

Toronto home to many art deco-styled buildings



CONDO TRENDS

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Toronto has many fine examples of art deco-styled buildings from a bygone era, many of which have been transformed into cool modern condo spaces.

The Montreal architectural firm of Ross and MacDonald were active in Canada during the early 20th century and brought Toronto many of its well-known examples of art deco such as the Maple Leaf Gardens, Union Station and the Royal York Hotel.

A great example of a deco conversion is the Tip Top Lofts. The ornate 1920s-era building was designed by Bishop and Miller architects and has been transformed into condominium residences.

At the site near the waterfront at 637 Lake Shore Boulevard just west of Bathurst Street, the structure was built to house the Tip Top Tailors factory and warehouses. Dylex sold the unique building in 2002, and it underwent a complete makeover by Context Developments.

Alex Speigel was director of development on the project and says that such undertakings are fraught with complexity, "especially when you have to deal with historical designations, the project is carefully monitored. It has to go through a whole process with the city of Toronto heritage department and in doing the conversion you go through a process called

designation."

So what exactly is art deco? Some say the first use of the term was attributed to the pioneering French architect, Le Corbusier. "Deco" has a distinct look and the decorations tell the story. According to Toronto architect Stephen Teeple, deco depicts the machine, modern materials and speed, as opposed to organic motifs.

"Things that were supposed to be fast, were supposed to also look fast. You get the notion of streamlining."

The art deco Imperial Lofts was developed by Plazacorp in 1997 and houses 60 residential suites. Located on Sherbourne Street, just north of Adelaide, it was home to the original Imperial Optical warehouse.

The six-storey, mill-style conversion features exposed wood beams, brick walls and 10.5-foot ceilings while the three-storey building features 10-foot concrete ceilings and columns.

Another magnificent example of downtown deco is the College Park complex, comprising a shopping mall, residential and office complex located on the southwest corner of Yonge Street and College Street.

The site of the old T. Eaton flagship store, it was originally built in the 1920s. The spectacular seventh floor event space has undergone a grand renovation and renamed The Carlu after French architect Jacques Carlu, who designed the original interior of the floor, including the 1,300-seat Eaton Auditorium.



The iconic College Park complex, an example of Toronto art deco, is comprised of condominium residences, a shopping mall and office space. DUNCAN MCALLISTER/FOR METRO



The Tip Top lofts condo conversion transformed a 1920s art deco factory building into residential condos along Toronto's waterfront. COURTESY OF CONTEXT DEVELOPMENTS