

Renovators rapt with professional help

It's good to know all your options when you are thinking about renovating and that's exactly what this Ngaio couple discovered when they got professional help with their project.

TURNING a "damp and cold" Ngaio home into one that was warm and inviting had as much to do with choosing the right colours as solving the drainage and heating problems.

"What was a tired, unloved ex-state house is now a lovely, contemporary family home," says project manager Fiona Ogilvie, of realtyRETURNS The Property Improvers.

"And that's partly due to a consistent colour scheme that reflects the light so well and makes the house so warm."

realtyRETURNS organises and oversees renovations for people who have neither the expertise nor time to do it themselves.

"We work with clients who have busy lives: professional couples who may work long hours, families with busy schedules, people who have a dream for their home but don't want to spend the time and energy learning everything there is to

know about the building industry to realise their dream," Fiona says.

"We can arrange and manage everything so they can just focus on the big picture and let us worry about all the details."

Friends who had used realtyRETURNS recommended its services to the owners of the Iwi St property.

"They met with us as they were buying this house and gave us their wish list, timeframe and budget," Fiona says.

"We were able to complete the renovation within their pre-Christmas deadline so they could enjoy Christmas in their first proper 'home' in New Zealand."

The renovation included a custom-designed kitchen, bathroom and ensuite; painting inside and out; fitting new lighting; repairing and staining floorboards; laying carpet; installing a central heating system; custom-making cabinetry; tiling; adding insulation; remedial

drainage work; landscaping and fencing, and building a shed.

While the owners had a clear idea of what they wanted to do with the ex-rental property, they were open to suggestions.

For instance, they planned to replace the dark, unwelcoming blue kitchen with one that was all white, from the cabinetry and benches to the appliances.

"Having everything white would have looked too stark," Fiona says.

realtyRETURNS' architectural designer selected Resene Craigieburn beige as the base for the house's colour scheme, which he then integrated into the kitchen design.

"We went through the house room by room with the painters, who recommended using a combination of quarter-Craigieburn and half-Craigieburn depending on the light in each area, with the half being used for the lighter areas," Fiona says.



Before and after: A light and airy look to the new custom-designed and built kitchen.

"In the end we went for stainless-steel appliances because they tied in better with the colour scheme and added to the overall contemporary look of the sleek new kitchen."

The clients also opted for a Formica bench and surface-mounted lighting.

There's a wide range of each to choose from, and surface-mounted lighting also doesn't compromise ceiling insulation.

While the 140-square-metre dwelling's original native timber floorboards were beautiful, too many had been patched. With others needed patching, it was clear sanding and polishing would only highlight their imperfections.

Instead, they were stained in a warm chocolate shade so they would look the same throughout the three-bedroom house.

"My clients were particular about the floor stain, so we got in the experts to try sample stains," Fiona says.

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Bright result: The renovation at Iwi St included a custom-designed kitchen, bathroom and ensuite; painting inside and out; fitting new lighting; repairing and staining floorboards; laying carpet; installing a central heating system; custom-making cabinetry and tiling.

Bright result a real winner

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GENERALLY, Fiona consults with clients about what would best suit a house, then sources two or three options to show them.

Sometimes she has to use her contacts to find specific items that aren't widely available, such as the unusually narrow vanities in the bathroom and ensuite.

"We were limited by the working space in the bathroom," Fiona says. "Because of how the door opened, we had to keep the toilet where it was. Therefore, we couldn't have a typical-size vanity.

"So I researched until I found the perfect vanity that would fit into the space, yet still provided enough storage."

Indeed, such was the tight configuration of the bathroom that the original bath had to be cut in half to take out through the doorway. The wall in the bathroom was tiled with 450x450mm Millennium Stone. Where space is at a premium bigger tiles are recommended, because there will be fewer grout lines, thus making a room feel less hemmed in, Fiona says.

"Generally, if you prefer rectangular tiles it is best to run them vertically on the walls, as installing them horizontally in a small space can make the ceiling seem lower and the room smaller. "If you tile only halfway up the wall in a small room it can appear to cut the room in half, which is why we decided on floor-to-ceiling tiling.

"All tiles throughout the house were in the sisal tones, including the kitchen splashback, which has vertical Contempo Cafe tiles, and we used glass mosaic tiles above the vanity in the ensuite."

Fiona says renovations of this scale typically start from \$100,000. Clients who don't want to move can often spend more than \$250,000 if their project involves structural work.

She points out realtyRETURNS can help clients to save money because of its buying power,

streamlined processes and relationships. "We also look at where clients are spending their money to ensure they are getting the best result.

"We have had a number of clients who are project managers by day and know how much is involved. The last thing they want to be doing is project-managing their own renovation."

The owners of Iwi St agree. "We had high expectations so were probably a nightmare of a client – despite Fiona assuring us we were not.

"As we hadn't lived in the house, and didn't want to before the renovation was complete, we had a lot of decisions to make in a very short time if we wanted to be in by Christmas.

"Because our working weeks were so full, we would happily spend time in the weekends at the house looking over the various choices Fiona provided us.

"Some of our original choices were made in haste as we were so busy, so being brought other options allowed us to reconsider some of our previous decisions.

"Sunday evenings would then become long-emails-to-Fiona evenings, which she didn't mind at all, sometimes with the decisions she needed but more often even more questions for her.

"Our dithering was always met with fast and thorough responses which helped us to focus and prioritise.

"In an ideal world we would have liked to have done the project-managing ourselves but we work fulltime and don't have the time, contacts or knowledge in the building industry."

■ realtyReturns will be at Wellington Home Exhibition next weekend at TSB Bank Arena, Queens Wharf, in Wellington. There will be more the 100 exhibitors at this event, which runs Friday, Saturday and Sunday, offering inspiration and practical advice.

For more information go to: realtyreturns.co.nz homex.co.nz



Good living: A view of the lounge and dining area in the remodelled home.



Tiled effect: The smart new bathroom.



Outdoors: The exterior of the Ngaio home.



Bed time: A blind and matching lamps in the master bedroom.



Al fresco: French doors open to a decked back yard.