

# Big Loft in the Little City

The redesign of an overlooked piece of Edmonton real estate.  
BY CORY SCHACHTEL | OCTOBER 24, 2022



When people think of loft living, they tend to think of a true Big City like New York, not Edmonton and its measly million or so population. And it's true: No matter how much we revitalize it, our downtown core will never compare with Manhattan real estate. But a quick search of local lofts for sale could surprise you. There are at least 20 loft buildings, mostly around Rogers Place, with a few dozen units for sale. So it's not that uncommon to meet someone who owns one, though there probably aren't many who own two.

When Ian Buckley of Lorax Constructors put interior designer Susan Jomha (Distinct Interior Design) in touch with the resident of this Rogers Place-neighbouring Excelsior Loft, she was intrigued to start work on her first loft — and her second, simultaneously. “He bought side-by-side lofts, and he wanted to open them up,” Jomha explains. “So we brought in an engineer to knock out one wall to open it up and create one big loft out of the whole area.” The whole area now measures 3,123 square feet of open-air living that would meet the style standards of any big city. It's undeniably modern, but blends well with the mid-century-building's character. “The orange brick fire-place is original, and the ceiling is original, including the pipes, which we painted black,” Jomha says.

The new fireplace is probably the loft's most striking feature. The two-way electric unit sits in a ceramic tile mantel that reaches the top of the nearly 14-foot ceiling of the now double-wide suite. It separates the main living room from the walnut dining table (stationed in front of the west patio doors) and kitchen that was kept but completely redesigned to be more spacious and accommodating. “He's a tall guy, so we raised the quartz island to 36 inches,” Jomha says.

If you were enjoying that fire from the living room couch, the old dividing wall would have been to your right. Looking that way now, you'd see the old elevated bedroom, which they converted to an office reached by floating fir stairs. It's roughly the mid-point of the now-expanded space, with a 180-degree view of Jomha's work. “We knocked out the walls around it and surrounded it with glass railings so it's open to both sides,” she says.

The second kitchen was replaced with a wet bar that sits adjacent to the orange-brick living room, separated by a few stairs leading to the main bathroom. Then there's the bed-room, which may be the most stylish room in the city's most stylish loft. And what looks like a massive, intricately designed, wooden headboard extension is actually an intricately designed feature wall

made of porcelain tile. “We played around with the tile to create the different shapes, and it turned out to be one of the coolest features in the whole place.” Designing a whole place like this — a whole two places, technically — was a first even for the experienced Jomha, and she had largely free reign to make design decisions. Continuity matters in any well-designed home, but a loft offers both an opportunity to make an overall look stand out, as well as more pressure to get it right — because if you don’t, visitors can see all your mistakes at once.

Matching the existing hardwood floor in the places where they had to rip it out was difficult, Jomha says. So she came up with the creative solution of adding black and grey hexagon tiles, in non-linear patterns. They scatter from the entrance into the kitchen, in part of the main living room, the guest bath-room backsplash and even in the en suite shower. It’s an “intentionally unfinished” look that would probably be out of place in a standard home with a normal number of interior walls. But in a downtown super loft with no ceiling, it perfectly completes the suite’s existing style. “We thought they would add a bit of edge and make for a nice theme throughout. And they’re a great conversation piece — everybody comments on them.”

If it’s not clear, this is very much a bachelor pad (with the requisite autographed sports paraphernalia on display), which is also what people tend to think of lofts, no matter the city. And this globe-trotting professional certainly fits the bill. There will only ever be one New York City, but when it comes to lofts, this one — which was used in two movies filmed this summer — sets the local standard.

## Build & Decor

- contractor, Lorax Constructors
- interior design, Distinct Interior Design
- dining chairs, occasional chairs, living room coffee table, office chair, SUNPAN

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