

## Community Bowl: Designer transforms retro bowling alley

Phillip Thomas transforms an old bowling alley into a retro wonderland



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Often referred to as a hidden gem of Long Island, New York, Bellport is a small coastal village that sits on the Great South Bay. Rated one of the happiest seaside villages in the U.S., designer Phillip Thomas of Phillip Thomas Inc., grew up spending his summers there.

Recently the designer made the little village even happier by reimagining and restoring an old 1920s-era bowling alley that sits in the basement of the Bellport Community Center. Before Thomas got to it, the bowling alley was a bleak space with poor lighting and uninspired colors.

“I really pushed for this project to happen,” says Thomas, who is very involved in the local community, sitting on the board of the Bellport Village Program Fund. “Bellport is very much about the bay, but that’s just one aspect. Being able to work on the community center is what I call an evergreen project, because people will be able to appreciate it year-round.”

As with many city projects, Thomas says the biggest challenge was the budget, and stretched every dollar and quarter to its fullest extent. Paint was his most reliable friend. “I love color and think it has a dramatic impact on people,” he explains.

Starting with the stunning Great South Bay-themed floors, Thomas carried a simple palette throughout, choosing to go with bold primary colors that evoke a fun retro vibe. Two of the existing bathrooms had yellow tile from the 1950s that Thomas kept in place. “The pool tables are also vintage from that era, so I thought why not kind of emphasize that?” he says.

Having given the bowling alley a fresh new look, Thomas says his favorite part of working on this design was seeing the excitement of the locals when it opened to the public. “I still get messages through social media and emails from people about how they have so much fun using the space. That’s the best thing I could ever want; to create a space that brings people joy.”