

Basements

So you have purchased a new home and the basement is totally unfinished...a new slate ...no one else's mistakes or cover ups. As a former renovator the best advice that I can give you is.... live in the house for one full year before you do any renovations. As a home owner you need to see how the home will react through all 4 seasons, will it leak, will it be damp, will it be cold, will it settle? So you want to go forward and start to develop the space, always important to have a plan on paper not just in your head. Ideas to keep in mind. As a home inspector I am asked quite often for my opinion on an unfinished basement so hence my blog! So I tell my clients that some things to consider would be, what are you going to do with the space, bedrooms, bathroom, family room these are the usual choices depending on floor size. The most important thing in my mind is, that you have a plan in place and get the proper building permits for them (or hire an architect). If you are going to do the work yourself, the planning departments are very co operative in helping you adjust your plans so that they will meet the necessary code requirements. You will need to know specifics like plumbing and proper venting for a bathroom, electrical (AFCI breakers will be needed for bedrooms, GFI's for the bathroom), will the Main service panel accommodate more circuits? Lighting will need to be adequate for all rooms (better too much than not enough)! Points of Egress i.e.) window size for the bedrooms. Type of door that will be used and their placement. Secondary heat- if you are planning for a fireplace of some sort (wood, gas, propane, electric) you will need to know the requirements/clearances which in turn will dictate its placement in a room. Heating and cooling requirements (vents and a cold air return). Do you want to install a noise barrier in the ceiling? What type of insulation/vapor barrier will you use fiberglass, comfort batt, spray foam? Flooring, what type of flooring will you want (carpet, ceramic, laminate)? Will a sub floor be used and if so what type? Do the floors need leveling before you start (if you decide on using ceramics ... will you install in floor heating otherwise the floor will be cold in the winter)?Wall and ceiling finish, most homeowners choose drywall but in choosing drywall, I recommend moisture resistant drywall on all exterior walls. Always remember that access must be left for clean outs and water/gas shutoffs. What type of studs will you use? Moisture/mold resistant blue wood has become popular on exterior walls and don't forget the sill gasket. These are just a few suggestions, but as you can see it can be a very daunting task to undertake a basement development. Always get permits and the inspections that go with those permits! If you get a contractor, get referrals and check him/her out and get several quotes. The opinions expressed in this article are based on the authors own personal opinion. Always seek professional advice when renovating a home.