



Non-handed velvet couch, tufted leather ottoman and mixture of solid and patterned wing chairs stand out against the rich imported Wenge wood flooring. Built-ins hide electronics and dress the space, while recessed wall panelling at the new fireplace tie the features together.



BEFORE

the other condo game

A look inside an award-winning condo renovation from Eurodale

BY BRENDAN CHARTERS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER SELLAR

Over 100 construction cranes dot the Toronto skyline on any given day. They represent a shift in the 2005 provincial policy to curb urban sprawl and intensify the core of this globally renowned city, which has become the real estate darling of North America in recent years. Closer to home, we call this centre of housing activity "The 416". With increasing competition between developers for sales of new units, many condos have become an example of high design, filled with the best and most luxurious of finishes, designed by our city's plethora of talented designers. With extremely high raw land costs, recent doubling of city development charges and the strained labour force, costs

have escalated. For this reason, new condos have been shrinking in size to meet the budget ceilings of purchasers. Smaller units, referred to as micro-suites, are comfortable for young professionals just entering the market, or even seniors who have significantly downsized, but they do not fit the needs of all families. Those in search of luxury and space quickly discover that these units are accompanied by high costs of purchase and monthly condo fees. This has created a market shift to renovate existing stock or, in some cases, purchasers are buying condos in the outlying 905 areas of the GTA.

In search of a similar alternative, a client of ours purchased a 3,000-square-foot condo unit built in 2002 by Camfrost-Felcorp in Erin Mills (Mississauga), known as The Palace at Granite Gates. The building is predominantly a solid concrete



BEFORE



Extending the cabinetry opened up for a professional style cappuccino bar, with counter and high-top table seating for casual meals and increased storage.

structure, and has been well maintained. At just over 10 years old, the finishes were not horribly dated, but did not speak to the luxury layout and finish that the owners were after. They had done their homework and toured the penthouse suites in Yorkville, and had a firm sense of what they wanted their new home to look like. During a detailed design process, we reviewed the existing building plans, poked holes in walls and mapped service locations. The plan evolved to convert a three-bedroom condo into a two-bedroom unit with a large and sprawling master suite, including his and hers walk-in closets and a six-piece ensuite bathroom. Relocating the existing bathroom and existing laundry services took some creative design work, as well as some luck, given the inability to move a condo building's main services. Extensive collaboration between Eurodale's design team and the owners' personal project management firm, Alpha Pros Inc., ensured the plan would work from a technical standpoint, and meet the wishes of the client.

This project was unique in that our firm was contracted to perform the full turn-key process from architectural design, to construction, interior design, as well as custom furniture and drapery design and installation. Even artwork and other decorating details were handled for the client. The result is the 2013 Best Condo Renovation as awarded by BILD (Building Industry and Land Development Association). With units in this building currently selling in the \$1-million range, and a \$500k remodel and furnishing budget, the owners have ended up spending less than half of what it would have cost to buy in at the same developer's Yorkville Plaza condo project (currently under construction at the former Four Season's hotel site), and they have a larger total living area. Even though they don't have the same high-end shops and restaurants at their doorstep, they do enjoy a 100-acre ravine and greenbelt park that offers a beautiful view and walking trail site for them to enjoy.

While similar in nature, remodelling condos is not the same as a typical house project. Site access, trade vehicle parking, material deliveries, service elevator and work hour schedules are much more challenging than if you have a dedicated lowrise house site. Inside suites, structural walls,



Contrast of the white cabinets, Cambria quartz counters and the Wenge wood floors make the space feel larger and brighter.



BEFORE



The master suite, is completely customized—from the silk bedding, and draperies to specially designed furniture—the result is reminiscent of a Las Vegas high roller suite.

service runs and substrate materials are different and less flexible for change than in a house. Condo boards can also dictate a lot of what is changed and what is not permitted. If planning a project, it is best to make early connection with building staff and the board to familiarize yourself with the entire potential project impacting details to avoid surprises.

When looking for your own housing options, remember that many of the GTA's older condo units can present great opportunities to enter into the area you want to live in, they can be remodelled to suit your tastes and needs, and potentially offer great savings over buying new, where highly customizing suites are not typically an option. Be sure to do your homework as not all buildings are managed equally. Realtors can offer good insight into the history of a building. Be sure to also hire a professional with experience renovating condos such as our Design-Build firm Eurodale Developments, or other professional firms found at renomark.ca, the industry resource for professional contractors that abide by a strict code of conduct and carry the appropriate skills, licences and insurance required to do the job properly. ♦



Marble inlays and storage cubbies, custom cabinets, quartz and mirrors—this ensuite is replete with luxurious finishes. The unique walk-in bathing suite, open to the soaker tub completes a spa paradise.

Brendan Charters, Development Manager at Eurodale Developments, an award-winning, boutique Design-Build firm in Toronto. eurodale.ca