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Suite corridors and elevator walk-offs

BY ANITA WIKLÉM

For a condominium building, the suite corridors and elevator walk-offs are typically the single biggest expenditure or investment a corporation takes on when it comes to the refurbishment of their building.



This used to be scheduled for every 12 years; however, the norm lately has changed to every eight to 10 years. With all of the new condominium buildings going up in the Greater Toronto Area, we have found ourselves doing partial refurbishing projects in buildings only a few years old. In this competitive market it has become more important than ever before to “look your best” and keep the value for the suite owners.

Corridors and elevator walk-offs can be tricky to design as they have a tendency to be very long with few areas to create interest. As a design firm we are often met with a lot of restrictions as well as a collage of starting points. Our job is to make the new design fit in seamlessly, and create a new look yet give the building a feeling that makes it look like it has always belonged.

- The budget allowance in the reserve fund for refurbishing is often much

lower than what is available in the marketplace for products and labour of equal value, and much lower than the expectation levels of the board of directors. Also, the reserve funds are based on remove and replace – not adding additional products and designs to enhance the property.

- We typically have one or several starting points, as most buildings have elements we have to work with that are not due to be replaced yet. There could be natural stone, existing millwork at the suite doors or the doors themselves, door hardware or lighting. Very often these elements determine the direction the design will go.
- Most boards want a design that is timeless enough to look equally good in more than 10 years.
- The carpeting has to be practical and not show traffic patterns, sand and salt.

It has to be dark enough to hide all stains and light enough to not look too dark. Busy enough to be forgiving and simple enough to not look busy.

- Hard flooring like porcelain and natural stone typically are designed to be timeless and last two to three lifecycles.
- Vinyl wall covering is the best choice for the corridor walls, it is a larger investment up front but much easier to maintain over time than paint. If the floors are darker and busier, we want to make sure we balance it off with a simpler and lighter wall covering.
- Most elevator walk-offs allow for some type of a feature. This space ends up being asymmetrical most of the time because of the layout of the cabs. If there are an uneven number of cabs on either side, this can create some challenges when it comes to design.

Some boards insist on hard surface at the elevators to stand up against wear. However you do have to deal with the issue of a wet mop and a vacuum lining up beside each other. The boards that choose carpeting at the elevators often select a more dramatic and decorative design in the carpeting.

- The wall covering is usually lighter with some type of texture for design as well as practicality. It is important to use products that are forgiving.

- Ceiling fixtures and wall sconces can have one of the biggest impacts on the design. Most corridors are underlit and do not even meet code. Now with the flexibility of screw-in compact fluorescent bulbs as an option and LED lighting becoming more main stream, the options are endless.
- Fire hose cabinet decals create a more residential feel for the corridors by disguising the view to the inside.
- Door hardware is like jewelry, a costly

investment but it really creates that finishing touch.

- Wish list items like millwork around the elevator and suite doors along with baseboards and sometimes the doors themselves have an immense impact on the overall design as well as the overall cost.
- Wainscoting and column details are another item on the wish list that brings a stately feel to a building.

The best compliments we get are when the condo suites go up in value. We have had successes stories anywhere from a few per cent to 25 per cent.



78 & 80 Harrison Garden Avenue

- Link way corridors have a tendency to get the worst wear because of the constant traffic. For this building we wanted to create a boutique hotel flavour; we chose to have the perimeter of the corridors lined with granite, sectioned off into segments with carpeting inset. A very luxurious look. From a practical standpoint, as the carpeting starts to wear, those sections can simply be replaced as the granite stays.
- When investing in natural stone and detailed designs at the elevators it is important to keep a timeless approach. The double boarder adds a contemporary feel.
- Less is more; the details are in the suite door as well as the crown moulding and millwork.

91 Townsgate Drive, Vaughan

- To add some richness to a simple look, install the porcelain tiles with a granite boarder. Tip: if the disposal room is close to the elevators, you may want to install tile past the disposal room door. A charcoal accent paper was chosen to balance off the carpeting with a light wall covering throughout to offset the

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dark accent. The existing light lens at the elevator walk-off bulkhead was removed and pot lights were installed.

- Adding millwork to a suite door surround adds grandeur to your home, your front door.



16 & 18 Harrison Garden Boulevard

- Modern contrast, the millwork colour creates a bold contrast.

1300 Bloor Street, Toronto

- Custom printed carpeting allows for lots of creativity with both colour and design. This type of carpeting allows for minimal seams and lots of creativity.
- This simple stone detail defines the elevator area while the ceiling fixtures play on the diamond in the centre off



the pattern. The tone on tone colour scheme makes this main floor elevator lobby inviting.

1 Aberfoyle Crescent, Toronto

- The simple millwork and wood baseboard complement custom-made features and fixtures. A custom made shelf plays off the custom light fixture. A decorative mirror and raw silk-like vinyl wall covering add warmth as do pot lights over the suite doors.



- To bring the carpeting alive we chose a light accent to contrast the dark colours. We needed it to make the carpeting pop. At the penthouse levels we chose to

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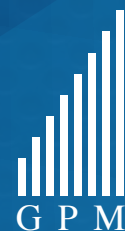
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keep the existing chair-rail border and create elegance with a large scale tone-on-tone pattern above the chair-rail.

- Breaking the carpeting into separate rugs cuts the visual length of the corridor.
- One Aberfoyle was a great example of what can happen when the interior design team, board of directors and the general contractor (Tri-Can Contract), collaborate to complete a project on time and on budget. In this particular case, the results were an instant return on the condo corporation's investment with an impressive post-refurbishment increase in property values.



100 Upper Madison Avenue, Toronto

- We chose to add amber into the new colour scheme for the carpeting, making the existing amber stain on the millwork look alive again. New light

sconces were added to the existing mirrors.

750 Bay Street, Toronto

- We wanted a strong statement for the floor, a transitional look with a bold statement. The cut and loop pile custom printed carpet is extremely forgiving. The bold stripe running down the hall is off-set to one side; the diamonds defines the elevator walk-off. The ceilings have original drywall with diamond shaped ends. We added moulding and painted it out with decorative textured wall covering. The light fixtures mirroring the diamonds in the carpeting at the elevators with a simpler fixture down the corridor. The wall covering has a linen texture and acts as a neutral backdrop to the rich colour scheme.
- The penthouse often gets stuck with the ceiling grids and tiles. We chose a slim line grid with a neutral minimal texture in the ceiling tile level. Pot lights are evenly distributed for overall lighting. As we do not have a ceiling detail in this area we chose to use the decorative pebbled wall covering at the elevator wall/ tile level.

333 Clark Avenue West, Vaughan



- We chose to use natural stone at the elevator walk-offs on the main floor, with a simplistic design. Half columns were added for elegance with wainscoting. A natural silk wall paper was installed above the chair rail. Custom wall sconces balance either side of the decorative mirror.
- The suite corridor floors are the same except with carpeting, a bold statement is created using red as our base colour. A medallion pattern is flanking the walk-off area with simpler pattern trailing down the corridors. □

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