

Clean lines, sleek modern appliances and bold patterns blend seamlessly to create striking visual impact when entering the Barbers' Lancaster loft.

One word captures the sentiment visitors commonly express when they enter Rob and Deborah Barber's home in downtown Lancaster:

WOW.

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Photography by Donovan Roberts Witmer

WOW
FACTOR

It's hard to pinpoint the **SINGLE MOST STRIKING ELEMENT** of the Barbers' condo, housed in a former factory on East Grant Street.

There's the old-fashioned cage-door service elevator that opens right into the condo. There's the cool, clean industrial feel of the high ceilings, exposed-brick walls and glossy cement floor. There's the colorful, eclectic artwork, much of it created by local artists. And then there's the view, courtesy of tons of large windows, of the downtown cityscape, including the twelve church steeples the couple has counted, and the neighborhood's old locust and magnolia trees.

For the Barbers, the entire package was "wow"-worthy—and just what they'd been searching for. The couple had been living in Mount Joy for 15 years, but they longed to move into an old warehouse in downtown Lancaster and renovate it into a home.

"We always felt a draw to the city," Rob says. "We had feelers out for three or four years."

While they couldn't find a warehouse that was available or that was feasible to renovate, they had been eyeing the already-renovated Grant Street property for a while before the condo's previous owners decided to put it on the market.

Deborah says, "We'd driven by this property a number of times before it was ever for sale and had told friends, 'If anything ever opens up in that building, let us know.'"

But finding the condo wasn't the end of the process—the Barbers still had to sell their house in Mount Joy, which proved to be a challenge. The house was contemporary in a traditional suburban neighborhood. Some potential buyers liked the house but were less enamored with the neighborhood, or vice versa.

Storage proved to be another challenge. Rob and Deborah went from multiple closets and a full basement to just one storage room several floors down, in the condo's garage.

Deborah says, "We actually mapped the room out in our basement in Mount Joy. I can't picture square footage—I have to see it. Rob taped it out and said, 'This is how much room we have. We have to fit everything in here.'"

At 4,000 square feet, the condo is larger than the Barbers' former home, but it has fewer rooms—meaning Deborah and Rob also had to get rid of a lot of furniture before they could move.

A Sputnik-era lighting fixture defines the dining area, which looks out across the city from its third story perch.

"It felt good, though," Rob says. "It's a great feeling to de-clutter. We 'Craigslisted' like crazy."

After nearly a year of trying to sell their house, and then cleaning and purging their home of extra



stuff, the Barbers finally moved into the downtown condo in March 2010.

As it turns out, the previous owners of the condo shared the Barbers' taste and aesthetic. Rob and Deborah were able to easily integrate their furniture, artwork and other decorative elements with what was already in the condo: cabinetry, stainless-steel kitchen appliances, the built-in bench in the eating area, most of the lighting, and the fixtures and furnishings in the two bathrooms and walk-in closets.

Likewise, the condo perfectly blends the new and the old, with the Barbers' modern furnishings and the building's old industrial bones. Built in 1920, Rob says, the property was a hatbox manufacturer until World War II, when the factory started making boxes for bayonets. According to Rob, the factory supplied these boxes to W.R. Case & Sons Cutlery Company, a knife manufacturer in, coincidentally enough, Deborah's hometown of Bradford, Pennsylvania. He thinks the factory also made candy at one point, though he hasn't had much luck in tracing the building's history. About 20 years ago, a group of investors purchased the property and renovated it, giving the former factory a new life as a four-floor condominium complex.

Even though the space wasn't the empty, gutted warehouse they had originally envisioned as their next home, the Barbers have added a great number of personal touches to their space. Rob, the vice-president of Barber's Rentals in Harrisburg, has a background in construction. He built new doors for the coat closet and the pantry, which mimic the style of the exposed outer door of the elevator. He also constructed the TV stand in the living room and several frames for artwork. A paper prototype of the wooden bicycle he's building hangs on one of the walls of the condo.



Rob & Deborah Barber left a home surrounded by the farmland and fields of Mt. Joy when they relocated earlier this year to their warehouse condo in downtown Lancaster.

