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A new Hollywood Squares-inspired entertainment unit conceals storage and houses speakers.

CASE STUDY:

A brand new condo gets an amenity makeover

Panorama, a condo building located in the heart of downtown Toronto, was only a couple of years old when its board called in Wiclém Design Inc. The board — a young, urban, social group — wanted to make more of their two-storey party room. They also wanted an entertainment space where people would meet, greet and celebrate.

BY ANITA WIKLÉM

Initially, the 7th floor was designated as a games area with massage chairs and a lounge area with fireplace. There was a cafeteria and a catering kitchen hidden behind the scenes. A spectacular black granite and glass staircase led guests up to the 8th floor, where they found a bar, pool tables, washrooms and a walkout to a deck with a hot tub. However, when residents rented out the party room, other residents were cut off from accessing these amenities.

The board hired the design firm to create a new bar on the 7th floor and relocate the lounge to the 8th floor. That way, the 7th floor area could be used for party rentals and the residents could still enjoy the lounge and have access outside.

Because the building was new, its existing design treatments were modern and upscale. Throughout the party room spaces were nice, warm, wood tones on the wall paneling and columns. Between the columns, there was a heavy chain material, which was stripped down for an urban effect. The rich dark brown hardwood floor was lightly restored to its original lustre.

When it came to designing the new bar, the trickiest part was that there was no existing water supply or drainage on the 7th floor. The only option was to get the needed drainage through the two-storey gym on the 5th floor, which required special scaffolding to access the ceiling.



Quarter rounds replaced square table tops, taking the dining area from cafeteria-like to slick and versatile

Once the “science” was solved, the design firm set to work on the “art”. The vision was to embellish what was already in place and create an inviting entertainment area. The firm’s strategy was to work backwards, so that new design components would look like they had always been there.

The black galaxy granite on the staircase was a beautiful starting point. As well, the design team kept the blue and azure colour palette for continuity. Plus, it worked so well with the rest of the building and its locale (blue from the sky; blue from the lake).

This palette features prominently on the 8th floor’s new TV area wall, which is outfitted with a built-in “Hollywood Squares” entertainment unit. Its fabric squares house the speaker system while laminate conceals storage. The use of existing furniture and carpeting clearly defined the space as the new, inviting place to be. It said: have a seat, relax and hang out with friends.

With an entertainment space comes the expectation of ambience. The design team added a punch of contrast to the blues with bright yellow accent furnishings and lighting. The original lighting was configured on a single circuit, meaning the lights were either on or off. The design team re-wired the circuits to make key areas, such as the dining room, controllable with dimmers. The sound system was also rewired from the kitchen to the new bar area for more central access and better sound control.

For drama and grandeur, a 1960s-inspired chandelier was suspended over the stairs from the 8th floor ceiling.

The design team also did an inventory of the existing furniture. Because it was new and of high quality, much of it was refreshed with steam cleaning and incorporated in the new floor plan.

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A new bar wraps around two structural columns, making it feel like it was always part of the structure.

A case in point: the table bases in the eating area were salvaged. The square table tops were broken and replaced with quarter rounds, facilitating dining configurations ranging from round to halves to S-shapes.

The design team redid the floor plan with different groups of furniture and discussed the feel and flow with the board, based on how it wanted to use the space for dinners and other entertaining. This led to the inclusion of a cost-effective buffet ledge for the dining room, which tied in with the new table tops. The design team also inserted a modern, black, glass fireplace running through the dining room at eye level.

The design team wrapped the new bar around two of the structural columns. This treatment was critical to making it feel like it was always part of the structure because the existing space already had different levels of drop ceilings. However, the design team ran into an issue with floor around the bar area.

Feeding the water line and drain to the bar left an unsightly cut-out in the hardwood floor. The design team opted to create an inlay granite collar at the base of the bar — the same black galaxy from the stairs — lending prominence to the bar area. Thanks to the new plumbing, the space got a wet bar. The bar area was also back lit to show off the beverage wall.

After the interior design project was completed in the fall of 2013, residents packed the new party area for its opening night. The board has fulfilled its project goal, with the room now being used more than ever. It wanted an entertainment space where people would meet, greet and celebrate, and in the redesigned party room they do. □

Anita Winklém is the creative director and founding partner at Winklém Design Inc. She has extensive experience and expertise in condominium refurbishment design.

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