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G2 SPECIAL FEATURE **NEW HOMES & CONDOS**

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BASEMENT | Windows that let in natural light a plus

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While recessed LED lights are popular because they don't take up space or emit heat, points of natural light are in demand as well.

"In homes with smaller windows, we're digging from the outside, cutting into the foundation and creating larger windows," Renovco's Walter Assi said. "People are trying as much as possible to make the basement feel like just another room in the house. Natural lighting plays into that."

People are also installing elements that allow for extra sunlight.

"For example, if we put in a bedroom with walls that block a lot of light, we'll install French doors," he said. "That way the light continually passes through the glass to the rest of the basement."

In addition to lighting, the concept of a healthy basement is hugely important in modern home design. The term refers to having air quality and humidity levels in the basement that are identical to those of the rest of the home.

"We're always checking for water leaks, or any condensation in existing constructions," Assi said. "If it's an old basement, we also do decontamination and disinfection techniques on the site before we start the reconstruction."

When building or rebuilding a basement, one key task is to create a thermal shield in order to ensure no condensation or humidity penetrates.

"Insulation is very important, as is proper subflooring," he added. "The goal is to make the basement as comfortable as any other room."

Because basements have traditionally been used for functional purposes only, their ceilings have

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Walter Assi

usually been made of suspended, office-like tiling. But as the room has evolved over the years so, too, have the ceilings.

"We still use the concept of suspended ceilings but the materials and designs have changed a lot," Assi said. "They're much more domestic-looking and have richer designs, unlike their cold and commercial predecessors."

Despite the fact that these contemporary ceilings are slightly pricier than models of the past, consumers are choosing them in order to achieve a warmer look. They're also willing to pay for perks such as fireplaces.

"People love having fireplaces in their basements," Assi said.



COURTESY OF RONA

Windows that let in natural light, even small ones set high in a wall, help alleviate the subterranean feeling so many basements have. Increasingly, however, people are having such windows enlarged in an effort to make the basement feel more like just another room in the house.



COURTESY OF RENOVCO

A contemporary ceiling with special lighting, plus sufficient soundproofing makes this luxurious home theatre a wonderful basement feature.

"There are different options available, including gas and electric, and it's the perfect example of the type of luxurious design element that people never would've included in their basement in the past."

In addition to proper air qual-

ity and fireplaces, homeowners are also investing in soundproofing systems for their basements.

"It's important if you have a home-theatre system and want to watch movies without disturbing the rest of the house. Or if you have teenagers or kids, or you

plan on entertaining guests. It's always a good idea to get soundproofing; it really maintains the serenity in the rest of the house."

The common theme in all of these new decor and design techniques is that the entire notion of basements has changed.

"People are demanding a real living space now, so it's required a total rethink of the basement," Assi said. "It's a beautiful thing when people make the most of their space; I'm very happy to see that (basements) have evolved in this way."