

{ PERSONAL SPACE }

REFRESHING THE NEST

The central gathering place in a luxury Park Ridge townhome complex needed a redo, and it needed to feel just right.

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Design by Diane Durocher
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You can't please everyone, as we've all heard. But you have to put that truism out of your mind when you sign on to refresh the common area in a luxury gated townhome complex like Bear's Nest in Park Ridge. There a designer isn't working to suit the tastes of an individual homeowner—instead, the boss is a committee. Fortunately, Diane Durocher of Diane Durocher Interiors in Ramsey was equal to the task.

A Bear's Nest committee member had seen the designer's work in BERGEN and other magazines and thought she'd be perfect for the gig. Indeed, Durocher was full of ideas from the start. "Hospitality is a combination of commercial and residential design," she explains. "For these larger spaces, it's important to have ample circulation of space, durable fabric and a timeless design and palette that appeal to the masses."

But Durocher had to start this job by coming to understand the purpose of the common area at Bear's Nest, a complex renowned as the last place the late ex-President Richard Nixon lived. "I wanted to get to know the committee and what they wanted their community clubhouse to look like," Durocher says. "Who

was going to use the space, and how?"

Turns out it was unanimous that the clubhouse needed to feel welcoming and comfortable. The space had great bones but needed an update, she says. So Durocher used the vaulted great room fondly known as "the Nest" as her starting point. "The slate fireplaces in this room and in the game room dictated the direction of the palette for the flooring in the entry foyer, hallway and bar," she says. "We incorporated cream, gray and sand tones for a lighter, youthful and sophisticated ambiance."

The theme of community was paramount; thus the main room features multiple seating areas at which small groups of friends and neighbors can gather. In addition to the custom chairs by Masters Interiors in Clifton placed by the fireplaces to encourage warm conversation, "we also wanted to incorporate game tables and chairs, as well as a larger sitting area so groups could gather for book clubs, informal committee meetings, an impromptu game of chess or cards as well as just socializing." A smaller upstairs room has billiards and ping-pong tables, while another spot boasts a quaint coffee station.

Much of the furniture was pre-existing, but Durocher

Interior designer Diane Durocher of Ramsey was hired by a committee at Bear's Nest residential community in Park Ridge to freshen up the community's common space. "I'd describe this aesthetic as transitional—traditional furniture with modern fabric and an infusion of timelessness," says Durocher.

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Opposite: The custom console by Old Biscayne Designs located in the foyer offers a glimpse of the muted yet sophisticated design that lies ahead. This page: Durocher made sure to incorporate multiple seating areas to encourage residents to hang out together, including lounge spaces in front of the slate fireplaces and a bright, homey bar.

and her team refinished, reupholstered and refurbished many of the chairs in durable fabrics in that same neutral palette. They also created a new layout and entrance into the bar from the main hallway and worked their magic with new trim, wallcoverings, lighting, bathrooms, carpeting, tile and cabinetry, as well as a new bar. The bar certainly feels like the place to be—it features a built-in fireplace, floating shelves, a mounted television and a mosaic tile accent wall in the same sandy tones seen elsewhere. They also refinished the existing bar stools in a faux leather on the front for durability and Knoll fabric on back.

The time from signing the contract to the final installations was just over two years, culminating in fall 2021. What came out of it is a labor of love that the Bear's Nest community will cherish for years to come—the committee's verdict was a thumbs-up.

"This project was truly a group effort," Durocher says. "And the result is a beautiful community clubhouse that we are all proud of."

