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## Executive Living - Interior Design

# Couple undertakes ambitious overhaul of downtown Pittsburgh condo



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When husband and wife [Stephen Casbeer](#) and [Lori Carpenter](#) decided to sell their Washington Landing's home last year, they were hoping to simplify their lives.

Things started off smoothly. They received a cash offer on their home before even placing it on the market, downsized to one car and temporarily moved into an apartment near Carpenter's downtown office while they looked for something permanent in the city.

"While Washington's Landing was beautiful, we wanted to be able to have the ability to walk to restaurants and have more of a sense of community," Carpenter said.

At the end of April, Casbeer, senior director of content creation at **LexisNexis**, and Carpenter, president of Carpenter Legal Search, closed on a condo in Piatt Place on Fifth Avenue. While the unit was a resale, already having been developed and designed, they decided to make it their own.

"We really started from scratch, essentially building another unit," Casbeer said. "We were the first resale in Piatt Place, but we wound up doing the same thing we would have if we purchased a unit that was not previously occupied."

Working with Shadyside-based Denham-Vitalie Design Associates Inc., they began an ambitious overhaul. The couple declined to disclose the cost of the renovations, which are ongoing.

"This project was very aggressive to begin with," Casbeer said. "In our minds, we were going to close April 30, start the demolition and construction the following week, and be in the condo four to six weeks later."

So far, the couple is a month beyond their target move-in date, and since the lease on their apartment ended in May, they have been staying at the **Duquesne Club** when they are in town.

And while the process of simplifying their lives has turned out to be more complicated, Carpenter and Casbeer say it will be worth the wait to have a place that perfectly fits their taste and lifestyle.

They decided to forgo a traditional dining room and table in favor of an arched kitchen counter. Carpenter said the rounded bar area is more conducive to conversation for entertaining, especially with most of their gatherings being centered about the kitchen.

"There are so many things that change in a couple of years that we are including things in our design that we didn't even know existed before starting this project," Carpenter said.

The couple also designed a spa-like bathroom with an Amalfi slipper tub and unusual bubble tiling.

[Ben Hayes](#), junior designer at Denham-Vitalie, said the design work the firm has done for the couple could be considered "transitional modern."

"We are doing traditional detailing, but using very unusual materials," he said. For example, they decided to swap out the traditional glass in the kitchen cabinets in favor of inlaying antique mirrors.

Hayes said while the condo still has a clean, modern feel, it has a sense of history and comfort to it.

Casbeer said they have been meeting with the design firm about once every two weeks over the past three to four months to review items and make decisions.

"It has been a tremendous amount of work and effort," Casbeer said. "But at the end of the day, I think we are going to be very happy with the choices we have made."

Justine Coyne covers manufacturing and higher education.