammers.

Whether it be an entertainment room, home office or kids' craft area, basements are incredibly versatile and can be transformed at almost any budget level into multifunctional spaces that suit the entire family. ❖



Photos courtesy of Decorating Den Interiors