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BEACH GROVE

Clubhouse's Redesign Hits A Hole In One

WITH ITS TUDOR-STYLE clubhouse and lush greens, Beach Grove Golf & Country Club has been a landmark on Riverside Drive since the 1920s. Three years ago, Global Golf Advisors was brought in to assess the St. Clair Beach property. The experts rated the golf course an A and the clubhouse a disappointing C-.

"The club's board of 2013 seized on this and said we're going to do something about it," remembers Gary Geoffrey, Beach Grove's general manager. "It's an old building. Not a lot had been done to it. It was in need."

Members were asked for their ideas and a wish list was created. Out of that emerged a solid plan, architectural renderings, interior design plans and tenders for the work required. A huge majority of members gave their vote of approval for the \$4,642,000 budget.

With an eye on the Mar. 31st, 2014 completion date for the total remodel project, "we ran the club at breakneck speed till December, 2013," Gary says. The kitchen shut down on Jan. 7th and was demolished. Its rebuild cost \$750,000.

"We kept curling going through to March," Gary recalls. Then the locker rooms were torn apart and new washrooms were built. Dust was being raised in other areas of the 27,000 sq. ft. club as they, too, underwent refurbishment. Every two weeks, the general manager walked through the job site, videographing the ▶

Displayed above the new St. Clair Lounge's rounded banquette is an archival photo that Housewears enlarged on canvas, displaying swimmers around Beach Grove's pool years ago. Other photos were given the same treatment and now share Beach Grove's history throughout the club.



reinforcement of old floors and other necessary construction work to share with curious members.

“We did not take away any character of the building,” Gary assures. Everyone appreciated the members’ strong attachment to their club, which began with the vision of 16 men who decided in 1921 to build a golf course and clubhouse. Beach Grove Golf & Country Club opened to members a year later. A fire in 1927 destroyed the clubhouse and the Tudor-style building that members enjoy today was erected in its place.

In Beach Grove’s early days, members could stay overnight in guestrooms and savour a leisurely breakfast in bed before tee time. That amenity eventually gave way to offices and locker rooms. Over the years, Beach Grove added a swimming pool, tennis court, curling facility and lounge. A new pro shop, Turf Care Center, putting green and first tee complex were built in 2007.

STC Construction Group Inc. was hired as the general contractor. With attention focused on the club’s interior renovation, the Beach Grove board hired some of its members, Jill Straky of Housewears, to work with architect Jerry Kavanaugh of ADA to determine the colour scheme, lighting, bar designs, flooring, millwork and wall coverings. Housewears also selected and installed new furniture, window treatments, art, mirrors and accessories.

“There was a need to improve the functionality and aesthetics of locker rooms and lounge areas and to capitalize on the areas that allow members to enjoy Beach Grove’s exclusive waterfront locale,” Jill says. “Décor was tired and worn; locker rooms had dated, painted metal lockers and wooden benches



This page, top to bottom: The ladies’ terrace is light and bright with soft turquoise and white walls. Additional comfortable seating is offered throughout the two levels of the dedicated ladies’ rooms, graced by pale green walls in one area, a fieldstone wall and fireplace in another, and elegant window treatments monogrammed with Beach Grove’s coat of arms throughout.





covered with old carpet remnants; shower facilities needed improvement; handicap facilities needed to be added; window treatments were disintegrating; and light fixtures were hazardous and providing insufficient lighting.”

Beach Grove’s views of Lake St. Clair and the club’s own lush greens inspired the colour palette. “Variations of blues and greens flow throughout the club, from spa blues and celadon greens in the ladies’ areas to regal navy and rich olive hues in the men’s areas,” says Jill.

Respecting Beach Grove’s heritage, Housewears presented traditional elements with a modern twist throughout the club. “Dark woods are used for lockers and furniture to repeat the original Tudor woodwork; lighting is oil rubbed bronze and gold incorporating Edison light bulbs; mirrors have an ornate gilded bronze finish; and classic patterns such as houndstooth, herringbone and crocodile leather are incorporated in fabrics, window treatments and wallcoverings,” Jill says. “The stately Beach Grove coat of



Photo: Charles Thompson



This page, clockwise from top left: The men’s rooms were totally redesigned. The locker room floor is covered in wood-look vinyl, the ceiling in wood-like panels. New dark wood lockers are in keeping with Beach Grove’s 1920s architecture. The club’s vintage leather sofa finds a new spot in the reconfigured space. The Stanley Thompson Lounge sports a new bar and big Edison light bulbs.

arms logo is repeatedly incorporated on window coverings, doors and tile accents. Mirrors are used strategically to brighten areas and reflect the magnificent waterfront views."

