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NEW IN HOMES & CONDOS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2017 SECTION H

ON ON2

> HOW WE LIVE

Lobbies with purpose and poise

Serving the social role of a front porch, a building's entrance hall makes an important first impression



COLE BURSTON FOR THE TORONTO STAR

From left, Lifetime Developments' vice-president Brian Brown, designer Melandro Quilatan and owners Jacob Plago and Lily Chan at the Bond.

ELAINE SMITH
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

While floor plans and amenities top the shopping list for condo buyers, each building has another unique calling card: the lobby.

"Lobbies are very important when you live vertically," says Jared Menkes, vice-president of highrise and residential development for Menkes Developments, the builders of Pears on the Avenue, a 20-storey condominium in Toronto's Yorkville neighbourhood.

"You don't have a front porch anymore, so the lobby becomes that social environment for residents. It's where they meet and talk," Menkes says.

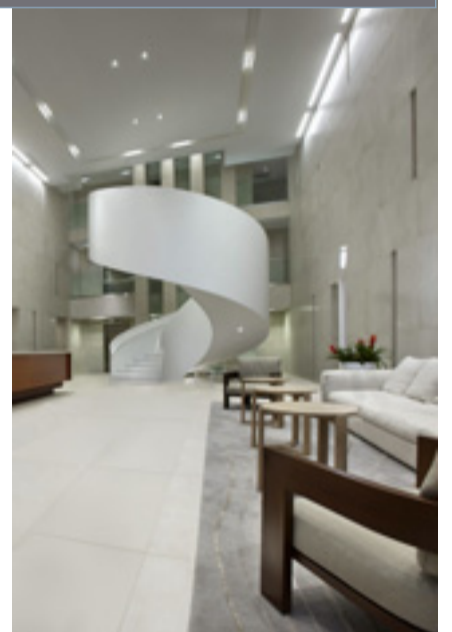
"It's also the first impression people have when they visit the building. People want to impress their friends and family."

This duality was one of the principles that guided the building's designer, Alessandro Munge, principal and founder of Studio Munge in Toronto.

He created a welcoming and elegant lobby with a stunning focal point: a large, spiral stairway that leads to a gym overlooking the pool, a party room, a theatre, a yoga room and an outdoor terrace.

"I wanted a freshness and a modernity that was timeless and warm, even though modern design is usually cold and sterile," Munge said.

LOBBIES continued on H5



MENKES DEVELOPMENTS

The spiral stairway creates a sculptural focus at Pears on the Avenue condominium.



"Lobbies are very important when you live vertically . . . The lobby becomes that social environment for residents. It's where they meet and talk."

JARED MENKES
MENKES DEVELOPMENTS



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> GTA HOME AND RENO SHOW

How to handle a DIY staircase refurbishment

Contractors provide tips for what can be a messy and complicated project

IAN HARVEY
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Stairs and stairways are often last on the list when it comes to home renovations, even though they are often front-and-centre, the first thing you and everyone else sees after opening the front door.

Although not prohibitively expensive, refurbishing stairs is a messy and skilled job beyond the reach of average DIYers.

The basics, though, aren't hard to grasp, and with a little planning and help, you can take the rights steps to elevate your stairs. Older homes, especially, will need stair repairs and upgrades, says Jordan Spear, a RenoMark contractor and featured speaker at the GTA Home and Reno Show, which runs Feb. 17-20 at the International Centre in Mississauga. Spear is scheduled to deliver his presentation, *Old Homes: What Lies Beneath*, on Feb. 20 at 2 p.m.

When it comes to restoring staircases, "the first thing is to look at the structure for safety," says Spear, who specializes in restoring century homes. "You want to make sure the treads aren't too worn and 'cupping,' and that the nosing is secure and that the railing is all secure and the components solid."

Changing the basic physical design of a staircase usually isn't an option because it could mean major structural changes that are expensive and time consuming.

"Don't go for cheap and easy repairs," advises TV contractor Damon Bennett, another RenoMark contractor.

"If you can, get in underneath the stairs to see how they're secured. I've seen so many things hanging by just two nails."

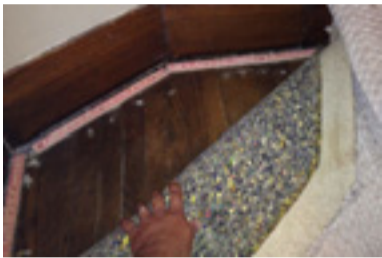
Refinishing and staining

First, assess the wood, says Chris



DREAMSTIME

Stairs are often overlooked when it comes to home renovations.



JORDAN SPEAR

Peel back the carpet and you may find some treasure worth restoring.

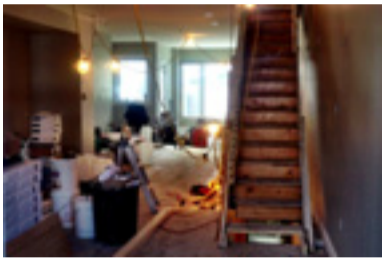


JORDAN SPEAR

Runners can be added for safety purposes.

Palmer, also a RenoMark contractor who will appear at the Home and Reno show.

