



HOMES

New life for Peterborough's historic YMCA building

Y Lofts by Atria Development preserves the downtown Romanesque Revival structure in a \$50M renovation to create 136 modern suites and amenities

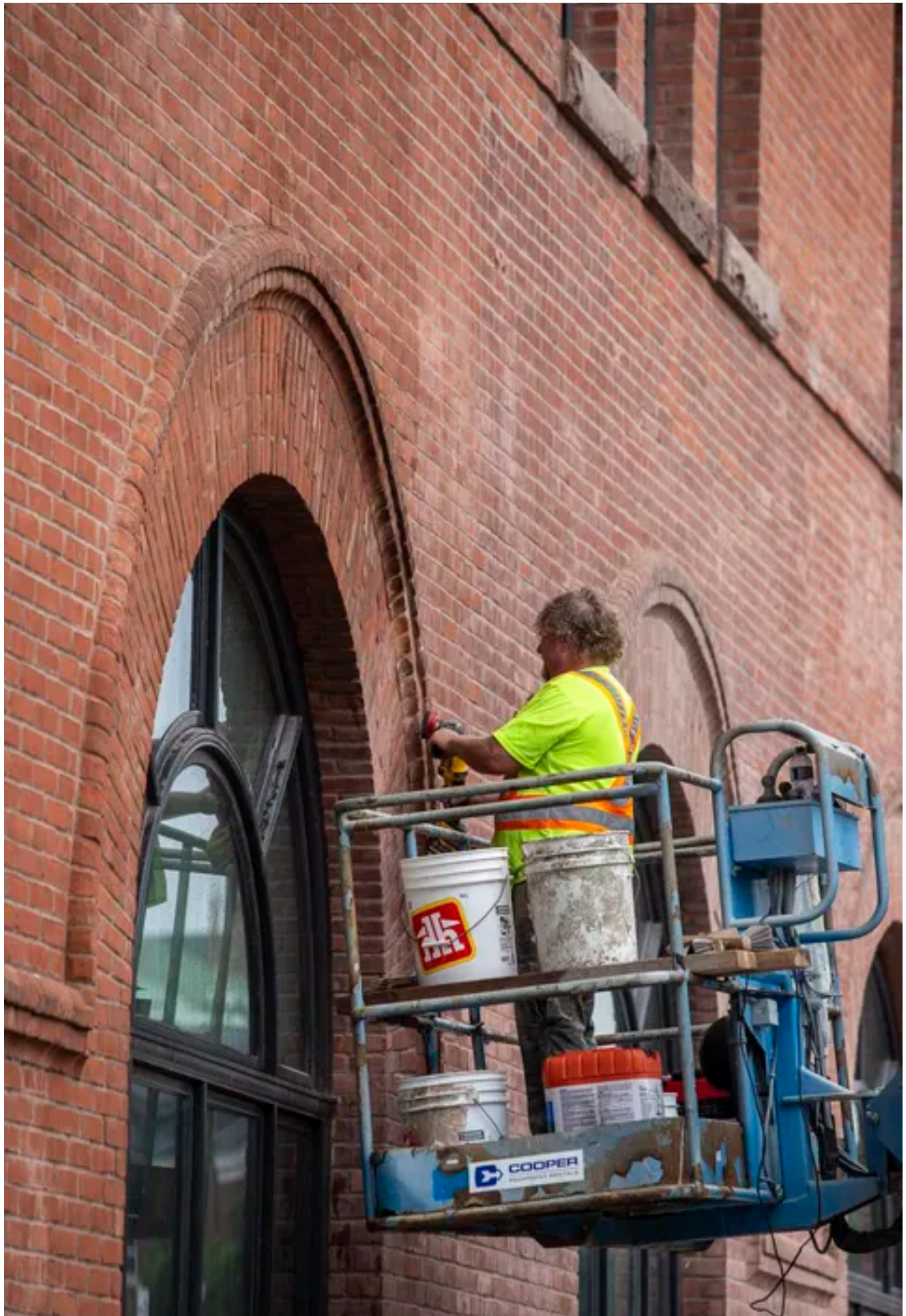
By [Carola Vyhna](#) Special to the Star
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Bricklayer Tim Moncrief is washing away the last traces of 125-year-old grime from the red bricks of Peterborough's former YMCA.

