

The Bathroom: Move it or Lose it?

Bathrooms are components to many a basement that I finish.

It used to be, many years ago, when I first started finishing basements that bathrooms were a rarity. Nowadays as basements are looked upon as more and more an extension of the house, many more people want one.

I'd like to go a bit further in depth with this article and give some additional supplementary material to what I wrote in "Basement Ideas."

Resale

Other than the bar/kitchenette area, the bathroom is generally the most expensive room per square foot of space in the basement.

Any new basement bathroom will help your home's resale value. I'm very often asked the question: "How much should I expect?"

I have seen reports as low as 40% for a return on a basement to as high as 96% return on investment. The honest answer is: "What you can get for it."

Odds are however, that the longer you remain in the home the better your chances are of recouping that money. If you remain for a very long time and as your home appreciates in value you may even see a "profit" on that investment.

Look at finishing your basement first and foremost in terms of how it will increase the quality of your life.

That being said, if one goes ahead and opts out of the bathroom those funds can be put somewhere else. A pool table or flat panel TV are options I would think of.

In my home we purposefully opted not to install a bathroom so the kids would surface now and then.

Consider too if you simply want a powder room or whether you should install a shower.

As the shower will add further expense, take an honest look at how often it will be used and if that usage warrants the extra investment. Don't rule out the: "want it, gotta have it" either. Validate that opinion too. If it makes you happy it should be done.

The Rough-in That Came With The House

The bathrooms placement is critical to the functionality of your space and really should be thoughtfully placed.

Many a tract home builder will offer the option of a basement rough-in for the new home. Unless you already know EXACTLY how you would like your basement finished, PASS. Often, the rough-ins are not well thought out.

In these instances I consult with the owners the available options:

- (1) Cap off the location, save the money and forget about it – especially if this particular spot could be put to a much better use.
- (2) Move the location to a more optimum place.
- (3) Live with it.

Other than option two, the potential for future regret enters in – if the bathroom rough-in was located poorly.

Think through to the future to decide which alternative is the optimum solution for you. Realize that creating a new bathroom location and the resulting additional rough-in cost is not exorbitantly excessive. Once the decision to change is made, you forget about the money and have piece of mind.

No Rough-in

No problem. Your basement floor is your canvas.

Design

Look to the plans I created in Plan Explorer as well as Basement Explorer and you'll see what I do. There are many plans with bathrooms of various sizes, shapes and locations. Adapt one to your project. There's a few here to get you started.

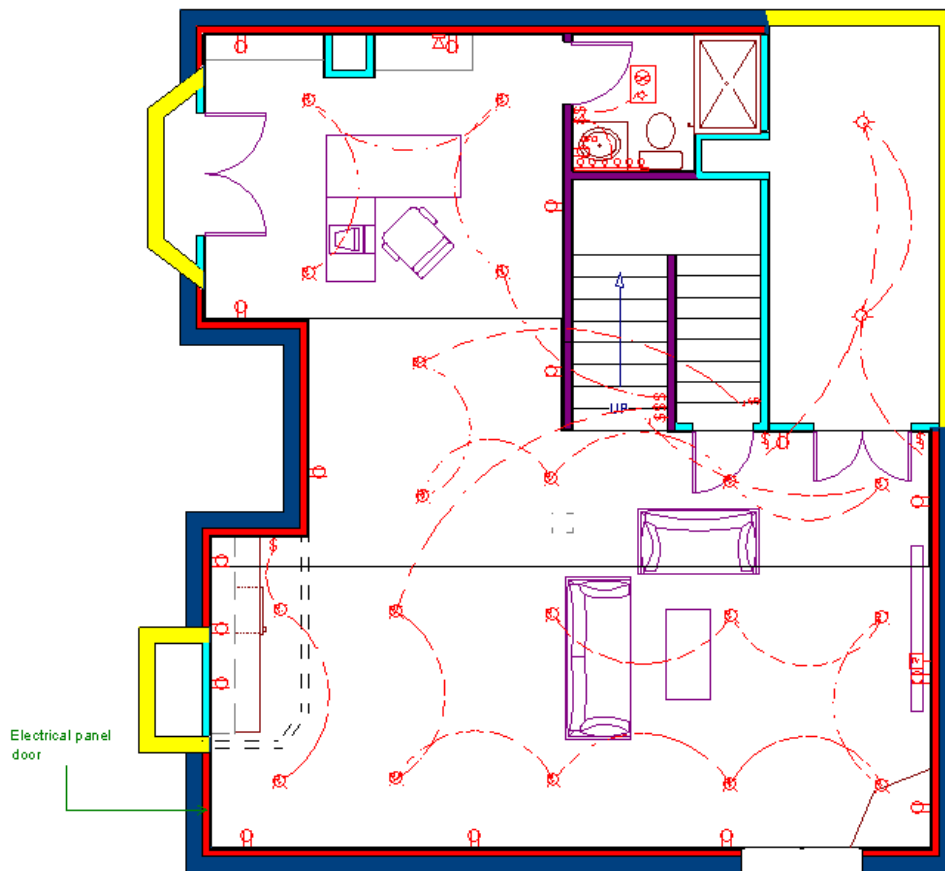
In terms of importances and weighing what my clients tell me here's my thinking:

