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Life / Homes

History meets cutting-edge design along King St. E.

Area combines Toronto's built heritage, modern decor retailers and the energy created by 10,000 George Brown students.



VIEW 5 PHOTOS

WILLIAM ZBAREN PHOTOGRAPHY

Modern furniture with a heritage view: Design Within Reach combines both at its new King St. E. location.

By: [Vicky Sanderson](#) Decor, Published on Fri May 15 2015

Street-level snapshot: By the time you read this, 214 King St. E. will be home to the chic new location of [Design Within Reach](#) (DWR), the Connecticut-based retailer that sells modern home design and decor pieces in studios across the U.S., and in Mexico City and Toronto.

A few short weeks ago, however, the team tasked with moving DWR from its former space at King St. W. and Spadina Ave. was feverishly laying flooring, hanging lighting and fixing products to wall displays while surrounded by the buzz of workers and power tools, as well as the smell of fresh paint.

The bustle fits right in on this busy stretch of street — a piece of the city's heritage as an original street when Toronto was called the Town of York in the early 1800s. Much of the energy and commotion is generated by the 10,000 students who arrive daily for classes at the George Brown College campus, just west of DWR.

Gerard Hayes, director of student experience for George Brown College, says students love the hustle and flow. "Some schools say they have a big campus. Well, our campus is the whole city and you just need to walk out the front door to get to it."

He's right that there's something to see in every direction. Look east on the north side, for example, and you'll be struck by the interesting roofline and finishes of the Canadian HQ of business analytics company SAS Canada — a LEED Silver structure that uses 65 per cent less energy than typical office buildings in Ontario.

DWR's move across the city to King St. E. reflects the firm's strategy to locate in high-design neighbourhoods.

"One of the things we look for is being in an area with like-minded businesses," says Kimberly Phillips, who handles public relations for DWR.

They can now check off that box — just east of them is [Klaus](#), the family-run business that has been championing excellent modern design in Toronto since the 1960s.

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Other locals include Trianon, Studio B and Kiosk.

Newcomers are joining the mix, including [Glen Peloso](#) (who also writes for the Star) and partner [Jamie Alexander](#), who are opening a studio/showroom at 225 King St. E. The draw, says Peloso, is that “it’s becoming a design hub that’s easy to walk and close to everything.”

At 239 King East, [D&E Lake Ltd.](#) is a charming and beautiful jumble of precarious towers of books (rare and new), among which can be glimpsed detailed antique maps, weighty art books and delicate prints. Its affable, intelligent, opinionated owner, Don Lake, who’s been there since the ‘80s, is wealth of information about the street.

Home decor hot spot: The dazzling cloud of 148 pendant lights floating above the DWR entrance is an “aspirational space for people to look at and see what they could do with light,” says Phillips.

Just beyond, a 30-foot installation of removable custom upholstery samples from such suppliers as Maharam, Knoll, and Edelman Leather does double duty as wall art.

Approximately 13,000 square feet of floor space is carved into 27 room vignettes featuring DWR’s exclusive collections and such designers as Chris Hardy, Egg Collective, Jens Risom and Norm Architects.

A video tri-screen will run seasonally changing content. Wall-hung “galleries” showcase chairs, sconces and outdoor lighting as well as table and task lamps.

Like many retailers these days, DWR wants customer experience to go beyond mere shopping. Studios host regular events, ranging from book signings to private events for architects and designers.

“It’s very much one of our goals to make it a place that’s about education and community — a place where people can learn and talk about design,” says Phillips.

Where to play: George Brown’s fitness facilities are open to the public. Eight weeks of fitness will cost students \$40 and \$80 for members of the community.

St. James Park, surrounding the beautiful cathedral, is just to the west of the design stretch. Two blocks to the south, on the Esplanade, is St. Lawrence Community Recreation Centre.

Where to eat: A favourite with students, the family-owned [Patrician Grill](#) has been there since the ‘60s. Among the standard diner food, nicely done homemade soups and meat loaf stand out.

There’s also the [Chefs’ House](#) teaching restaurant, part of George Brown’s Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts, where you can get a three-course lunch for \$25. The Chef on the Run program (weekdays from noon to 3 p.m. at 300 Adelaide St. E.) offers very affordable takeout food made by Chef School students.

Restaurants and cafés dot King St. E. but perhaps the best-known location for food of every sort is the St. Lawrence Market, a block south on Front St., at Jarvis.

Where to live: At Parliament and Berkeley Sts., East United Condos will be a 21-storey building with 279 units, 3,000 square feet of retail and 8,650 square feet of office space.

The student community is excited about a 500-bed residence that will open next year after it serves as accommodation for athletes during the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games.

Street Numbers

\$10,000

Price of rare book *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, by Margaret Atwood and Charles Pachter, at D&E Lake Galleries.

4,060

tons of CO2 cut in one year at SAS Canada’s HQ. It’s the equivalent of taking 615 cars off the road

1976

Year that 200 King St. E. location of George Brown opened.

1968

Year that Klaus Nienkämper bought a building at King and Berkeley Sts.

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