"I love this building. I learned to swim in this Y," he says from above in his cherry picker lift.

While those pool days may be long gone, Moncrief is pleased that the once-abandoned heritage building has come back to life in a conversion to rental apartments.

As he brushes cleaning solution around an arched window, incoming residents Dave and Darlene Smith make a final visit to "Y Lofts" before their Sept. 2 move-in. Their transition downtown from their west-end house means a reconnection with an old family friend dating back 50 years.





“It’s exciting,” says Darlene, who joined the Y with Dave and their three young children in the ’60s. Memory lane for the couple is actually the indoor track at the former athletic and recreation facility on George St. N. at Murray St.

“I would come every morning at 6:30 and run laps on the big track,” recalls Dave, 81.

“I just remember having a fun time with two friends, walking around the track,” says Darlene, who also took their kids for swimming lessons.

Now, she’s hoping to celebrate her 80th birthday in Y Lofts’ party room in October after they’ve settled into their second-floor, two-bedroom-plus-den suite.

“I love it, I love the high ceiling,” says Darlene. “I’m really happy with the view overlooking the park. The windows make it for me.”

The interior of the four-storey landmark was mostly demolished and rebuilt with two floors and new sections added in a \$50-million project to create 136 rental suites and modern amenities.

Positioned in a U-shape around a courtyard, the apartments are more than half leased already. The remaining units range from a 625-square-foot studio to a three-bedroom unit of more than 2,000 square feet. There are also one- and two-bedroom suites with and without dens, as well as a number of accessible units. Prices range from \$1,850 to more than \$2,550 per month.



“We’re thrilled the response has been so enthusiastic and positive ...” Hans Jain, president of Atria Development, said when three model suites were unveiled in June. He noted that many local residents have an emotional attachment to the address, which appeals to young professionals to empty nesters.

Built in 1896 in Romanesque Revival architectural style, the original YMCA was expanded three times before closing in 2007 when the Y relocated. After sitting empty for 10 years, it was rescued by Atria, a Toronto-based development company that specializes in converting neglected heritage properties into modern living spaces.

In 2015, two years before work began, Atria invited a group of shutterbugs to shoot the cobweb-strewn, maze-like interior. Among the images the photographers captured was the octagonal-shaped tower, which is now a two-storey, three-bedroom suite that rents for \$5,500 per month.

As part of the conversion, amenities were added such as a rooftop terrace and

party room/lounge with a kitchen and dining area; state-of-the-art gym with massage room; and first-floor business centre.

High-tech features were incorporated, including a phone app controlling everything from door locks to buzzing in guests. The rental suites have concrete ceilings, energy-efficient windows, stainless steel kitchen appliances, Caesarstone countertops and ensuite washer/dryer units. Bike racks and electric car chargers are also available in Y Lofts, which has been nominated for a 2021 BILD award for best midrise building design.



The four-year project came with its share of setbacks, according to Sharon Dawson, Atria’s director of marketing and sales. More walls had to be removed than anticipated and extensive “shoring up” was required, she says.

But the builder was able to preserve a few exposed brick interior walls, the historic front entrance and one fireplace, which is in one of the 12 high-ceilinged units in the heritage section.

For the Smiths, their conveniently located new home “just seems to fit into

our vision of a bustling, vibrant, growing and diverse community,” says Dave, who still works for DNS Real Estate, a brokerage firm he founded in 1988 and sold four years ago.

The couple expects to make good use of the theatres, restaurants, bars and “cultural things” in the city of 85,000 people as they downsize from the large, almost 5,000-square-foot house they built 32 years ago.

Renting a 1,330-square-foot apartment means “less work to do,” says Darlene, who calls the transformed Y building “a neat and unique place to live.”



Married 61 years, the couple has eight grandchildren and soon-to-be-10 great-grandchildren. All their adult offspring have “fond memories” of the Y, including son Dan Smith.