- (1) If there is to be a bedroom in the basement I opt to put the bathroom somehow adjacent so there's a separate entrance if at all possible. The bathroom must also be set so that it still feels private to persons simply in the basement when they use it. If doing so takes up too much main room space or seems unaesthetic then I drop the idea of the bathroom next to the bedroom.
- (2) The next choice is to have the bathroom located somehow out of the way, maybe near the storage room or furnace room. It's important to make the entrance to the bathroom be somewhat private. Sometimes a good solution is to create a small hallway. The bathroom can be on one side and the storage or furnace room entrance on the opposite or adjacent wall.
- (3) If you have a shower, forced air heat and a lower ceiling, stay away from having the shower underneath the ductwork if at all possible. The space underneath may seem uncomfortably tight when taking a shower especially if lifting your arms overhead causes you to bump the ceiling.

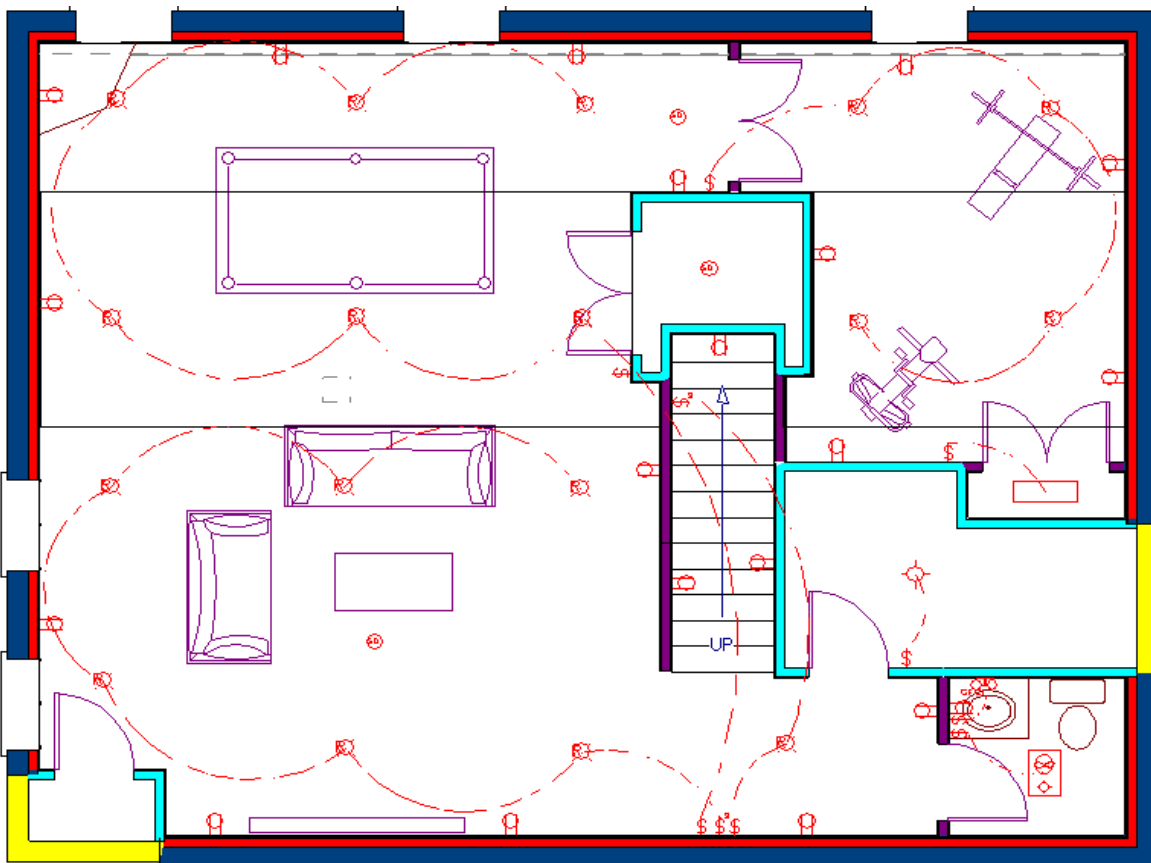
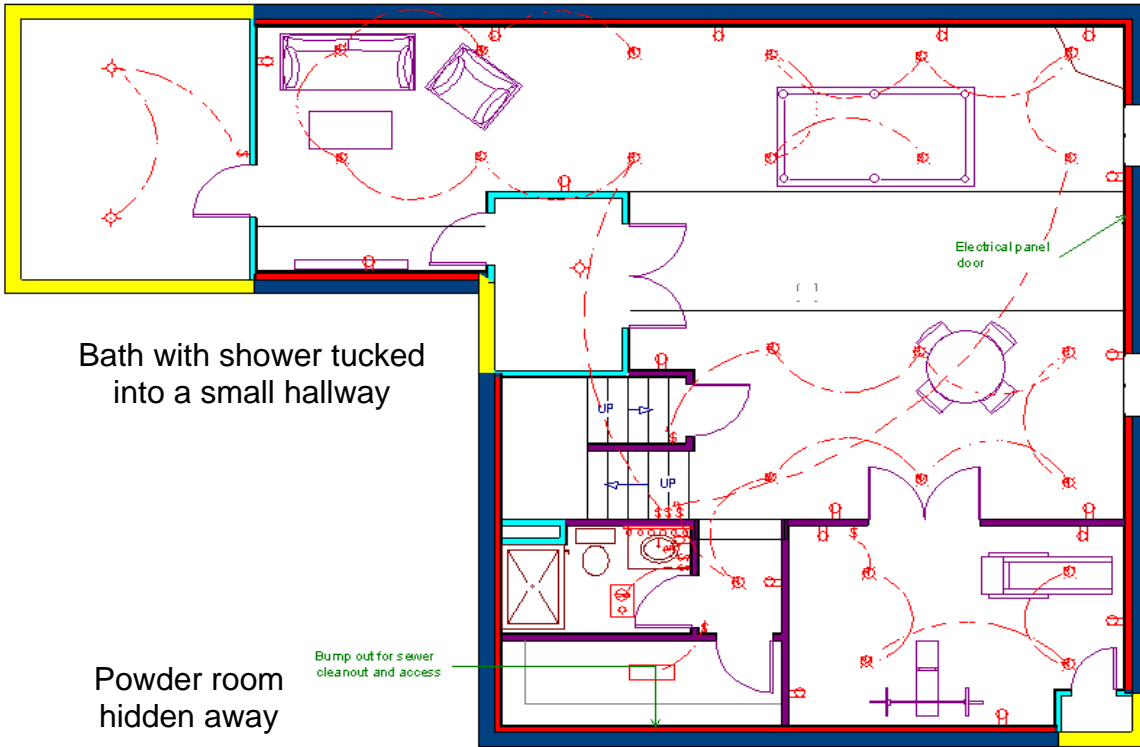
If absolutely no other location works, factor in annual use – you may need to tile the ceiling and the area above the shower surround to keep water from damaging the walls from frequent use.

