



An original wall was demolished to make way for the freestanding bar and custom banquette, creating an open flow from the kitchen to the formal dining room.

Riverside Perch

Jim and Nancy Humphrey have a bird's-eye view of the city they love from their cozy Pointe Royale nest.

STORY BY CATHY CHESTNUT | PHOTOS BY GARTH FRANCIS AND AMANDA INSCORE



“We love all of our views,” Nancy Humphrey says, motioning to the Caloosahatchee River views to the south, west and north.

“But my favorite one is right here, looking out over the city,” says her husband, Jim Humphrey, headed to the east balcony of their 16th-floor penthouse. “I like to show people that we are a tree city.”

Jim, a former mayor of Fort Myers, is rightly proud of the sight. The green-limbed canopies of mature trees shelter and nestle the gray, urban landscape far below the highest perch of Pointe Royale in downtown Fort Myers. It’s a badge of honor that city officials and planners have carefully ensured the oaks and mahoganies and royal palms have thrived in place, offering benefits to both the natural and built environments.

And they’re both right: There’s not a bad view from any vantage point. “You’d be amazed at what you see in the water, even this high up,” says Nancy. “Dolphins, rays, manatees...”

For the couple—both with deep connections to a town they hold close to their heart—the penthouse they bought and completely remodeled is an elegant nest for quiet refuge, family gatherings and personal style that blends what Nancy describes as both the eclectic and the traditional. She has a distinctive taste and style, but at the same time, she’s a local who likes to simply kick back. “I like to think you can just squinch down in a chair and curl up,” she says.



Homey and cozy

The Humphreys, who have three grown daughters and six grandchildren, lived in established neighborhoods off McGregor Boulevard while the kids were growing up. Jim, an attorney, served as mayor from 2000 to 2009, and Nancy has long been involved in the community. They tested the experience of condo living but it didn't quite suit them. Their last home was a 3,000-square-foot brick ranch home built in 1946 in Edison Park. Finally, Jim suggested they move into a maintenance-free location—though the penthouse is a full unit and a half, and the footprint only slightly smaller. But it means no more juggling of yard services or fretting

over broken faucets or faulty wiring. “I’m just not handy,” he laughs.

They enlisted Fort Myers interior designer Karen Benson for both their Edison Park home and their penthouse, which had been owned and occupied by the same family since the building was originally constructed in 1981. Jim knew the builders and had faith that it was well-constructed. First, the Humphreys wanted the infrastructure—electrical, plumbing, vents—replaced. They sold their home and moved into nearby High Pointe for a year while construction was unfolding. Nancy was the “construction manager,” Jim says.

Karen and Nancy went to work. A couple walls came down and up went architectural features: tray ceilings,

columns, crown molding, beams, niches, built-in cabinetry, and a free-standing island bar and custom dining banquette. The foyer was reconfigured and the main hall was widened, with a full-length built-in wall for books and objects d’art. »



Opposite page, from top: The cypress tray ceiling and paneling, and built-in wall unit, give the family a distinct feel. Jim and Nancy Humphrey are embracing the condo life following decades of home-living in residential neighborhoods.

This page, from top: Black-and-white checkered marble flooring in the foyer is echoed in accents and accessories throughout, as is the subtle Asian motif introduced in the four-panel wall art. Books and objects d’art found a cozy home in a custom, hall-length built-in bookcase. Nancy Humphrey incorporated her furnishings from their prior residence, but incorporated new artwork and a massive secretary that carries the underlying Asian theme.



Although the main living space is open, individual spaces were thoughtfully planned and demarcated through interior architectural elements. Warm, red oak flooring is predominant, but a playful addition is the black-and-white checkered marble foyer floor, which is echoed in the utility room and in small accessories and accents throughout.

The Humphreys brought over most of their furnishings. “We used everything we picked out 10 years ago and added a few things,” Karen says. “Things were repurposed, and it turned out great.”

Karen says one of the most challenging aspects of renovat-

ing a condo is working within the parameters of fixed plumbing stacks, electrical panels and lack of space for lighting fixtures. But there are solutions. Lighting, for example, is worked into tray ceilings and wall sconces. She has other tricks to defray bulky appearances; a curtain rod is easily hidden behind an elegant cornice. “It’s all about unifying the space, getting lighting in the right spot and balancing every detail,” Karen says. “We didn’t waste anything.”

Jim is quick to point out that his favorite rooms are his home office, the nexus for concentrating on his lawyerly duties, and the cypress-paneled family room featuring comfy sofas and a large-screen television and panoramic views of the river. Nancy



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— KAREN BENSON, Interior Designer



admits that she was hesitant at first, thinking it would look like a rustic men's clubhouse. But she has grown fond of the way it turned out.

Both love the open kitchen, which shares the bar and banquette, and flows into the formal dining room that opens to the river. Nancy's other favorite includes her bathroom (they each have their own). "It's girly and spacious," she says, with its ivory cabinets,

sparkling chandeliers and granddaughter's mini-vanity, but not so spacious that it feels like a spa or echo chamber.

The couple feels luxuriant in the relaxed feel of the penthouse, which they share with Cozy, their 6-year-old male Coton de Tulear. "I took my inspiration from Cozy," Karen smiles.

After an initial false start, the Humphreys have discovered

that the condo life is for them. Nancy feels a fond closeness to her neighbors, and she serves on the homeowners' association board. It's so cozy, she sometimes forgets all the hard work and planning that went into it. "We do think it's beautiful, but feel like we wanted it to be the kind of place where you just want to sit down and enjoy yourself," she says. Adds Jim, "It's homey." **G**

The open kitchen has views of the formal living room, and straight into the dining room and river beyond. Cozy, the Humphreys' 6-year-old Coton de Tulear, poses under the dining room table. Nancy Humphrey hand-picked this playful and colorful chandelier as the centerpiece over the kitchen island.



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