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INSTALLING LOFTY DREAMS

LIVING IN THE FAST LANE



who realized the potential of this century building as a perfect candidate for residential renovation. “We wanted to create something drastically different, something to revitalize this overlooked space and get people’s attention.”

To come up with the conceptual drawings, The Kilbarry Hill team enlisted award-winning Toronto architect, Peter Darling, who although retired, came back with a vested interest in this specific project – his daughter, Elaine, was determined to live in one of the two lofts that the building held promise to bear.

“When we discovered that there were no height restrictions, we were able to expand upwards, gaining enough space to divide it into two units,” revealed Shawn. Peter worked diligently to design a European inspired H-shaped building that, due to unforeseen challenges, resulted in a re-design conforming to the original foot plate of the existing building. “It did pose limitations for what we could do aesthetically. There was very little structure inside, just an open space with a few small change rooms,” commented Peter.

Robert Mitchell of Davenport Architectural Group prepared the finished drawings. The addition of a second and third level onto the original main floor boosted the 3500 square foot building by 700 square feet, maximizing the size potential of the 50’ x 42’ lot. The exterior side walls and upper two floors were finished in stucco, leaving the century brick exposed at the back. Mirrored black-gated carports, separated by a face of reclaimed brick greet the street. Vertical wooden panels of Brazilian ‘Ipe’ ascend skyward to finish the geometrically sculpted upper floors.

The ambitious ten-month renovation delivered two unique units for two unique purchasers, both on board before construction began. “Even though the units could

Imagine the builders of this original single-story garage having the clairvoyance to glimpse its fate, one hundred years later. Those same bricks, later crowned with another ½ story and skinned in stucco, eventually housed a photography studio, preceding their most recent revival: two luxurious 3-story lofts in Toronto’s vibrant multicultural South Annex. The neighbourhood boasts a dynamic collage of cafés, shops and open markets, amidst a flux of multifarious Victorian and wartime architecture.

As an innovative attempt to infill laneway development, trends towards reincarnating former commercial properties into alternative living spaces by creating ‘lofts’, are gaining ground. In the same laneway, a successful loft project set precedence in the 80’s by transforming an old munitions factory into freehold units, pioneering a local paradigm.

“There are over 250 kilometres of underutilized land in the city of Toronto – just in laneways,” reports Shawn Mecklinger, President of Kilbarry Hill Developments





have been done the same, we really wanted them to be different inside," offered Shawn, who refers, in particular to the specs of the second purchaser who sought a discerning alternative to traditional condo living. As a business professional, she needed a space to facilitate her frequent entertaining. This unit's unobstructed layout and open living/dining areas with a convenient offset kitchen, all hoisted to the second floor, offered the perfect arrangement to mingle guests.

With a professional propensity for design, the homeowner brought

her own creative edge to the project, directing her own interior design. However, Jordan Mecklinger, Director of Operations, availed as match-maker, marrying the client's ideas with Kilbarry Hill's contacts to beget her vision.

That's quite a transition; from century garage to luxurious loft. Imagine inviting those original bricklayers inside today, after a hard day's work - handing them a drink from the pantry fridge, the remote for the gas fireplace, and a towel for the sunflower shower. Can you fathom what they might invite us into in 2108? ♣

BATHROOM: Radiant floor heating warms the Jerusalem Limestone tile floors; the Neptune fibreglass tub is accented with a Volare floor mount, single lever tub set, by Aqua Brass.

KITCHEN: Cherry stained, red oak cabinets were finished with HanStone countertops; a Liebherr built-in refrigerator and Viking Professional appliances were installed.

OPPOSITE: The master bedroom boasts a spectacular view of Toronto's financial district. "With a firehall clocktower outside the window," muses Mecklinger, "who needs a watch."

ABOVE: Astro Kitchens manufactured the cherry stained, oak millwork in the television room. Eco-friendly Aura paint from Benjamin Moore, was used throughout.