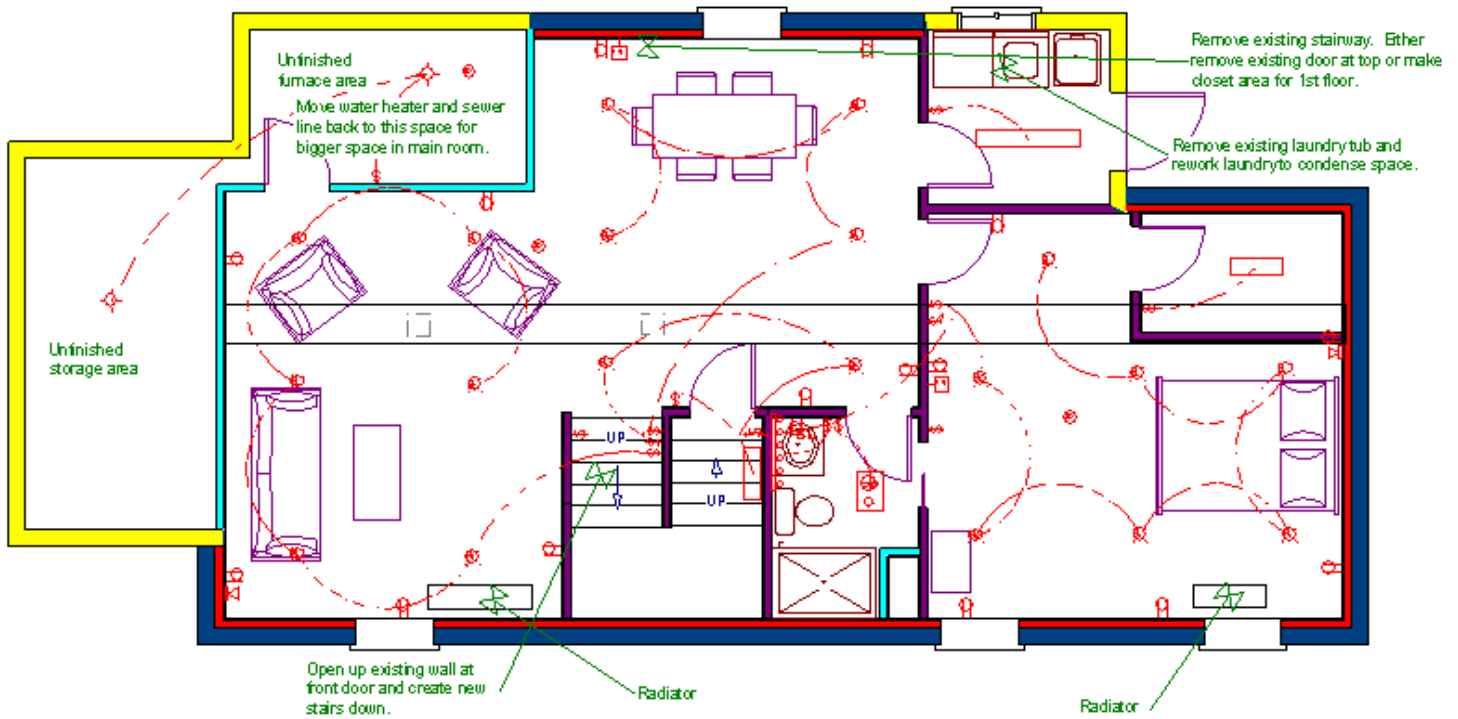
- (4) You'll need to designate a spot for an ejector pit and pump if none exists or your desired location is not nearby an existing one.
- (5) Make sure the doorway to the bathroom is across from the sink and not the toilet.
- (6) Placing the plumbing fixtures in a row makes it easier for the plumber – do this when possible.

In making decisions I look to functionality and aesthetics first, cost second. And if that doesn't work we re-evaluate the priorities and look for another solution until one is found that satisfies. There is a balance that can be achieved.



Bath with shower tucked out of the way.





Bath with shower adjacent to a
Bedroom. Bedroom has a private entrance
to the bathroom.