



DESIGN RENOVATIONS
CONDOWORKS

Living Life up to the Hype



BY: PAUL HARRISON

Thinking Outside of the Condo Box

An Interview with Babak Nikraftar of Condoworks Design Renovations



History

Babak Nikraftar is the founder of Condoworks Design Renovations, a Vancouver-based company, that began in 2019, and now employs seven people. Babak's sense of dedication and entrepreneurship has led Condoworks to win numerous awards, including four Georgie nominations in 2022 - one of which won for Best Condo Renovation Under \$250,000.

Originally, Babak's team primarily dealt with house builds, comprised of duplexes, multi-residential units, and high-rise construction management. In time, people began asking whether condo renovations were also in Babak's team's wheelhouse. The demand in requests prompted Babak to form a company exclusively focused on condo renovations. Thus, Condoworks was born! During Covid, the demand for condo renovations surged upward as many people were stuck at home for long periods of time. Business has, therefore, been on the uptick for Condoworks as the brand recognition is gaining traction.



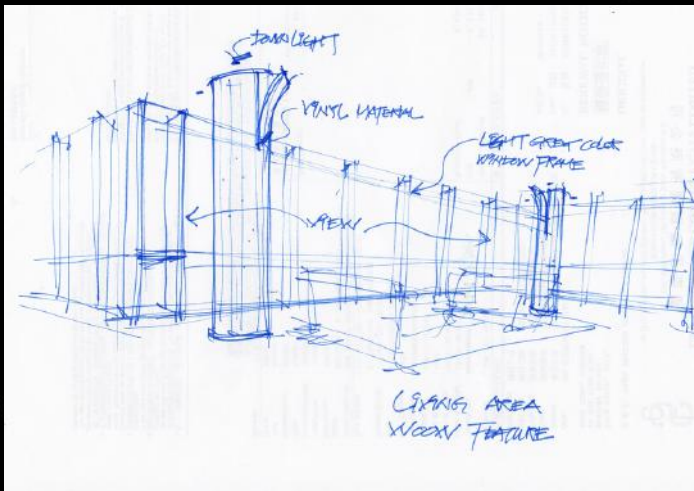
Babak explains: "Our renos are not for people who have a cookie cutter mentality. Instead, they are for clients who want to 'break away from conformity.' It's for the customization of condos. This is a niche market. Condos are basically boxes and constructed in the same format, so we team up with award-winning designers to enhance the functionality of the unit, delivering our client's vision."

Clients reach out to Condoworks through a variety of means; for example, Babak notes: "Often it is the designer who recommends us to the client. We deal with designers and clients who show us what they envision. It's for this reason that we work with top-class designers, such as Kalu Interiors. In 2022, we won a Georgie for the Best Condo Renovation Under \$250,000 with Kalu Interiors."

Preparation Steps

Preparations for a renovation are essential to its success. Babak explains: "There are many steps we go through before we begin a project. First, is our consultation with the client. We discuss the floor plans and what the client wants, in conjunction with the designers. Of course, we have to discuss the budget and how much the client has allocated or is prepared to spend. If it's more than he or she can afford, then a transparent conversation takes place and provisions are made. Once this process is complete, we then apply for municipal permits. Next, we handle all the communication with the building's property management firm, ensuring everyone in that role is informed, as well as the neighbours that live above, below, or on the same floor as the condo being renovated. In addition, we have procedures in place to protect the common areas, such as corridors and elevators etc., so that trade-damage during the renovation process is eliminated."

Babak continues: "Once onsite, step two is the Demolition Phase. During this time, we keep the clients informed with updates so that they can see what we find behind walls. Upon demolition completion, the unit's layout is a clean canvas, revealing what is behind the walls; it's in its skeleton phase. We want to be certain that the client is aware of the existing lighting and mechanical rough-ins, and then brainstorm solutions to meet their design requests based on what we have to work with. Since condos are typically of smaller size, we are somewhat restricted on the paths that our electrical and mechanical routing can take. This is where our expertise and experience shines.



