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How to design a stylish basement

For style blogger and author Erin Gates and her family, livability is attractive, too, in their Newton home's basement.



JOYELLE WEST FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

An IKEA sofa that came in pieces was the only model Erin Gates could find that would fit down the narrow stairwell. Marble-topped end tables with brass legs are from Target. The CB2 Lucite waterfall-edge coffee table doesn't add bulk to the space. Oversize botanical prints bring color to the mostly gray, black, and white scheme.

By Jaci Conry | FEBRUARY 12, 2016

In the 1960s, homes had formal, polished living rooms — but the real living was done in the basement rec room. The aesthetic was simple: inexpensive rug atop cement floor, old living room sofa, maybe some dark paneling, a record player, a Ping-Pong table or a bar, and you were ready for leisure.

Transforming the bottom floor of a home into extra living space went out of fashion for a while. It's in again, and today, much more effort goes into creating comfortable, attractive basement living areas.

“People are going the extra mile and being thoughtful about what they do with the design. They're not just putting in crappy carpet,” says interior designer and blogger Erin Gates, who recently renovated the basement of her Newton home.

“Home values are so high now, people are staying put and using every square inch of their houses,” says Gates. “If the basement has decent ceiling height, it can be a great place to create a really amazing extra space.”



Before: A nonworking fireplace was removed to create more space. Since the room wasn't insulated, the walls and ceiling had to be taken down and replaced to meet code.

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