



THE
RESENE
EASY
DECORATING
GUIDE
PART EIGHT

TRANSFORM YOUR GARAGE

Renovating your garage can be a highly cost-effective way to ramp up the value of your property, writes **Sharon Newey**.

ONE OF THE easiest and most affordable ways to add value to your property investment may be staring at you in the face. That shabby old garage that's full of old paint cans, rusty bike frames, broken tools and a whole array of unwanted clutter can be resurrected as a living/sleeping space to generate extra income. The foundation, walls and roof are already in place. The wiring is probably sufficient and the entry already exists. In many houses, a well-designed garage conversion can create a new room or rooms that blend with the rest of the house.

You don't have to make permanent structural changes. It's more about recapturing under-utilised space. It's something many people do. But because this proposed change will result in the creation of a new household unit, the work must comply with the Building Act 2004 sections 112 to 115 and it will require building consent. The steps required to convert the garage will require compliance with the building code in all respects. This means, the building must

be safe and sanitary to live in, have proper insulation and meet heating and energy-efficiency requirements. Go to your local council for further information. But where to start?

First ask yourself what kind of space you want to achieve. Is there enough space to create several rooms in a self-contained apartment-style area? Or maybe space and budgetary limitations mean sticking to the basics with a more liveable studio/bedroom space that includes a kitchenette/bench-top arrangement along one wall with a small separate toilet tucked into a corner.

Once you've decided on the kind of space you want, consider whether or not you can do it yourself or whether it's best to bring in a professional builder, electrician and plumber to do the work. You may be able to do some of the work yourself but some areas are best left to the experts.

Whichever you choose, make sure you allocate realistic costings for the full scope of the work and only proceed if completing





Once a garage, now a home office with a sliding door for outside access.

RENOVATION: GARAGES



the project means realising a worthwhile increase in the property's yield. It's also prudent to check with a local real estate agent whether proceeding with your planned improvements will add to the property's value for resale. Badly planned, awkward-looking living areas may rob the property of what was considered valuable vehicle storage space.

One of the first ways you can improve a garage is to add wall and ceiling linings which immediately gets rid of the raw timber or aluminium beams that collect dust, cobwebs and clutter. Garages tend to be quite dark, so paint the walls in fresh, light colours or inject warmth with soft, dusky paint colours.

Masonry walls need to be cleaned thoroughly and a latex block filler applied to seal the pores. Sealing the walls from outside the garage will prolong the paint job

and keep dampness out.

Install more windows to bring in more natural light and add extra light fixtures with task lighting over the kitchen bench. You'll probably need additional electrical plugs on walls and unless you're an expert, it's advisable to get an electrician to do the work.

One of the best places to add style and colour to improve the liveability of a garage is the floor. Standard concrete floors are functional but in garages, they are often cracked and invariably greasy and grubby with unsightly oil, grease and rust spots.

Cracks are easily filled with special patching cement or with silicone caulk for the tiniest cracks. If you repair cracks before they get larger than the diameter of a pencil, it will keep them from spreading and causing more damage. You can do this repair yourself with simple tools or hire a

professional.

Concrete floors need to be cleaned thoroughly and prepared for their new role in life. If floors are bare concrete, use a diamond grinder or acid etch them. You need to rough them up a bit so that they have the feel of a medium grade sandpaper. Then paint them with a decking acrylic like Resene's Lumbersider or Resene's Sidewalk Paving Paint. If you want to leave the floor looking like concrete then use Resene's Cemseal which gives a wet, natural concrete look and stops the dust from rising. Or you could go for a totally clear finish with a concrete conserver or glaze which can be tinted or coloured to bring the concrete up with a nice shine.

If the floors have already been painted with either an epoxy resin or acrylic paint, remove it with a diamond grinder and start again and the original surface may lift

IS THERE ENOUGH SPACE TO CREATE SEVERAL ROOMS IN A SELF-CONTAINED APARTMENT-STYLE AREA?

your new coating. The key, as always, is to prepare well. If you don't get it right, the new paint will come off and spoil the effect.

Instead of having the conventional concrete floor in the garage, you can disguise any faults with a carpet or rugs. A variety of 100% polypropylene carpets especially for garages are available in different styles and colours, which are an inexpensive, hard-wearing flooring solution for a big area.

Adding a toilet to a garage is an issue where there are concrete slab floors. It's too much work to drill through the slab and install a drain and the pipe needs to be hooked up to an exterior waste water pipe. To overcome this problem, put in a p-trap

or wall-faced pan which discharges waste out the back into a drain so you don't need to touch the floor. In situations where the garage is in the basement of a home, you could install a flush-up toilet – one that flushes water up instead of down. There is no need for drilling or running pipe above the floor. It is hooked up directly to your waste water pipe and waste water is taken from the toilet to your existing ground water removal system.

These days you can buy tiny kitchenettes or compact modular kitchens that come complete with storage cabinets, sinks, hobs and small fridges. With their tiny footprint, they can easily be inserted into small areas. By putting a sink into a garage, you are turning the building into a dwelling and the garage must have a minimum floor level height. Check this with your local council. You'll need a plumber to connect to water systems and an electrician for the electrical fittings.

Uninsulated garages can be ridiculously hot in summer and in winter they tend to be cold, drafty spaces and expensive to heat.

To get rid of the drafts that creep in around big roller and tilt doors, replace them with a wall that provides a window and an opening door. While you're adding gip to the walls, you'll need to install insulation – otherwise your garage conversion simply won't comply with the building code. Insulation will make the garage a lot more comfortable for tenants – and the sound-proofing aspect will be appreciated. However, heating is still required in winter and it's preferable not to leave that option to your tenants given that the garage is usually a small space with inherent fire-risk problems.

One of the safest and most energy-efficient options is a wall-mounted heat pump/air conditioner which doesn't take up valuable floor space. Wall-hung radiators are also efficient space-savers.

Done well, a garage conversion will be a real asset, helping you to bring in additional income to recoup the cost of the project and making the property much more saleable when the time comes to eventually sell. ■