Preparation Steps Cont'd

"We try to meet in person with the client at least once a week or more, if possible. Clients are also kept up to date on the project via cloud storage, with weekly updates of photos and videos. On very rare occasions, a client may actually live in the condo during the renovations, but this makes matters more difficult for all involved. It also takes longer to complete a project if the owner is present."

Upon project completion, Babak states: "When the project is completed, we stay in close contact with the client post-renovation. There may be deficiencies or material shrinkages or wear and tear that is normal on the installs.

There may be deficiencies or material shrinkages or wear and tear that is normal on the installs. We try to be extraordinary in this area to keep the client ecstatic. In addition, we put forth a maintenance schedule. Just as you own a car and have to maintain it periodically, your condo requires the same attention. Sometimes, the client may want some small changes at a future date, and this can be arranged with our team."



Partnerships

Condownorks' projects would not be possible without the help of a variety of key partners. Babak is proud to work alongside many subcontractors and vendors, including, but not limited to: " Kalu Interiors , a highly professional designer company; Frank & Sons Electronics provide our electrical needs; B.A. Robinson supply our lighting and plumbing fixtures; Jade Walls installs our wallpaper;

Precise Mechanical does all of our mechanical and plumbing work; Pacific Rim Cabinets builds and installs our cabinet fixtures; Julian Tile supplies tiles; MV Glasspoint supplies & installs all glass, such as mirrors and shower doors; Fifth + Fir Tile also supplies our tiles;

Woodpecker Flooring lays the hardwood floors; Vancouver Fireplaces supplies us with condo-sized gas fireplaces; Bradford Hardware is responsible for interior door hardware, including door locks, towel bars, and other accessories; Bocci Lighting supplies our beautiful light fixtures; RJS Stonetops supplied us with stone tops for our natural stonework – it requires a lot of skill in moving these stone pieces into our condos; last but not least, Magnif Window Coverings is responsible for supplying and installing our blinds."

Although some of these are located in the Lower Mainland, others are cross-Canada or North American businesses.



Tips for Staying Within Budget

During these unpredictable times of wild price swings, staying on budget is a hot-button topic. We asked Babak if he had any advice on budgetary matters: "First and foremost," advises Babak, "be honest with yourself. Know how much money you have for the project or how much you are prepared to spend. An honest contractor tells you the truth. If the client requests are exceeding the budgeted amounts, they must be informed at the earliest possible time. It is helpful to know whether the condo will be an investment with the goal of a future flip, or if the intention is to make this the client's long-term home. If the client intends to sell the condo soon, then an informed contractor with an experienced real estate agent should be able to provide a budget cap on how much to spend on the renovations, with the expectation to increase the property's future value."

New Projects

Condoworks has been keeping busy with some spectacular new projects. "Recently we worked on a James Banfield Design townhouse project, which we submitted for the upcoming Georgie Awards" Babak notes. "It was a three-storey townhouse, which we gutted from top to bottom. We moved non-load-bearing walls and made many other changes. The house had the James Banfield touch with that organic, sophisticated feel. James Banfield uses natural stone, wood grains, hardwood flooring, and soft tones to bring it all together."





Current Projects

Moreover, Condoworks is in the process of renovating a unit in one of Vancouver's most prestigious towers. Babak explains: "Currently we are working on completing a 2700-square foot condo in downtown Vancouver. It is located in the Shangri-La Tower. The interior design firm, This Is Dizign, is from Hong Kong. They've injected innovative and creative ideas into the project. They use textures, colours, and imported materials to produce much-welcome creativity in their work. This is a very challenging project for us but we're learning as we progress. It has us pushing the envelope on many fronts. The project will be complete this fall."



Construction Tips

Finally, Babak offers some advice to condo owners looking to renovate: "It's all about the team. As they say, 'you get what you pay for.' Pay a bit more for the best people. Use good subcontractors, such as electricians, plumbers, framers, construction managers, etc. It's rewarding to see something go from a two-dimensional design on paper to a three-dimensional finished project before your very eyes."

Stayed tuned for another interview with Babak Nikraftar in an upcoming issue in which he discusses Condoworks' 2023 Georgie nominated projects.

For more information on Condoworks, visit <https://condoworks.com/>



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