

## Penthouse living something to see

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It's all about the view.

If replacing the tiny industrial windows hadn't been feasible, the whole renovation project and move from a traditional home in Shaker Heights would have been cancelled, said Rick Maron, developer and proud owner, along with his wife, Judy, of one of Cleveland's most unique residences -- the entire 16th floor of the Guardian Building (also known as the National City Bank building) at 629 Euclid Ave.

The building itself, which dates to 1895 and reportedly was the first steel-constructed high rise in Cleveland, is now a Holiday Inn Express, a \$12 million project handled by Rick Maron's company, MRN Ltd.

During the restoration, Maron was intrigued by the top floor of the building, which had never served as anything but space for storage and the mechanicals of the building, including cables and electronics for the elevators.

He thought the location had potential. With his wife in agreement, he took the first step by making sure bigger windows could be inserted.

It worked, aesthetically and structurally. The nearly 180-degree vista of downtown Cleveland, the Flats, Lake Erie and even, on a clear day, the Lake County water tower was there.

Then nine months of construction began in earnest. In May 2005, they moved from Shaker Heights' Fernway neighborhood to the Gateway District.

The Marons recently gave a tour of their sleek 4,800-square-foot penthouse that is a showcase of innovation and reuse of an industrial space.

"This is what it's all about," Judy said, pointing out the living room window to views of The Q, Jacobs Field, the Terminal Tower complex and, glistening in the morning sun, the Cuyahoga River, rolling inevitably toward Lake Erie.

The windows are "postcards to the city," she said.

Visitors are greeted with two dramatic vistas. The first is a colorful wall mural, which seems to flow up from a smooth limestone floor. The mural was created with liberal inspiration from Van Gogh's "Starry Night."

As the eye moves past the mural, a corner sculpture composed of thousands of pieces of colored glass comes into view.

Its beauty is highlighted by spotlights and its placement against a bare wall.

"We are eventually going to have a smoky glass buffet, with some wrought iron," said Judy.

Past the entryway, and into the main living area, there is an overall impression of airiness and a strange knowledge that, yes, you are indeed in a former attic, albeit an industrial one. That acknowledgement is due in large part to the omnipresent, triangular steel trusses in every part of every room.

"We had to work with them," said Rick. The trusses - painted in burnished earthen tones yet still boasting the visible stamp of Carnegie on their girders - are vital to the building's structural integrity.

In certain spots, such as the entry from the front hall to the main living space of the kitchen and great room, a truss was carefully notched to allow for much-needed headroom. In other rooms, such as one of the guest bedrooms, a truss became a headboard. ("We put a piece of glass at the top of the bed so people wouldn't fall off," said Judy, laughing.)

Other necessary adjustments, because ceilings are lower due to the girders and the space's proximity to the roof, include a smaller-than-average Jenn-Air refrigerator and two refrigerated drawers to compensate for the smaller storage space. A second, smaller kitchen, minus a stove, is across the entryway.

"I hate clutter," said Judy. They use the smaller area for preparation.

At the west end of the penthouse is the media room, the only spot where two of the original, 2-foot-by-4-foot windows remain. They did get new glass.

One of the highlights of the penthouse, both Judy and Rick said, is the master bedroom.

It is here that all the details of the penthouse - the trusses, the unusual space and, of course, the views - mesh.

The king-size bed is on a platform in the center of the room, facing an expansive, southern-facing window. Cleveland is literally and figuratively at the Marons' feet when they are in bed. A fine-mesh screen shade comes down to mute glare or, at night, for privacy. It gives the city lights a starry quality, said Judy.

The bed seems to be in the middle of the space, again because of trusses.

The result? On the right side of the bed, as you face it, a nearly unobtrusive door leads to a large walk-in closet that goes the width of the bed and back about eight feet.

Rick, trying to integrate the decor with the setting, suggested that copper piping be used as the hanging racks, and it succeeded both aesthetically and practically.

And then there's the master bathroom, occupying the eastern half of this space. The entire room - floor, shower walls, counter space, even the platforms holding the nearby toilet, and the spacious, remote-controlled claw-foot tub - is encased in warm, glowing onyx, a stark but beautiful contrast to the limestone and bamboo floors found throughout the rest of the penthouse.

Along the far wall of the bathroom, nearly floor-to-ceiling windows give a straight-on view of Euclid Avenue, as if you were traveling in an easterly flying helicopter rather than standing at a bathroom washbasin.

All the decorating touches by interior designer Cindy Cohen - from the warm, earth- and sun-toned wall colors, to the use of the original brick whenever possible, to dozens of small lights dangling from adjustable arms - were carefully considered to enhance the space and draw eyes to the views rather than the decor, the couple said.

"We wanted to give a modern spin to history," said Rick.

Still to come: a 1,000-square-foot exercise room off the home's front entrance.

The penthouse, which was a stop on an early summer wine-and-dine tour of the Gateway district, was filmed for the HGTV show "reZONED," which features unique homes across the country in spaces that previously were factories, schools or, in this case, industrial attics. The segment will air sometime in the fall.

Right now, little do Holiday Inn guests realize as they walk across limestone and marble floors in the narrow lobby 16 floors below that history has been rewritten above their heads.

Rewritten, that is, not erased.

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