

Couple's \$600K Renovation Project in White Plains

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"You can't beat this view." A view out the window from the penthouse owned by David and Ilyssa Kaminsky in the Ritz-Carlton building in White Plains. (Photo: Mark Vergari/The Journal News)

Ilysa Kaminsky never really wanted to leave the city.

But a spacious, unfinished space with stunning views in all directions convinced her that maybe living in the 'burbs wouldn't be such a bad thing after all.

That and a little prodding from her husband David. "We had been living in Manhattan for a long time and we wanted more space and the ability to do some customization," he says.

A friend recommended they look at the Ritz Carlton Residences, a condo building in downtown White Plains.

In October, the couple closed on a spacious, two-bedroom, 38th-floor penthouse and immediately set about to make it their own.

Both agree they would never have found anything like their finished home — and its unobstructed views — in Manhattan.

The space reflects light from floor-to-ceiling windows, subtle mirrored surfaces, marble, gold- and silver-toned wallpaper and a color palette of soft grays and beiges, the perfect neutral backdrop for Kaminsky's colorful collection of original art by Keith Haring.

"I always loved his work," he says. "I started collecting back in the '70s."

The fact that the space was raw appealed to the couple who had been searching for a place to live between the city and their Connecticut weekend home. They knew, with some design changes and construction, they could make it reflect their tastes.

"There weren't really any walls when we saw it; it was an empty space. Not even the floors were done," says Kaminsky, who owns EZ Pawn Corp, a collateral loan company with more than a dozen locations throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. He also operates a boutique in Beauty & Essex's Restaurant downtown, a boatyard in Freeport, Long Island, and some commercial properties in the city and Long Island City.

The couple had a vision for what the space could become and set out to create it. And they really mean just for them. Their home has a large, master-bedroom suite and just one guest room for friends up from the city visiting children and grand-kids.

The extensive renovations, which took about six months to complete, included a gas fireplace in the living room — a first in the Ritz Carlton — and replacing the dark hardwood walnut floors with white maple pine, just to start. With the help of interior designer Glynis Sharp and Pamela Pagan, who worked on the interior finishing, the Kaminskys now have a gorgeous, open space to call home. In all, the Kaminskys estimate they spent about \$600,000 on the renovation.



The dining area of the penthouse owned by David and Ilyssa Kaminsky in the Ritz-Carlton building in White Plains.

(Photo: Mark Vergari/The Journal News)

"We took walls down and added others; I even ended up with a bigger closet than my wife," says Kaminsky, giving a tour of his home the day after hosting a party for Ilyssa's birthday.

The home is big; make no mistake, this is a penthouse in every sense, but it has an almost cozy feeling. The airy, open kitchen has massive island, copper sink, wine fridge and every bell and whistle you could imagine.

The best part? Unlike most kitchen views, when you're doing the dishes in the Kaminsky's sink, you can see all the way to the New York City skyline.

"You can't beat this view," says Ilyssa, noting that their friends cannot believe they can actually see all the way to Manhattan, until they come and see it themselves.

The couple made some well-planned changes including turning a sitting room by the master suite into a media room, switching out the floor-to-ceiling, room-darkening blinds with a projection screen that scrolls down, silently, at the flip of a switch.

A large, awkward walk-in closet in the master suite was reconfigured to create a sophisticated and luxurious open dressing room for Ilyssa.

David got a set of built-in shelves in the living room's granite fireplace for, as his wife calls it, "his stuff."



The dressing room in the penthouse owned by David and Ilyssa Kaminsky in the Ritz-Carlton building in White Plains.
(Photo: Mark Vergari/The Journal News)

Her newly redesigned space has a wall of closets with mirrored doors and a large vanity area.

Other ingenious touches: the master suite shower which has steam, rainheads and lights which turn on with the switch of a remote control. "We call it the disco shower," says Ilyssa, as David switches from blue to right to pulsating disco lights.

At the end of the day, they both agree that the view was the ultimate selling point.

"Just look at this," Illysa says turning around 180 degrees in the living room, with those amazing views of Westchester, the Kensico Reservoir and the Manhattan skyline unfurling all around.

"You could not get a view like this in the city at this price point."