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SECTION E

MAKING THE MOST OF HIGH CEILINGS

WENDY HELFENBAUM

Soaring ceilings of 10 feet or more are a huge selling point in homes and condos, because they make the space appear larger and airier. But having so much room overhead presents a number of challenges around lighting, window treatments and colour palettes.

We asked two Montreal interior designers to share their best tips for making the most of high ceilings.

ADDING ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

"When I see that a client has a high ceiling, I get totally excited," said designer Cindy Brownstein, owner of CindyB Décor (cindybdcor.com).

"Having a high ceiling is an asset for any decor and, today, everybody wants high ceilings."

Create surprising views by incorporating lots of texture on the



Adding wooden beams to the high ceiling in this bathroom not only adds warmth to the decor, but also provides an eye-catching backdrop to the chandelier over the bathtub.

ceiling, suggested Brownstein, who likes to repeat materials like

reclaimed wood on floors and ceilings, which warms up a room.

"I've worked on projects with 10- to 15-foot ceilings where I've done coffers and beams, and I've also done panelled ceilings and wood treatments, which are very popular now," she said.

"There are plaster moulds you could have made and do some very interesting coffers, or you could do some big squares or rectangles out of wood surrounded by mouldings."

One budget-friendly option if you want your ceiling to look like cement, wood slats or big marble tiles, is to put up gorgeous textured wallpaper, Brownstein added.

LET THERE BE LAYERS OF LIGHT

You can create many moods in homes and condos that have high ceilings, so it's wise to install various light sources, said Eugénie Triandos, a designer at Hibou Design & Co (hiboudesignco.com).

"Recessed lighting is good general lighting, even when ceilings are high, and the new LED fixtures give off a strong diffused light while minimizing the need to install so many," said Triandos.

"It's also very important to bring down the lighting with pendants and wall scones installed at — or just above — eye level. Incorporate table and floor lamps to al-

low you the flexibility to create an awesome ambience while adding depth to the decor."

Very tall leaning floor mirrors also bring in light and call attention to the ceiling height, she said.

When ceilings and windows are high, natural light pours in beautifully, said Brownstein, but for evenings, you'll need extra lighting. In addition to recessed lights, she likes to add a couple of chandeliers and accent lights.

"As the sun goes down, you want a layered lighting effect, so I work with lights going from the ceiling all the way down to the floor; a great room can handle a lot," she said. "I'll put in a lot of hidden LED strips in the millwork or the shelves of a wall unit or on the floor. Having layers of lighting allows you to turn on as much or as little as you want."

There are also lighting systems you can control with your smartphone or tablet, Brownstein said.

GLAM UP YOUR WINDOWS

One common dilemma property owners face is how to handle the floor-to-ceiling windows that frequently come with high-ceilinged homes and condos. Leaving them bare means little privacy, plus intense heat from the sun. Brownstein said there are many options at different price points.

SEE WINDOW TREATMENTS ON **E2**



Motorized window treatments are a good way to cover walls of high windows.



Wooden beams and wall scones above the windows add warmth and light to this home's dining area, despite the high ceiling. Transom windows further add to the natural light while brass shelving suspended from the ceiling adds to the storage space in the kitchen while simultaneously serving as a visual element. PHOTOS (3): COURTESY OF CINDYB DÉCOR

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An autumn scene in Senneville, Que. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE VILLAGE OF SENNEVILLE

SENNEVILLE

A community snapshot of a suburban oasis

MEGAN MARTIN

Nestled on the most western tip of the island of Montreal, the quiet community of Senneville is a suburban oasis that is home to exclusive properties and serene green spaces. With a population of under 1,000, it's a tight-knit town that's centred around nature and tranquillity; it's so quiet, in fact, that there isn't any commercial activity within its borders.

"I always refer to Senneville as the countryside on the island of Montreal," said Mayor Julie Brisebois.

"It's a tranquil village with a rich history and architectural heritage,

and it's also recognized for being a village under the trees."

Senneville's urban planning by-laws were designed to preserve the town's green spaces and substantial population of mature trees, including its expansive Ecoterritory of Senneville Forest. The massive territory was deemed an ecological treasure and thus given protected status long before the Grand Parc de l'Ouest was announced.

"The urban agriculture movement is also embraced here in Senneville, with several vegetable farms in operation and even a vineyard," Brisebois said.

"It's the kind of community where neighbours of all ages meet

up on the tree-lined streets to talk, and children safely ride their bikes."

Despite the fact that Senneville has no commercial sector, its location provides strategic access to just about anything residents could need. The city of Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, which is right next door to Senneville, offers a comprehensive yet quaint commercial area, including several restaurants and tourist spots along the waterfront.

"We are also a bridge away from both Vaudreuil and Ile-Perrot and our location between Highways 20 and 40 allows us to be in neighbouring West Island cities in a few minutes," Brisebois said. "Downtown Montreal, in non-rush hours, is less than 30 minutes away, and our proximity to both the EXO and upcoming REM Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue train stations makes public transit commuting easy."