Stairs made from good hardwood, such as oak or maple, are usually worth refinishing. Peel back a sec-



DAMON BENNETT

Painting is an option for worn or low-grade stairs.

tion of carpet or runner to check the wood. If it's low-grade pine or spruce (called "builder grade") then painting, capping or re-carpeting are the only options, Bennett says.

If you're lucky, you might need to just replace the most damaged treads. "To match up old treads sometimes you have to make them yourself with an electric planer," says Palmer, who was an industrial designer before appearing on TV shows such as *Canada's Handyman Challenge*, *Income Property*, *Open House Overhaul* and serving as Global TV's resident handyman expert. "Or find a place like Peacock Lumber, in Oshawa, which has rough stock and will dress it to your needs."

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ON ON2

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Designers aspire to create timeless style

LOBBIES from H1

"If I wanted my home to feel like a gallery, I'd go to the AGO (Art Gallery of Ontario), but I want to come home to something different.

"This has a beautiful residential feel, using textures and layers and inviting, gorgeous finishes, and the staircase is a sculptural opportunity to connect two spaces."

Munge believes lobbies play an important role in the lives of a building's residents.

"People in condominiums live in 500- to 1,200-square-foot boxes and are confined to them," he said. "The public spaces are equally important to them, if not more so."

The public space was something Lily Chan and Jacob Plago took into account when they purchased a two-bedroom suite in the Bond on Adelaide St. W.

"The combination of a nice floor plan, nicely planned amenities and the location were important to us," said Plago, 29, who works in financial services downtown. At the Bond, he'll have access to a pool, a golf simulator and a play station room.

"The lobby is nicely laid out. It provides a sense of permanence and makes you feel more at home. It has a modern esthetic and helps you feel comfortable in your own space."

Chan, 32, an optometrist, is pleased to have a nice space where "guests can sit and wait for us."

One of the lobby's notable features is a light pillar.

Brian Brown, vice-president of Lifetime Developments, the Bond's developer, said the pillar adds a meaningful vibe.

"It's a very cool, hip, young neighbourhood," Brown said. "It's very important to get the lobby correct and reflect the neighbourhood and who's living there. It establishes the quality of the building."

"We want to feel that the lobby is inviting and welcoming, but it's also a high-traffic area, so the quality of the materials must be able to withstand the weather and traffic that goes through it."

"Generally speaking, we try to create something reflective of trends

and styles, but still timeless so that the owners of the building won't need to revise it."

At Imperial Plaza, on St. Clair Ave. W., the lobby dates back to the 1950s, when the structure was built as the headquarters for Imperial Oil. The building was recently converted into condos after the company relocated to Calgary.

The public lobby's vaulted ceilings retain the original 1950s light fixtures; a pair of murals depict the history and the future of oil; a massive clock's golden tiles gleam.

Energy and people fill the space since the lobby houses an LCBO outlet and a Longo's grocery story, conveniences most condo dwellers yearn to have in their building.

"It's grand, impressive and distinctive," Joseph Feldman, development manager for Camroost-Felcorp's Imperial Village project, says about the lobby.

"There is marble, granite and the amazing clock. In the 1950s, they overbuilt everything and spared no expense."

The result is an active lobby that sees a working crowd during lunch hour and later "residents in their pyjamas going to pick up dinner."

There's also a private, 2,500-square-foot lobby for residents on a lower level and 22,000-square-feet of amenity space that includes a golf simulator, theatre, games room, squash courts and a fitness club.

Feldman, though, sees the public lobby as the jewel in Imperial Plaza's crown.

"We received an Award of Merit from Heritage Toronto for restoration," he said. "We took a commercial, corporate space and created a sense of community. Retail brings shoppers in and it's always bustling. It's very different than your standard condo."

He notes, however, that the lobby design depends on the project, something with which his fellow developers agree.

"You need to cater to the neighbourhood and every lobby is unique," Feldman said. "If you had a standard concept, they would lose their sparkle."



CAMROOST-FELCORP

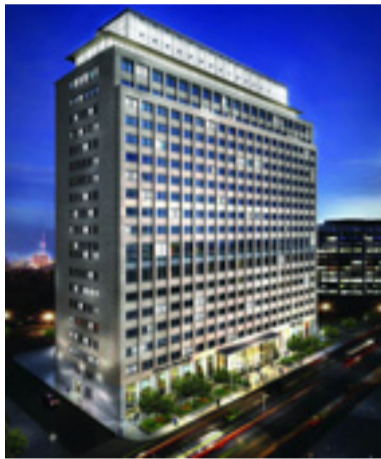
The Imperial Plaza condo's lobby stays true to the luxury with which the building was designed with in the 1950s.

Buildings that make a statement



> PEARS ON THE AVENUE

Address: 170 Avenue Rd.
Developers: Menkes Developments
Public Lobby Dimensions: 2,000 sq. ft.
Units: 20 storeys, 175 units
Completion Date: Occupied
Contact: info@menkes.com



> IMPERIAL PLAZA

Address: 111 St. Clair Ave. W.
Developers: Camroost-Felcorp
Public Lobby Dimensions: 8,500 sq. ft.
Units: 23 storeys, 400 suites
Contact: sales@imperialcondos.ca



> THE BOND

Address: 290 Adelaide St. W.
Developers: Lifetime Developments
Lobby Dimensions: Approximately 750 sq. ft.
Units: 42 storeys, 393 units
Completion Date: 2017
Contact: info@thebond.ca

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