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The age of 'smart' living-space designs

Lots of thought goes into planning suites and the right mix

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

There was a time when developers could put up a building with little thought to its interior. But the times, they have changed.

Interior designers are being called early in the planning stages to plan everything from how spaces are divided up and the mix of suites to be offered, to the look and feel of individual living spaces, as well as lobbies and other common areas.

Interior designers look at more innovative ways to use an area, creating smart designs that maximize every inch of space without sacrificing esthetics, says interior designer Elaine Cecconi of Cecconi Simone.

Cecconi's work at the Phoebe on Queen, a three-building project that sits on the block bordered by Soho, Queen, Beverley and Phoebe Sts, is a case in point.

The layout of Phoebe's design comes from understanding the purchaser profile, she says.

"We were looking at business people who want to be close to the core, the arts community (the Art Gallery of Ontario and art galleries are nearby) and new media professionals along the Spadina corridor."

To attract these potential buyers, who likely want non-traditional and creative living spaces, Cecconi took a fresh approach and designed living spaces that were flexible, but practical enough to accommodate the whims of their buyers.

Daylight is maximized, with the living and dining rooms and kitchen areas set against a 20-foot window.

It makes sense because these are the areas in which people spend most of their time, Cecconi says.

She relocated the second bedroom away from the win-

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dows to "inside" the suite. "Bedrooms do not really need windows, as these are the places where darkness is welcomed, by tradition."

However, that doesn't mean the bedrooms are dark. Second bedrooms have sliding frosted glass doors that open from adjacent walls and meet to form a corner.

When the doors are pushed apart, they retract into the walls and create a dramatic opening to the rest of the suite. Cecconi's "smart design" also includes an office, which she placed near the front door. That allows clients to be welcomed into the home office but keeps the rest of the suite private.

"It gives a nod to those people who work at home," she says.

"It borrows from the loft idiom, but is more refined, with higher-end finishings. It's not as raw"

The suite design is serene and comfortable. "It borrows from the loft idiom, but is more refined, with higher-end finishings. It's not as raw," says Cecconi.

A two-wood scheme incorporates the use of dark walnut floors and lighter ash (almost white with the grain still visible) for vertical materials and furniture. Aquamarine walls contrast with the chocolate floor.

Contemporary furnishings (most designed by Cecconi) are of white ash, with teal sofas, breakfast stools and dining chairs. There is very little pattern in the fabric. Instead, interest comes from textures.

The look is carried throughout the suite for consistency and to provide a "calming and serene feeling."

In the kitchen area, stainless steel provides the state-of-the-art look currently popular, she



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Smart designs use every inch of space

The designer and developer at Phoebe on Queen knew exactly the buyer they wanted to attract. They went for a loft look with sophisticated finishes — and a kitchen trough. Page P9

JOY VON FEDEMANN PHOTOS

BRIGHT IDEAS: Designers Cecconi Simone have eliminated hallways and use glass sliders to separate bedrooms and allow a flow of light through the model suites of Phoebe.

says. Interactivity is encouraged with a floating breakfast bar/island that connects the living spaces.

The island features a unique "trough" — not an eating trough, but one that can be used for everything from planting fresh herbs to storing cooking utensils, Cecconi says. "It's a place where each owner can express their lifestyle."

At the back of the kitchen counter, a built-in shelf integrated into the cabinetry provides space to store condiments without using up valuable counter space. It also makes appliances look as if they are built-in, she says.

The key to smart design is determining the functions of the space, maximizing every square inch and making the space look good, too.

Suite Ideas is a regular feature that looks at condo model suites.

