

How to Renovate for Rentals

Renovating rental properties can be quite a dilemma. The question you need to ask yourself is, 'What adds value and will attract a good tenant?' Stepping back and thinking about what the tenant wants is a good start. We all have a tendency to want to renovate the way we like things to be. A good example of this is bare floor boards. You and I may think that timber floors look amazing and are a great design feature. Tenants look at them as being cold and drafty in winter, and more of a hindrance than an interior design feature. This is obviously suburb dependant, but usually homes in the south and west of Auckland are in lower income brackets than homes in the eastern and northern suburbs. You can afford to heat your home in winter, your tenant may struggle to.

Although sanding timber floors is slightly cheaper than carpeting, if you do decide on floorboards over carpet, then you must also insulate under the house. Time is also a key factor during the renovation process, and laying carpet is much quicker. Also sanding and polyurethaning eliminates any other trades people in the house for at least three , further slowing down the renovations. We are not totally against wooden flooring, and it does work in some homes, but save those amazing floorboards for when you sell the house, not when you rent it, as this is when you will get the most potential from them.

Kitchens are a big expense if renovating any home. Please consider all your options before ripping out the perfectly ok kitchen in your rental property. Sometimes a good clean and change of handles is all that is required to transform the kitchen. Painting the kitchen cabinets is also a quick and cheap fix. Installing a cheap granite bench top may seem like a great idea, but this will not necessarily impress your tenant. If the existing bench top is in a state of disrepair then a standard bench top from Placemakers will do. As long as the colour palette works well together and you don't install a green based work top with the blue cabinets, because the green top was on special! Lino is also a good option for the kitchen (and bathroom) and is warm to walk on.

Below is an example of how a kitchen can be transformed by some paint and new handles.



The bathroom may only need a paint, clean and some new silicone around the bath and basin but we always suggest you install a new shower curtain (if the shower is over the bath) and a new toilet seat.

Another thing to take into account is the colour scheme. Neutral is always best so please do not paint your lounge feature wall maroon! The tenant needs to visualize their belongings in the house and if you choose a neutral palette then everything goes. We do not use grey based white as they can make properties look quite dark and dirty, we tend to go for green based neutrals such as Resene's Thorndon Cream or Resene's Joanna. Off white may be a great colour for your home but is too light for a rental property. The walls need to be able to withstand children's dirty hands and so choosing a slightly darker neutral saves repainting so frequently.

Always install curtains. You may think net curtains are the cheaper option, but what you don't want is for your tenant to try to hang their own curtains and tracks. Not only will they make a mess of your newly painted walls but the house will look messy when future tenants may view the property.

Light fittings are also something to think about. The glass light fitting on special in Lighting Plus may look great but can be easily broken. Go for plastic china man shades, they can be easily cleaned and *can not* be broken!! Also always check all of the light fittings are working and install light bulbs. This may seem petty but your tenant will complain if they move in and the light bulbs are not working. Also we always advise that if there is an open fire that the chimney be swept. You may want to do this prior to the painting.

That's the interior sorted, now to outside. The roof should always be checked for leaks, and any repairs carried out immediately. If the roof is iron then we advise painting the roof to tie in with the colour scheme of the house. It's amazing how a coat of paint can make the roof come up like new. Usually we advise a darker colour for the roof and a lighter colour for the weatherboards. A light to mid tone is usually suggested for the weatherboards as too light a colour will need cleaning more frequently, and too dark can be a maintenance nightmare and will show every imperfection. Windows should always be white, inside and out. This makes life easier for the painter as there's no cutting in, saving his time and your money. Ensure your builder unbids all windows prior to painting and make sure all windows are fitted with window hardware.

Below is an example of how giving the house and roof a fresh coat of paint can make a huge difference.

