

Eight practical uses for that neglected living room

How to inject a little life into your otherwise unoccupied formal living room

If you are like most homeowners, your formal living room is useful for one primary thing: accumulating dust. Originally, formal living rooms were spaces in which special guests were entertained. However, as modern-day life has become more casual, so have our living spaces. Friends come in through the front door and are escorted to the family room, bypassing the formal living room all together.

That leaves you with a wasted space that can cost a mint to decorate. There are an endless number of ways to use this room that would increase its value to your family - and your home's value overall. Your options depend primarily on this room's location in your home.

If the living room is directly in front of the front door, the formal living room would be well suited to convert into a library or a reading den. In addition to reclaiming the functionality of the room, you would have a place to store your family's books that tend to accumulate and clutter shelves all over the house. You might also consider turning



it into a music lounge, where residents and guests alike might go to listen to, and play, music. In each of these situations, the room's aesthetic and functionality would still be suitable for its prominent location in the house, while also increasing its utility.

Another popular idea is to use the larger living room space, which often has a majestic fireplace and windows, as the formal dining room, with a larger and more elegant table, sideboard or butler and other appropriate furnishings. The smaller formal dining space can then be utilized as a cozy and intimate reading den or sitting room where you can still have coffee or tea with special visitors. This smaller dining space can also be converted into a functional home office.

Your number of options expand greatly the less the formal living room is visible. It can be transformed into a media or theater room, which has become incredibly popular, a billiard room and bar, a children's play room or even an exercise or craft room. The best room to convert into a media



Instead of having a living room that no one actually lives in, a slight change of theme can entice people to come in, sit down, and enjoy.

room would have doors and very few windows. Of course, if your house has an open floor plan, you can easily add doors and use heavy window coverings to block out the light. For the other usage alternatives, you would likely want to add doors to preserve the room's privacy or hide its clutter. Adding doors is an easy alteration that would also greatly increase the options available for the room - and the room's resale potential at large.

Today, a "living room" is what a homeowner makes of it. The days of formal

living in one's own home and wasted square footage have predominantly passed. Whichever option you choose, rejoice in your reclaimed living space!

— *Luxury interiors expert Elaine Williamson is the principal of Elaine Williamson Designs - a full service, award-winning firm specializing in high end custom interior design for luxury residences, high rise properties, and commercial establishments. She may be reached online at www.ElaineWilliamsonDesigns.com*

Residential Mortgage Rates (As of May 25, 2010)

	6mo open	6mo closed	1yr closed	2 yrs closed	3 yrs closed	4 yrs closed	5 yrs closed	7yrs closed	10 yrs closed
ATB Financial	6.45	5.05	3.80	4.15	4.75	5.74	4.85	7.00	
AMA Financial			2.80	3.55	3.75	4.34	4.59	4.95	5.59
Bank West			5.25	5.50	5.75	6.00	6.50		
Bridgewater Bank			5.99	5.75	3.95		4.64		6.89
Calgary Mortgage Corp		4.65	2.64	3.30	3.95	4.39	4.49	5.00	5.59
Canadian Western Bank	6.50		3.70	4.15	4.70	5.74	6.10	(5 yr variable 2.25)	
First Calgary	6.45	4.95	2.99	3.59	3.99	4.29	4.59		
HSBC Bank Canada	7.00	4.65	4.35	3.95	4.50	5.14	5.49	6.65	6.80
Invis		3.95	2.64	3.20	3.75	4.19	4.59	5.00	5.50
Jencor Mortgage	6.60	4.55	2.64	3.20	3.75	4.29	4.39	4.90	5.59
Key Savings & Credit Union	6.45	4.65	3.40	3.65	2.99	4.74	3.99		
Laurentian Bank	6.45	3.85	3.60	3.75	4.15	5.05	5.38	6.60	6.75
M. Richard & Associates Inc.		4.60	2.65	3.15	3.85	4.34	4.39	5.25	5.59
Mortgage Alliance Company		3.95	2.75	3.45	3.60	4.09	4.29	5.25	5.35
Mortgagequote Canada Corp.		4.60	2.65	2.95	3.50	3.69	3.89	4.65	4.99
Mortgage Intelligence		5.94	4.99	5.49	5.49	5.50	5.59		6.15
MyMortgageStore.ca		4.60	2.65	3.30	3.85	4.29	4.39	4.80	5.35
National Bank	7.00	3.60	3.60	3.75	4.15	4.94	5.25	6.30	6.50
Pro-Link Mortgage		4.60	2.65	3.30	3.85	4.29	4.35	4.80	5.35
RBC Royal Bank	6.45	4.65	3.40	3.75	4.15	4.94	5.25	6.65	6.80
TD Canada Trust			3.90	4.40	4.95	5.64	5.99	6.59	6.90
The Mortgage Group		4.60	2.65	3.30	3.85	4.34	4.49	5.00	5.34
Dominion Lending Centres Westcor		4.60	2.64	3.20	3.85	4.29	4.39	4.90	5.59

*All the above information is subject to change without notice. Certain rates may be displayed as promotional rates only. Contact individual institutions for details.