

House Beautiful

The Bellport Bowling Alley Puts All Others to Shame Strike!

BY AMANDA SIMS JUL 16, 2019



AYDIN ARJOMAND

Growing up in the small village of Bellport, New York, in the 1980s, designer Phillip Thomas and his siblings spent a good amount of time at the rec center. "My brother and sister would go play in the bowling alley. And I was the nerd, the inspiring interior designer who would rather do arts and crafts," he recalls. Down a few steps into the basement of the center was a kid paradise: a whole row of pool tables, lanes for bowling, and Formica surfaces all lit up in a fluorescent glow. It was the place to be—at the time.

In the '80s and '90s, the building "fell on hard times, to put it lightly," says Thomas. The bowling alley was locked up and largely forgotten about, but inside it was essentially preserved in time. When the Bellport Village Program Fund—a local organization that funds initiatives for the community—decided to renovate and re-open the bowling alley as their big 2019 to-do, Thomas (a board member) took the lead.

"Despite being banged up, it was in remarkable condition," says the designer, who has now been a local resident for 40 years. "It required very little renovation to bring it back to its original glory."



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The new design is arguably more glorious than the last: There's a kitchenette, so kids can have birthday parties; two of the original pool tables restored to retro perfection; detailed millwork for shoe storage by RB Hartwell & Sons; Bellport-branded bowling balls (a must!); wide open space for arts and crafts (inspired by Thomas' own wishes for the space as a kid); neat recessed lighting instead of fluorescents, and, of course, two gleaming lanes. There's color everywhere, from bright gutters to a blue-and-white checkered floor.



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For now, the bowling alley is only open to village residents—but there are talks of opening it up to the public. "They showed me pictures of the kids running into the building for summer camp this year, and it warmed my heart," says the Thomas. "I want people to use it and enjoy it."