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HOME
IMPROVEMENT

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The top 5 renovation projects for a more comfy home, courtesy of an award-winning designer

Canadian interior design expert Karen Sealy is known for making rooms beautiful. Here, she discusses her favourite ways to make a home not just attractive, but comfortable.



(CONTRIBUTED)

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When it comes to home improvement, people often concentrate on the aesthetics; the inviting colour on the walls, the coziness of the furniture or decorative elements around the house.

But in planning a renovation project, what you need to consider first are the things you don't see that significantly contribute to the home's overall comfort. True comfort starts with what's behind the walls, floors and roof. And with winter slowly making its way out, it's time to plan for a new season of renovations.

It's exciting to pick out the finishes that add wow to your space, but from a practical perspective, you must start with the structure; think of it like baking the cake before you can decorate it. Almost anyone can design a nice space, but if it isn't functional it's a waste of time and money. This is a philosophy I not only preach, but follow.

To keep temperatures cool, floors warm and maximize natural light (when we hopefully get more of it), I've handpicked my top five favourite renovation products from my new home to inspire your next reno project.

1. Go behind the walls.

Spray foam insulation like Icynene fills every nook and cranny between your walls. Unlike traditional fiberglass or cellulose insulation, Icynene spray foam insulate can safely go around wires and pipes and expands to 100 times its size for complete air sealing and thermal insulation year round. A spray foam insulated home not only keeps draft-free, but also keeps warm air inside during winter and retains cool air in summer. It also rejects bulk water to help prevent flooding (ideal for spring when floods are common post-winter melts). When installed, spray foam insulation improves indoor air quality, reducing the volume of allergens and pollutants. Another bonus for spring? It is not considered a food source for any pests, and the material makes it difficult for nesting. You can find a distributor in your area at www.icynene.com.

2. Choose new windows carefully.

Windows are a big investment. Ensure you understand the construction of your window and research the warranties. [Marvin Windows](#), which are made to order, have a 20-year warranty on their clad windows and can be customized to fit your measurements and colour preferences. The best part? Marvin offers more than 150,000 energy-efficient options for their windows and doors.

3. Reach for the skylight.

There is nothing like natural light filling the interior of your home – there are even studies that show positive health benefits of adding more daylight and fresh air to indoor space. With products such as the Solar Powered Venting Skylight by [Velux](#), you can illuminate your home with natural light and allow fresh air in to properly ventilate your home. The programmable skylight operates with a wireless remote control and comes with an integrated acoustic rain sensor, which will

automatically close the skylight should you forget, or if you are away from home when it starts to rain. There is no hardwiring required, so you can save on money by not having to hire an electrician. The air inside our homes can be two to five times more polluted than the air outside; a skylight, especially one that is energy efficient and solar-powered, can help circulate better air into your home.

4. Banish cold feet with warm floors.

No basement feels comfortable with a cold, damp floor, no matter what you throw onto it – concrete continually releases moisture, which causes constant cold discomfort. [DRICORE](#) Subfloor R+ is the solution. Designed specifically for the basement, DRICORE subfloors have a raised moisture barrier that covers the concrete to protect, insulate and cushion your finished floors. They have air gap technology to keep the floors dry and cosy all year round. The product can be purchased at your local Home Depot; it's quick and easy to install (a 500 sq. ft. installation can be done in an afternoon) and you can add your preferred finished floor – think engineered hardwood, laminate, carpet or ceramic tile. The best part is that it's proven to raise the temperature of finished flooring by up to 5.6 C.

Once the subfloor is in, a [Nuheat](#) mat can be secured to it. Nuheat radiant electric floor heating comes with innovative and energy-efficient heating technology and thermostats. The heat is delivered right to your feet, and since all surfaces in the room are also being heated, there are absolutely no cold objects to draw heat from you and make you feel cold. The product is easy to install and can be monitored using a Wi-Fi thermostat. It's also great if you have allergies or simply want to breathe cleaner air inside your home, as heated floors do not blow dust and allergens around and improve humidity levels.

5. Add style and comfort with an area rug.

Consider this product the function-and-fashion piece for your home. [Karastan's](#) SmartStrand Silk line comes in an array of colours and designs, but it's the construction of these carpets that make it truly special. There are over 700 fibres that compose one single strand of yarn, making it feel like the name suggests: silk. The best part? These individually packed fibers make for a durable, soft-to-touch rugs with built-in stain protection. They are also pet-proof, so if your four-legged friend has an accident, all you need is a little water and light detergent.

To see how my home renovation project is coming along, visit the [#PickeringProject on my site](#).



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