At first glance, the attraction to Senneville seems obvious. But what's even more appealing for such a quiet community is the amount of recreational facilities and programs it offers, including a community pool, as well as tennis and day camps.

Describing pre-COVID conditions, Brisebois said: "We have additional recreational classes for seniors and adults running year-round from the George McLeish Community Centre and various community events throughout the year. You'll also find a private



The village of Senneville's town hall, at 35 Senneville Rd.

golf course and yacht club in our territory; despite our small size and controlled municipal taxes, we aim to offer as much as we can to our citizens."

In terms of real estate, Senneville properties have long demanded a premium on the market, but there are homes available for many budgets. "Senneville is known for having some of the most private and valuable properties on the island, with private drives with gatehouses that lead to sprawling waterfront estates," said Jay Deakin, real estate broker and owner of Deakin Realty.

"It's always a fun privilege when we get to work on the sale or purchase of one of these unique homes. But I think these properties give the impression that Senneville is only luxury homes over \$1 million when, in fact, there are homes for more modest budgets."

In the village area of the town, tree-lined streets like Tunstall, Pacific and Elmwood have solid homes built in the 1950s and '60s that sell between \$600,000 and \$850,000, he added.

"What I find amazing is the large lots, often several acres in size, mature trees and proximity to the waterfront, giving a cottage-country feel – all without being remotely located," Deakin said.

"We sometimes refer to Senneville as a well-kept secret because homeowners benefit from a country atmosphere just 30 minutes from downtown. We are very lucky

to be able to have this quality of life this close to a major metropolis."

A new residential project underway in Senneville is about to significantly impact the housing stock in the area, to the delight of many would-be buyers. Senneville-sur-le-parc, a massive project that will include 84 single family homes built in a stunning wooded section of the town, broke ground in the fall of 2019.

"This project represents approximately 25 per cent of our residential housing inventory," Brisebois said. "This unique real estate project is located in the heart of the village of Senneville."

Close to 30 per cent of the project's 24 hectares will be devoted to preserving green spaces, including a parcel of land that will serve as a waterfront park on the Lake of Two Mountains, as well as 1.7 kilometres of walking trails.

Senneville-sur-le-parc will feature contemporary architecture that is modern in style while respecting the rich architectural history in Senneville, where some properties date back to the 17th century.

"Senneville is, without a doubt, the best kept secret on the island of Montreal," Brisebois said. "There is a very strong sense of belonging in Senneville; citizens love their village and there's real community spirit. Residents stay a lifetime, and young people return to raise their families."



The George McLeish Community Centre at 20 Morningside Ave. in Senneville.

Motorized window treatments ideal for high ceilings

WINDOW TREATMENTS FROM EI

"Window treatments today aren't like 20 years ago; these are not your grandma's drapes," she said. "Now, curtains are very straight and the hardware is very simple. We do a lot of ripple-fold curtains; they warm up the space, help with the echo and look great when you want that hotel look."

"If clients have the ability and budget to do some construction, I build boxes into the ceiling, so that when you roll up your blackout blinds, they're recessed into the ceiling so you have a clear view with completely open windows."

Custom-made options make

more sense, because store-bought treatments won't likely be available in the exact size you need, Triandos said. Because all that fabric can be heavy and challenging to open and close manually, she recommends motorized window treatments to cover walls of high windows often.

"We recently designed a loft in downtown Montreal with nearly 12-foot-high ceilings. Rollerblinds are too commercial and uninviting, so we opted for motorized roman shades to add warmth to the new penthouse."

POP THINGS UP

WITH PAINT

People have been conditioned to always paint a ceiling white, but in rooms with high ceilings, that will just add to the starkness of the space, said Triandos.

"Sometimes, in a smaller space like a powder room, it's nice to bring the ceiling down by painting it in a darker colour," she said.

"Paint can play an important role in accentuating the ceiling if it's placed on an accent wall or on a fireplace that goes right to the ceiling."

Cindy Brownstein added that rich colour can create an instant focal point.

"We've done ceilings in charcoal, greys and blacks," she said. "It's really nice, and gives you automatic wow factor."

AVOID THESE COMMON CEILING MISTAKES
Eugenia Triandos often sees homes and rooms with high ceilings

where artwork and lighting are hung too high in an attempt to fill the space.

"We adjust the art placement on 95 per cent of our projects during the initial consultation with the client, because artwork and lighting should always be installed around eye level," she said.

"The goal is to bring some of the visual interest down rather than fill the empty space on top."

In kitchens with ceilings higher than nine feet, Triandos suggests bringing cabinetry up to the ceiling whenever possible to maximize storage and draw the eye up.

If you have stunning ceilings, don't be afraid to show them off in all their glory.



In some rooms with high ceilings, painting the ceiling a dark colour can create the illusion of a cosier, warmer space.



Very tall leaning floor mirrors can bring in light and call attention to ceiling height. PHOTOS (2): COURTESY OF HIBOU DESIGN & CO.



Creating a coffered ceiling above the living and dining room portions of this open space not only adds a visual element to the high ceilings, but helps delineate those spaces and differentiate them from the rest of the condo. PHOTO COURTESY OF CINDYB DECOR