



CASE STUDY

# TOWER 5040

HOUSTON, TX

**CATEGORY:** Student Housing  
**BUILDING TYPE:** Podium

**UNITS:** 147 (405 beds)  
**AMENITY:** 5,770 sq ft

Delivered one month earlier than expected, Tower 5040 is a new luxury 5-story residential over 3-story podium student living community situated directly across from the University of Houston, and within minutes of downtown.

With 147 units and 504 beds, this lively student living experience supports both the growing undergraduate and graduate populations of the University of Houston and the nearby Texas Southern University campus.

Tower 5040 also offers the most diverse amenities package in the area, including a fourth-floor pool deck with dive-in movies, outdoor fire pits with games, fitness, and yoga overlooking the pool, dog park, interior courtyard, on-site computer lab, and abundant study spaces. Overall, it aims to enhance the student experience by promoting social, academic, and physical well-being.

When tasked with designing high impact areas like the lobby, lounge, clubroom, and gaming room, the design team at HPAD devised a strategy to shape the way residents experienced the space. The end goal was to create an environment that met students' needs in such a subtle way that the purpose was almost indistinguishable from the aesthetic vision.







## CHALLENGES

With students spending a significant amount of their college career in their home-away-from-home, it is essential that the amenities and units provide comfortable and inviting spaces designed not only to study and socialize but to recharge and establish a sense of ownership as well.

With the client giving full creative license to the HPAD design team, they knew they wanted to tie the entire community together to evoke a sense of youthfulness and fun with a sophisticated color palette and mix of elevated patterns and finishes.

Another design goal was allowing for multipurpose shared spaces. "This objective was met in a variety of ways," said Niki Landry, Project Manager. "The leasing area sits alongside study spaces and the coffee lounge while gaming cohabitates with group study areas." She also noted that using transitions of finishes, varied ceiling heights, and flexible furniture arrangements as visual separations leads to inclusivity among the spaces.



Though the process went smoothly, the team also faced a few obstacles along the way. Incorporating the HVAC ductwork and working around low ceiling heights in the leasing and lounge areas led to the modification of some design elements to fit the changing requirements. However, the team maximized the opportunity with exposed ductwork to make the space feel lofty and light instead of boxing in the HVAC.

## SOLUTIONS

"We drew some inspiration from WeWork and The Wing workspace concepts," remarked Foster Cranz, Interior Designer. "They represent the quintessential fun, modern, and millennial-friendly workspace design we were trying to achieve. We also paid special attention to not only how the spaces function but also how to convey a casual and comfortable residential vibe.



Strategically designed with a flavor of individuality, each area can be used collaboratively or alone to achieve more engaging and inviting spaces. Student housing shouldn't serve as a solitary experience, but rather, space for students to interact, collaborate, live, study, and grow.

Keeping spaces open and without physical barriers supports a sense of belonging, while functional furniture and accent pieces help to define a travel path. Additionally, adding contrast, layers, and texture also helps establish zones that brought the expansive double volume clubroom down to human scale.

The game room is enclosed with warm honey-hued wood columns and beams. Dichroic film was also applied to the glass wall to provide a sense of privacy. "This was a feature of rare undertaking," Landry said. "Supporting the beams and relying on our vendor to make sure that the film was installed properly was a very collaborative effort on all parties, but the contrast ultimately provided a fun and playful component."



Interior design is ultimately much more than furniture and fixtures – it should tell a story, share a message, and create an emotional connection across the design spectrum. The cheerful and thoughtfully designed spaces that make up Tower 5040 attract students and even seasoned professionals as well. Upon finishing the installation and finalizing the design, Landry noted that our client was pleased when he stated, "this makes me want to go back to school!"

