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WITH SQUARE FOOTAGE AT A PREMIUM, IT'S NOT ONLY THE SIZE OF A NEW YORK CLOSET THAT MATTERS, BUT HOW WELL IT'S DESIGNED.

BY JONATHAN LERNER

“What I hear all too often from clients, particularly if they’re from out of town, is that there is rarely enough storage space in apartments in New York,” says Brown Harris Stevens vice president and director Jeffrey Shannon. His clients have a point: In the long history of the city’s co-ops and condos, the utilitarian closet often has gotten short shrift. “You do find the existence of sizable walk-in closets in some of the 1920s and Art Deco-period buildings,” Shannon says. “But as wardrobes were more common for clothing storage in that period and certainly prior, there does tend to be less closet space on the whole as compared to post-war buildings.”

Things didn’t get much better after the war, either. In the spare, modernist buildings of midcentury, closet space was an amenity that was



The finishes are as luxe as the contents of today’s custom closets.

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“generally overlooked,” according to senior vice president Michael Graves of Core. Early loft conversions were about open space—not storage. “Industrial lofts were obviously not designed as residences, so it was up to the homeowners to renovate the space,” says Shannon.

In recent years, architects and interior designers have acknowledged a basic fact of city life: New Yorkers have too much stuff, and not everyone wants to store their precious holdings off-site. Smart builders are planning accordingly. “Those with experience know that closet space has such a value these days,” says closet designer Melanie Fascitelli of Closette Custom Closets. So much so that many interior architects consider the closet the new frontier of urban dwelling design.

“People want to spend, and to design details into their closets, the way they did with kitchens not long ago,” says Lee Stahl of The Renovated Home. “The amount of detail often rivals what goes into a library.” Stahl says clients demand luxurious finishes, like cerused oak, walnut, and exotic European laminates. They ask for all the bells and whistles, too, including the carousels you see at a dry cleaner’s, space for exercise and media equipment, even wine coolers. “I’d say 30 percent take a bedroom or some other consequential space and turn it into a monster walk-in closet.”



Loft conversions require owners to find creative storage solutions.

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Lisa Jacobs of Imagine It Done says such amenities as pull-out shoe storage, electronic tie carousels, custom cabinets for safes, and lit cabinets are in demand, as well as chandeliers and other items to decorate storage spaces. But regardless of budget, Jacobs is a strong advocate for rigorously editing down your life's contents. "Eliminate the unnecessary so the necessary can speak," she says.

For those whose clothing collections are too precious to part with but too extensive to keep at home, there is off-site wardrobe storage and management. Linda Rothschild of the lifestyle management service Cross It Off Your List is launching such a service, called Keep It, Store It, Find It. There's also Garde Robe, which creates a digital photographic inventory of your wardrobe, so you can retrieve any garment when you want it. Think cloud computing for your closet: Everything is there, somewhere you never see, and accessible with a click. **G**

INSIGHT

Clos-ette Custom Closets, 212-337-9771; clos-ette.com

Cross It Off Your List, 212-725-0122; crossitoffyourlist.com

Imagine It Done, 516-286-0504; imagineldone.net

The Renovated Home, 1477 Third Ave., 212-517-7020; therenovatedhome.com

