

Georgetown Gets Glamorous

Design buffs from near and far appreciate the incredible makeover of the now-popular Washington, D.C., shopping stop, Cady's Alley. By **Suzanne Powell Mills**

The super-trendy boutiques and stylish home-furnishing stores of Georgetown's Cady's Alley represent more than just great shopping. Not long ago this retail hot spot was a dingy dead end known for run-down, rat-infested buildings. Its transformation symbolizes a fantastic revitalization of the area.

Go Georgetown The mastermind behind the Cady's Alley makeover, Anthony Lanier, is passion-

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ate about Georgetown's potential. As president of the real estate redevelopment company EastBanc, Inc., he takes great pride in what this project does for the area. "It's innovative. I planted my soul into it. Unlike many buildings, this project has an ever-changing life, with fabulous characters," he says.

Those characters include an assortment of upscale design shops, always full of fresh ideas for the broad range of customers passing through. The alley's flagship store, Baker Furniture, often draws in the

BELOW: Cady's Alley design district features upscale boutiques and home-furnishing retailers, including Baker Furniture (shown at bottom, left). BELOW, LEFT: The district backs up to the C&O Canal National Historical Park.



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crowds, but others definitely don't disappoint.

Whatever the style, the 20 shops of Cady's Alley certainly impress. Located on M Street NW., the classy-looking entrance entices shoppers, but inside is where the true “wow” moments happen. A central courtyard area, complete with charming Leopold's Kafe, offers a distinctive European feel. Meanwhile unique architectural details including lofted ceilings, skylights, and glass-and-steel stairs give modern touches to the more traditional redbrick buildings.

Ugly Duckling No More The attractiveness of Cady's Alley is, in a way, deceptive. Most shoppers are blissfully unaware of the alley's not-so-pretty past. “There's a fairly long history to get where we are today,” says Mary Mottershead, executive vice president of development for EastBanc, during a speech recognizing Georgetown's Design District. “Cady's Alley didn't always look this way. It was ugly and scary. Trash was everywhere.

“There was a real mismatch of places, and there

ABOVE: Cady's Alley now makes a picture-perfect destination for residents and visitors. ABOVE, LEFT: Anthony Lanier, president of EastBanc, Inc., is the project's mastermind.

were even old apartments that were either vacant or in the worst conditions you've ever seen.”

Making It Happen The desire to clean up the area was strong among Georgetown residents, but previous revamping attempts failed. Finally in the late 1990s, Anthony decided EastBanc would begin purchasing all of the property. Fear arose that Anthony and his company would destroy the interior of the alley, but that was never the plan.

Instead, they worked with architects to insure the integrity of the area. They then dove into the \$150-million construction project. The price proved to be more than worth it.

“The stores’ owners love it. The residents love it. Now we have a fabulous universe of unique tenants,” Anthony says. He believes the success of Cady’s Alley is a sign of more wonderful things to come for Georgetown.

“It sets a standard as to what can be achieved on side streets or alleys, and has, in a way, anchored the west side of Georgetown,” Anthony says. “In 10 years, I believe Georgetown’s retail will have matured and be higher end than it is today.” ●

Cady’s Alley is located on M Street NW. between 33rd and 34th Streets. For more information visit www.cadysalley.com.

Shop Till You Drop

Georgetown is truly a shopper’s mecca, with more than 500 stores crowding M Street, Wisconsin Avenue, and nearby side streets. Retailers range from internationally known Benetton and Kate Spade to small thrift shops and antiques stores. It’s also one of the best places in the region to shop for home furnishings with some 80 neighborhood businesses, including those in Cady’s Alley, catering to this niche market.