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Savoring tradition with a twist

The magic behind
Nashville's Ophelia's
Pizza + Bar



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The magic behind Nashville's Ophelia's Pizza + Bar

By Scott DeLano

Nothing beats the feeling of walking into a restaurant where you instantly feel at ease—as if you are right at home. In a world dominated by food delivery apps, it often can be a challenge to find true neighborhood gathering spots. That's why Ophelia's Pizza + Bar, a 2,700-square-foot neo-Italian lounge, restaurant and bar in the heart of Nashville, Tennessee's evolving financial district, stands out as a true local treasure.



Inspired by the classic Shakespearean tragedy, *Hamlet*, Ophelia's reimagines European dining traditions within Nashville's core. When building the project, our team found inspiration in crafting an immersive stage-set experience for guests to create a sense of "seating in the round" within the floor plan.

This design prioritizes a well-defined orientation and focal point, strategically directing attention towards the vibrant streetscape of downtown. Outside, the elevated patio serves as a barrier between the lively city street and Ophelia's dining patrons, providing them with optimal views of the Nashville streets.

The overall design is inspired by fluidity, transparency, and flow. Guests can enjoy "dinner and a show" every time they visit.

The combination of rustic yet crisp white ceiling boards provides a striking contrast to the understated plaster walls and deliberately arranged, densely crowded art on the walls.

Incorporating Intentional Materiality Into the Design

Given that the cuisine at Ophelia's draws inspiration from the elevated and cozy Italian dining experience, we deliberately embodied this concept in our design. The collaboration between the teams at Certified Construction Services and The Bradley Projects with the restaurant ownership ensured that the

restaurant's ambiance matched the restaurant's culinary offerings.

To accomplish this, the team integrated warmer materials into the design, including a wooden ceiling, diverse artisan tiles, thicker plaster finishes, and an interior design package that incorporated rustic and distinctive elements into the restaurant. Through this approach, they could blend traditional

and contemporary aesthetics, creating a space that complements the continuously evolving menu.

The materials selected for this project were thoughtfully curated to evoke a timeless Italian café ambiance while blending with the lively streetscape of downtown. The combination of rustic yet crisp white ceiling boards provides a striking contrast to the understated plaster walls and deliberately arranged, densely crowded art on the walls. Walnut wood flooring is intricately designed to integrate Italian tiles for surprising yet practical European touches.

Additionally, the entire building façade features a glass frontage with sliding panels, creating a seamless transition between the indoor and outdoor spaces.

Adapting to Challenges During the Building Process

This project is located at the base of the historic L&C high-rise building in downtown Nashville, posing considerable





challenges during the retrofitting and coordinating new infrastructure.

Tasks such as revamping the HVAC, adapting to mechanical kitchen hood requirements, upgrading fire suppression systems, and installing new grease traps presented substantial hurdles for the project team to tackle.

The prior restaurant at this site needed updated infrastructure, posing an additional challenge for our team. Furthermore, we encountered significant delays in obtaining permits in the Metro Nashville area. Our primary focus was on preserving the original exterior elevation of the historic building at ground level, so we designed this project from the inside out.

As a result, the team encountered no challenges related to the historic coordination.

When clients possess a strong artistic vision, our teams try to turn these visions





into reality, wholeheartedly supporting their ideas and crafting a space that exceeds their wildest expectations. The fusion of the interior concepts proposed by the building owner, coupled with a streamlined and newly landscaped patio, provided the historic property with a more appropriate front entrance and an outward-facing facade that connects with the streetscape.

Because of this, Ophelia's has become a perfectly tailored addition to the historic L&C building.

Taking the Community on a European Journey

While many guests may anticipate an

ordinary Italian restaurant as they approach Ophelia's, they discover themselves enveloped in the ambiance of a European Italian restaurant, not only in terms of the exceptional food but also in the charm of the project.

Ophelia's exudes a captivating essence, boasting qualities reminiscent of the inviting Italian cafes and European Italian restaurants often found abroad. Ophelia's undeniably delivers an authentic and welcoming European dining experience to downtown Nashville.

Nestled in the heart of Nashville's evolving financial district, Ophelia's Pizza + Bar offers a distinctive and unforgettable

dining experience that transcends the ordinary. The restaurant stands as a true neighborhood gem, where guests can relish the feeling of being right at home. The intentional materiality woven into its design, blending traditional and contemporary aesthetics, perfectly complements the evolving Italian menu.

Despite the challenges of retrofitting a historic building, Ophelia's has emerged as a unique addition that embraces Nashville's streetscape. It is a true local restaurant that reminds the community that in the era of convenience, the charm of a genuine neighborhood gathering spot still shines brightly. **CK**

Scott DeLano, Principal of Certified Construction Services, brings 25 years of field and project management experience building educational institutions, hospitality, multifamily projects, medical/facilities, restaurant/service industry projects and historical restoration work in Michigan and throughout the South.