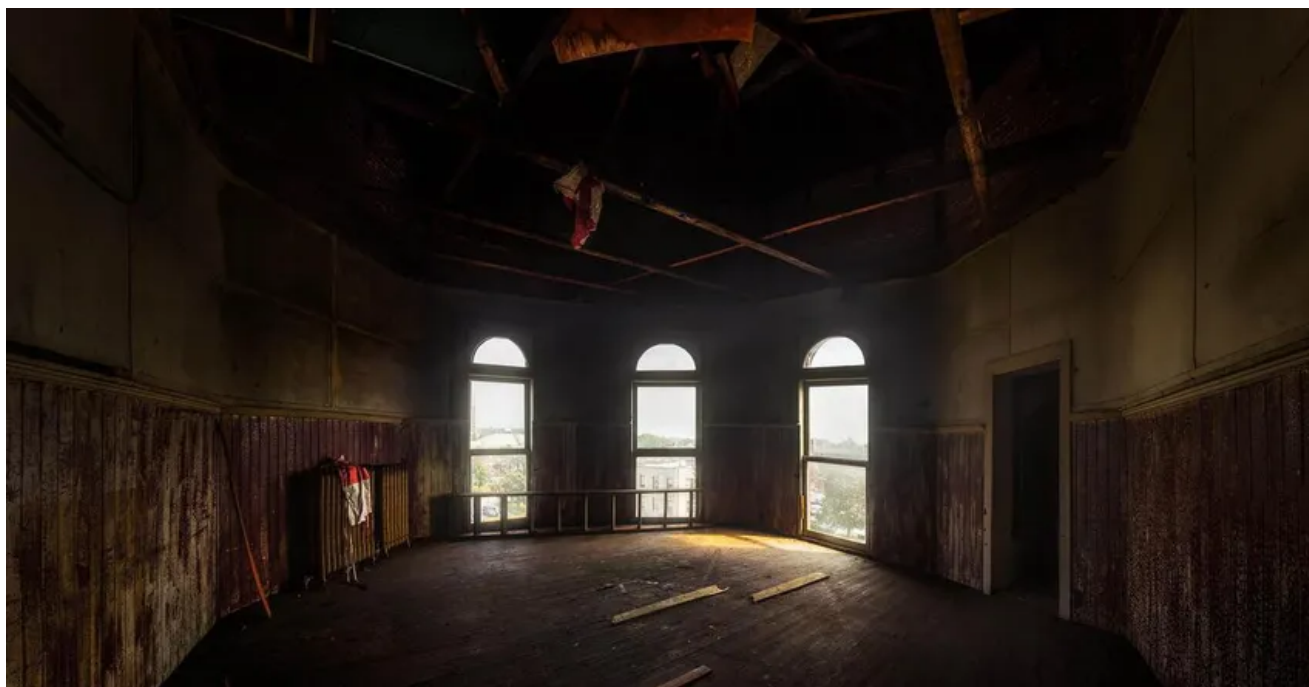
“We’d play squash, swim, play basketball, work out in the gym,” recalls the 58-year-old, who also did fitness training there before joining the Toronto Police Service in the mid-1980s.

Dan also remembers a blue wall with cartoon characters painted by the late William Windsor, a Peterborough carpenter. That interior artwork no longer exists but outside, the brickwork has been beautifully restored for future generations to admire.

“As long as everyone likes it, I’m happy,” Tim Moncrief calls down between brushstrokes.

CV

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Y Lofts

Location: 475 George St. N. at Murray St., Peterborough

Developer: Atria Development; **Architect:** A& Architects

Interior designer: Nino Francavilla of Studio Uno

Size: 136 rental suites in studio and one, two and three bedrooms with or without dens, from 625 to 2,074 square feet

Rental prices: starting from \$1,850 for studio; \$1,750 for one-bedroom; \$1,950 for two-bedroom; \$2,550 for three-bedroom

Amenities: rooftop terrace with lounge and barbecues; rooftop party room/lounge with kitchen and dining area; gym with massage room; business centre; bike lockers, wheelchair lift

Information: y-lofts.com; <https://www.y-lofts.com/> email: lease@prismpm.ca; phone: 905-441-8201 or 705-559-7548