

Messy Junk Rooms No More

Designer Karen Sealy elevates every inch of her outdated, underused basement.

BY MARIE ALBERT

When Karen Sealy bought her bungalow in The Beaches, an area of Toronto known for its tiny, charming but notoriously storage-starved homes, the basement hadn't been touched in 35 years. "It was cinder block with fluorescent lights," notes Karen, who gutted it to the studs and even overhauled the neighboring garage, which was barely big enough to fit a Mini Cooper, to make way for a great games room. While she was at it, she turned a stair-side nook into a laundry zone with hideaway storage that looks like a million bucks—it has to, since it's open to passersby. Now, the 250-square-foot main room with a large custom sofa is an all-in-one media zone, office and guest space, with sailboat-inspired cabinetry that holds everything from books to office supplies to off-season clothing. For a finishing touch, Karen designed recessed lightboxes to highlight vintage photos.

To maximize every inch of this 14x18' media zone/guest room/office, Karen needed a showstopper: The deep custom sofa's removable bolsters make room for a king-size bed.



Once a Basement...

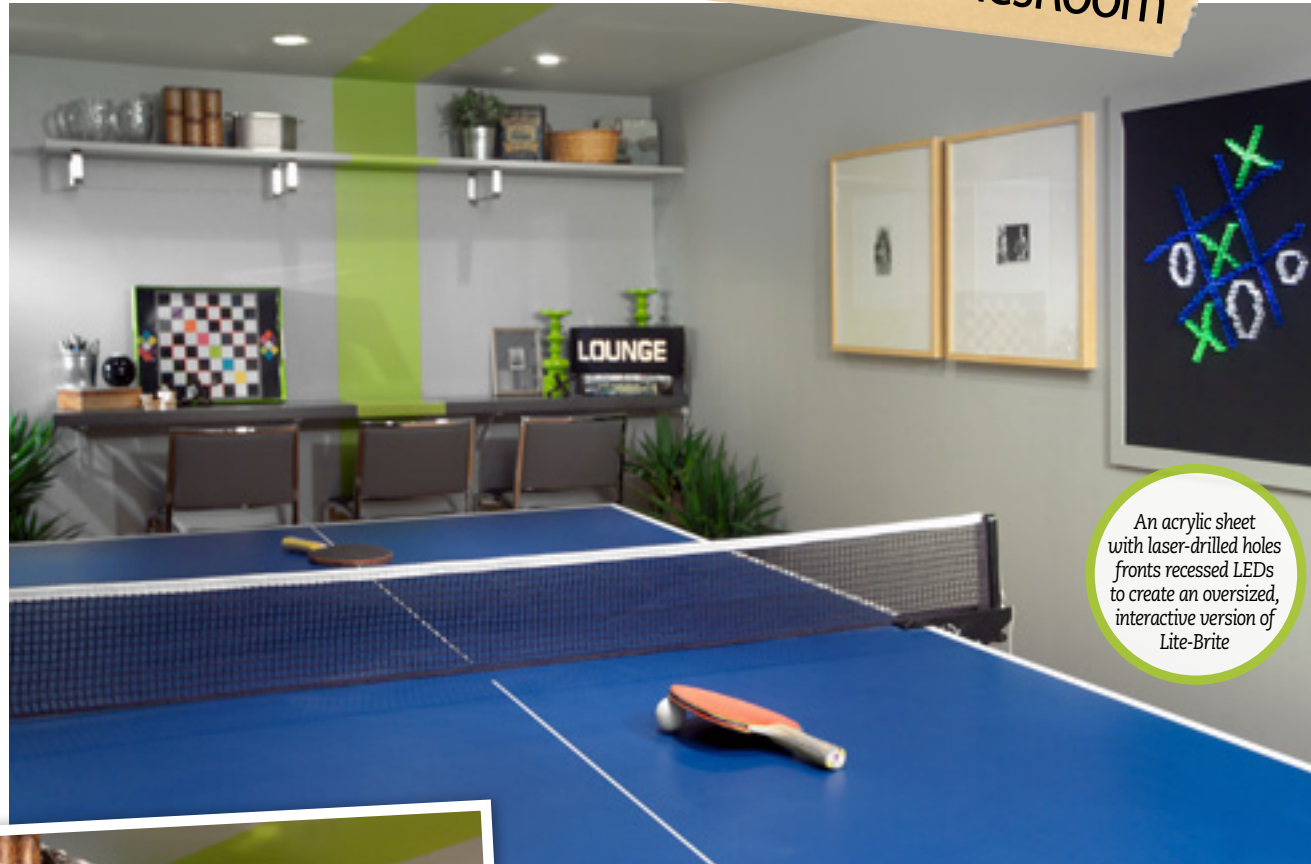
Save money on pricey upholstery, like this brushed suede, by covering the hidden sides of cushions with a less-expensive fabric

Above the built-in sofa, left, shelving provides a place to stash books and treasures as well as a surface for drinks when guests are reclined against the back of the 5-foot-deep sofa.

The basement ceiling is less than 7 feet, so Karen, who loves sailing, worked with the dimensions to recreate the look of a vintage boat's cabin, opposite lower. Walnut cabinetry boosts storage around the room and houses a shallow desk area. Carved wood vent covers dress up the ordinary, while recessed brass pulls on the drawers further the nautical theme.



Garage to Games Room



An acrylic sheet with laser-drilled holes fronts recessed LEDs to create an oversized, interactive version of Lite-Brite.

PHOTOS: ARNAL PHOTOGRAPHY



After coating the entire garage in a single color, *above*, Karen painted a chartreuse racing stripe around the room as an inexpensive but fun feature. A TV (not pictured) and lighting were recessed into walls to protect them from lively play.

Inexpensive off-the-shelf cabinets, *left*, form the base of the customized ping-pong table, whose top pivots to allow access to even more hidden storage for bulky items, like luggage, under its center. Genius!

A shallow slab of green quartz makes the base for a cozy bar area, *far left*, complete with seating for watching the game. Underneath, cork was installed to warm up the garage's concrete floor. It is easy on the feet, and it absorbs sound, too.



Good Looking Laundry Nook



To keep the area private but still let in natural light, Karen installed a voluminous, slightly opaque curtain, *above*, with a luxurious, thick hem.

Breathable basket drawers, *top*, take advantage of free space under the stairs. On the back wall, a small niche is embellished with dainty hooks for hanging wet items. Karen laminated the surface to protect it from moisture.

Cut-glass tiles from Edgewater Studio, *left*, add sparkle and texture to the backsplash above the folding counter. Reclaimed-wood shelving adds a warming contrast to the swanky glass while acting as a handy supply surface.

When installing cabinetry near a ceiling, be sure to test that doors will be able to open without hitting light fixtures



With no room for doors, Karen's goal was to make the laundry area beautiful. She saved money on plain cabinetry to splurge on fancy eye-level finishes like marble and glass tile.