



COURTESY DUKKOND AND SCHMITT ARCHITECTS INCORPORATED

Tip Top Lofts

by Irwin Rapoport

Selecting as the Project of the Year in 2004 by the Greater Toronto Homebuilders Association, the Tip Top Lofts condominium development is a shining example of how to preserve a landmark historic building and combine it with a modern addition.

"It's an iconic heritage building for Toronto," says Craig Taylor, director of marketing for Context Development Inc., the firm behind the project. "There is the six-storey structural steel addition to the existing five-storey heritage building that was a factory and warehouse.

"When the opportunity to purchase the building came up, Context Development snapped it up," he says. "There has been quite a bit of restoration within the building to bring it back to its former glory."

The 11-storey building has 256 units of various sizes and approximately 80 different floor plans, penthouses on the 10th and 11th floors and three levels of parking — one level under the original building and three under the circular entrance on the north side.

All the penthouses are two-storey units. The first storey is dedicated to bedrooms and living spaces. An internal staircase accesses the second storey: the kitchen, entertainment spaces and the terrace.

"This is becoming more common-

place," says Taylor, "but Tip Top's penthouses are definitely unique in the sense that they're floor-to-ceiling windows. Because there is no hallway on the 11th floor, you've got window-to-window right through each suite and you have cross views from all sides."

Completed in 1929, the building, a white concrete structure with elegant exterior and interior decoration, stood out because of its big red neon Tip Top Tailors sign, which has been reinstated.

Peter Clewes, a partner with Toronto-based architectsAlliance, was given the task of marrying new with old. The design called for removal of the sixth floor of the original building. This was replaced with a one-metre-high transfer floor, which served as a bridge to allow for the column and grid system on the addition to be linked with the existing system.

"It's a structural-steel frame that is clad in slightly reflective clear glass, with a dark-grey frame colour to make the top look as light and as unobtrusive as possible," says Clewes.

"The idea was to keep the units as open and simple as possible so that you really read the clarity of the original industrial construction," says Clewes. "We wanted to make the spaces as convertible as possible. Rather than just having a conventional bedroom, living room/dining room, we used a lot of sliding walls so that you can open up and close down the apartment depending upon the kind of privacy you need.

"We also tried to take advantage of the height of the floors of the existing

building by having loft areas overtop of the spaces that didn't need that high ceiling," he says.

The key, says Clewes, was to maximize space and to strategically place units to ensure excellent views, be they toward the skyline, the nearby park or Lake Ontario.

"It's very clear what is new and what is historical," says Clewes. It was a deliberate architectural intent of ours. Even though it is a fairly massive addition on the roof of the existing building, it does not dominate the architecture of the original building."

Scott Weir of E.R.A. Architects Inc., was the project architect for the restoration, with Edwin Rowse, partner in charge.

The original art deco building designed by Max Dunning required serious attention to restore it to its former glory. The concrete was repaired and given a fresh coat of white elastomeric paint. Adorning the concrete are coloured terra cotta spandrel panels (four different colours) that are found around the window openings.

"We're restoring the painted decoration on the ceiling along with the marble walls in the lobby," says Weir. "The ceiling was originally painted in geometric patterns with gold, green and shades of beige. A metal and stone concierge desk in the same room has been restored, as well as the original bronze doors.

"For the floor, some of the later layers of tile work were taken off and we found that a lot of the original stonework was intact," says Weir. "We were able to do some repair work and brought it back to its original appearance."

burdifilek was responsible for the interior design and was pleased to accept an award of achievement from the International Interior Design Association for the Tip Top Lofts sales centre, as well as other awards for work on the model suites.

"From the interior point of view, it was more about creating continuity between the old and the new," says Paul Filek, managing partner, burdifilek. "The essence of this project is that it was a loft conversion project and that the end user was looking for a modern contemporary environment. We provided a series of carefully

detailed design solutions and material palettes that could be combined to produce a unique solution for every buyer."

Lomax Management Inc. took charge of construction having secured the contract in 2002. Work began in November 2003.

"Because we were working with an existing building, we had to overcome quite a few problems, cutting, coring and demolition," says project manager Bill McCann. "We factored those in. It's been a challenging project.

"The circular driveway and surface visitor parking was treated with decorative paving to create a forecourt effect that would complement the arrival experience," says Paul Ferris of Ferris + Associates Inc. who handled the landscaping design. "Landscape planting along the street provides a natural screen that buffers the street traffic and encloses the forecourt."

On the roof of the existing building, an amenity terrace overlooks the lake to the south. The skylights to the atrium below are surrounded with a green-roof planting system. ■

HIGHLIGHTS

Location

637 LAKESHORE BOULEVARD
TORONTO, ONTARIO

Developer

CONTEXT DEVELOPMENT INC.

Architect

ARCHITECTSALLIANCE

Construction Manager

LOMAX MANAGEMENT INC.

Restoration Architect

E.R.A. ARCHITECTS INC.

Interior Designer

BURDIFILEK

Landscape Architect

FERRIS + ASSOCIATES INC.

Total Area

390,814 SQUARE FEET

Total Construction Cost

\$51 MILLION