

JOINT EFFORT

A Napier landlord has worked alongside her tenant to transform the interior of a rundown property, as **Joanna Mathers** explains.

FOCUS ON CURTAINS

Curtains were the catalyst for this home renovation. Here are some tips from Dawn Rees of Curtain Studio around choosing the right curtains for your rental properties, and how to look after them correctly.

- Natural textured tones in greys, shades of white and blues, followed by watermark prints on sheers, are all popular options.
- It is important to follow the care instructions on any blinds or curtains purchased to ensure your choice is fit for purpose. If well looked after, your curtains and blinds should last for over three years. In terms of styling the traditional pleat and the easy to hang eyelet header are always firm favourites.
- Thermal range curtains are perfect for helping you keep warmth in the home. Another tip for keeping in warmth is to let the bottom of the curtains brush the floor or "puddle", which assist with reducing draughts. A bonus of this styling is the "puddle" look is on trend
- When it comes to regular care, always follow the instructions. A regular light vacuum and "shake out" of your curtains can also keep them looking good. Remember the harsh New Zealand sun can damage your curtains and blinds, so ensure you regularly swap around curtains or seasonally change out your curtain style giving them longer use. Ventilation is also important to ensure your fabrics remain looking great as is keeping your windows clean both inside and out.

Franklin Mist curtains from Curtain Studio.

COURTESY CURTAIN STUDIO

Curtains provided the impetus for Napier investor Julie Thomas's recent interior rental makeover. When her tenant's mother was given a house-load of beautiful curtains, she shared them with her daughter, who then showed them to Thomas.

"She wanted to put them up, but I told her they looked too good for the place. So my tenant asked if she could do the house up."

The dark brown floor-to-ceiling curtains with fish-hook pattern would end up being the centrepiece of an interior do up that was a truly collaborative affair, and a great example of tenant and landlord working together for the benefit of both.

'After two years, three young children and two puppies, the place definitely needed some work'

JULIE THOMAS

The 1970s brick property in which the curtains would star was purchased by Thomas in 2015. It was definitely in need of some TLC, the wallpaper was "past it", and the carpet had been subject to wear and tear courtesy of children and dogs.

"You could see where kids had been picking at the wallpaper and where couches had bumped up against it. After two years of three young children and two puppies living in there, the place definitely needed some work."

But with 10 rental properties to attend to, Thomas didn't have the time to do the interiors herself. So when the tenant expressed interest in facilitating the renovation project, Thomas saw the opportunity to add value to the home and improve the living situation of the tenant at the same time.

The process began with Thomas ringing around painters and plasterers, and she was able to secure their services quite readily. The tenant then stripped

RENOVATION



the walls and pulled up the carpet before the tradies came in.

"It worked out really well as I was able to get painters and plasterers in for two weeks while the tenants were away."

Prior to the job, Thomas had given the tenant the freedom to choose her own colours for the walls and the carpet - with her final approval. For the paint they decided on neutral plain colours; "Resene Tea for the walls and Resene Black White for the ceilings".

Thomas had gone to Carpet Mill for samples, which she passed on to her tenant. She was impressed with their service.

"They were great, they never once used the phrase 'it's just a rental' which was important to me. I've had situations in which suppliers have used that phrase and I find it really insulting. They aren't just rentals, they are people's homes."

Upon viewing the samples, the tenant favoured a black carpet, but this was never going to work for Thomas: "I pointed out to her that her puppy's hair was visible even on the samples that she brought me. So I had to put my foot down and ask her to choose a different option."

Eventually they settled on a solution-dyed nylon in a grey shade, with a New Zealand made Dunlop underlay. "I always try to support New Zealand businesses when I can," Thomas explains.

Once the painting and plastering were finished, and the carpet laid, it was time for the star to take to the stage. The curtains were cut to size by the tenant's mum and her stepfather installed the

tracks before they were hung in the new, improved home.

"The house now looks amazing, and everyone is very happy," says Thomas.

Thomas believes the reno has raised the value of the home, but much of the capital gain is due to the skyrocketing of prices since the purchase of the home. "We purchased the place for \$375,000 and it's now valued at between \$520,000 and \$570,000."

As the location (Green Meadows) is very desirable, there is never going to be any trouble renting it out if the current tenants leave. But that's not going to happen soon - she has just signed a year-long fixed-term agreement with the tenants, leaving the rent at \$475 a week.

"We could probably get about \$580 now," she shares.

It wasn't a cheap project - Thomas paid the painter over \$4,000, the carpet cost over \$15,000, and the plasterer was over \$6,000. She also chose to put stays on every window in the house, allowing the tenants to leave the windows open securely at night and when they leave the house (this cost in excess of \$800).

Thomas prides herself on the quality of her rentals and has excellent relationships with all her tenants. In fact, she has many queries from ex-tenants returning to the area asking if she has stock available.

"I'm very hands on, so people know they are getting a great deal with me," she says.

She's delighted that she's been able to make the house far more liveable for her tenants, even though she wishes she'd been able to do more during the reno process.

"There are a couple of structural things that we could have changed; I wish we'd done it all at the time," she says. ■

The new dark grey carpet looks great with the dark brown feature curtains that appear throughout the house and were the catalyst for the renovation.