Gary observes, "The ladies' opinions of our club were very important to us, especially regarding the palette and how it looks and feels." So it was fitting that the first area to be treated to a makeover was the ladies' terrace connected to their locker room. Used for luncheons, social events and card playing, the terrace was showing its age. "The wicker furniture was part of the original furniture of the club," Gary notes.

The room was revamped with practical porcelain tile flooring mimicking dark hardwood and framed by a marble border. Soft turquoise walls with soft white wainscoting lighten the space. Elegant draperies in oyster tones are monogrammed with the Beach Grove coat of arms. New dark wood tables and upholstered ivory chairs now seat four-somes. A sofa, armchairs and bronze ottoman offer a charming corner for chats.

More opportunities for relaxing are in the lounge area of the ladies' locker room. A fireplace and television are inset in a fieldstone wall, while pale green paint uplifts other walls.

The dedicated men's rooms also received major overhauling. The footprint was totally reconfigured to improve functionality.

The old metal lockers were carted off; now, new custom wood lockers with ventilated shoe drawers elevate the locker room's tone to that of a gentlemen's dressing area. Vinyl flooring with the look of hardwood mirrors the warm effect created by the wood veneer panel ceiling. Antique brown granite countertops, grey walls and blue upholstered benches underscore the masculine vibe.

The colour scheme was carried through to the lounge area in the men's locker room. To adorn the grey walls, Housewears designed a triptych of enlarged canvas art from antique golf manual photos found in Beach Grove's archives. "The club's existing leather sofas fit into this space perfectly, creating a relaxed, Ralph Lauren-inspired setting," Jill believes.

Knowing that many golfers love to watch golf almost as much as they like playing the game, the architect made certain to strategically place several televisions throughout the men's Stanley Thompson Lounge. A new, long bar with ample bar stools was installed for thirsty golfers seeking a private 19th hole. Housewears enlarged and hung Glenn Gervais' photographs of Beach Grove's



Clockwise from top: The approach shot to hole #9 includes a view of Beach Grove's clubhouse and Lake St. Clair. An extra long bar seats guests comfortably indoors. On the open deck area, members relax on all weather seating clustered around coffee tables with built-in fire pits.

golf course. The lounge's dark wood framed wainscot panels are inset with navy faux crocodile leather, enhancing the gentlemen's club feel.

Although men and women appreciate having their own dedicated, stylish suite of rooms, the club members also like to come together in the new St. Clair Lounge, with windows overlooking the curling rink on the right and the lake on the left. The combined dining and bar space is now a hot spot at the club, a popular mixed grill area that opens onto a covered patio with outstanding waterfront views. Repurposed were the club's old, original corbels to embellish a new granite counter beneath the pass-through food service window.

Additional creative reuse of existing materials is evident in the St. Clair Lounge's new bar: Its light granite countertops are illuminated by Beach Grove's upcycled chandeliers outfitted with oversized Edison light bulbs.

One eagerly anticipated feature of the club's remodel was the new outdoor space connected to the St. Clair Lounge. "We built a deck at the back that is magnificently large," says Gary. It is now arranged with weather resistant woven resin armchairs and sofas with deep cushions. "The coffee tables are also gas fire pits that take the chill out of the air on cool evenings," Jill says.

For the most part, the club's Rose & Crown Fine Dining and the Great Hall were preserved. The original raised panel wood panels still grace the Great Hall's walls. New chandeliers, sconces and draperies refresh the rooms where members have dined and celebrated their special occasions for generations.

Ultimately, Jill says, "The design team collaborated to create an updated, classic look that would have longevity, pay homage to the rich history of the club, appeal to the current demographic of members with young families and function well for a variety of events."

Members were intrigued to see if Housewears, ADA and STC Construction delivered on their vision. On March 31st, as promised, Beach Grove's transformation was finished. The club's president, Goran Todorovic, had guided members through the construction phase and is pleased by their response: "Member satisfaction is over the top. Many members said to me, 'It's better than we expected.'"

"The beauty is it's brought in new life, new blood," Goran says. "We've retained the members that we had and members' children are now staying on because they see the future of Beach Grove."