



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION
of Dayton

Basements are going from Bleak to Chic

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The days of the dark and dank, paneled basement are rapidly becoming a thing of the past, replaced instead by media and game rooms, European-style pubs, wet bars and guest rooms.

New homebuyers by the drove are investing more of their money into their basements, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). While kitchens and bathrooms continue to lead the way when it comes to adding details and amenities into new homes, basements are quickly becoming the elaborate mainstay for the family entertainment area.

Since the exterior structure is in place, finishing a basement usually costs less than the cost of finished space upstairs, but because the possibilities may seem limitless when finishing lower-level space, so can costs. The numerous options that are available will require homebuyers to consider their design and cost options carefully.

There are many considerations when incorporating the lower level into how you will live in your new home.

There are typically two types of basements. The building lot may dictate the first decision that you choose. "Full" basements are what most people think of when they hear the word basement. They are usually found on building lots that are flat. In the past they had very small windows high above the floor of the basement. They seemed dark because of the lack of natural sunlight.

"Walk out" types (basements with the ability to walk directly out of a door on the lower level to the outside) are the most popular, but require a building lot that has the contour to accommodate this feature. These lots may require retaining walls and steps that add cost, but allow for outside entertainment areas to be adjacent and accessed from the lower level.

A hybrid type of basement is considered a "daylight" basement. The term refers to ability to have larger or even standard size windows in the lower level, bringing more daylight into the space. This is achieved by either lowering the ground level outside the window area or building larger window wells at each window. Since the building codes require each sleeping room to have an alternate exit, such as a window, the walk out and daylight basement types will allow additional bedrooms in the lower levels.

Next to consider is the basement wall height. Because the basement is typically where the distribution of plumbing and heating and cooling ductwork is located, ceiling height of the basement may be limited in some areas. Raising the basement wall height may give more headroom in those areas. Also keep in mind that columns will be required to support beams that hold up the floor system. There are many clever ways to disguise the columns or even work them into the final plans of the space. A couple of other things to consider may be a wider staircase and some soundproofing between the floors.

Now that the structure is in place, you can let only your imagination and budget hold you back with your ultimate basement plans. Simple spaces such as guest suites with large bathrooms can be included, but many homebuyers want to provide an experience in their basements. High tech home theaters are now rivaling what you get at the local cinemas. Game rooms complete with commercial video games are competing with the pool tables and dartboards for space in the lower level. Expansive pub style bars with stone, granite and fine wood finishes can seat many for an evening of entertaining. Fitness rooms with high tech fitness equipment, large mirror walls and saunas tuck nicely in a corner room. Even beautiful water features such as built-in aquariums can create a wonderful focal point.

So, as you can see, with a little planning, your new basement will be more than just a bleak place to send the kids, it will be the chic place to invite your friends!