



—SCOTT STEWART/SUN-TIMES PHOTOS

Marc Pierantonis (seated) and Albenis Villalobos were charmed by the real timber lofts and the flexible space in the vintage 1896, 6-story Huron Street Lofts building.

SKYSCAPES

Huron Street Lofts offer vintage advantages



Pierantonis and Villalobos shaped the space themselves and designed their own kitchen.

River North timber lofts a rare, vanishing breed

BY CELESTE BUSK
Real Estate Reporter

For Marc Pierantonis and Albenis Villalobos, a real vintage timber loft and the ability to design their own space were the lures for signing on the dotted line at Huron Street Lofts in River North.

Pierantonis and his partner, Albenis Villalobos, 46, recently moved to Chicago from New Mexico. One month before they moved here, they started researching a place to buy.

One evening after having dinner nearby, the pair crossed the path of 100-unit Huron Street Lofts, a vintage, timber-beam condominium conversion at 225 W. Huron Street in the "Gallery District" of River North.

"We handed the Realtor a check and paid for it on the spot," said Pierantonis, who knows what he's talking about when it comes to real estate. Pierantonis, 48, sold property in California and New Mexico and now is marketing real estate in the Chicago market.

Originally built in 1896, the 6-story Huron Street Lofts building is a vanishing species. "It's one of River North's last great timber-beam loft condominium conversions," said developer John M. Mullen, principal of Huron Street Associates LLC. The joint venture comprises the Morgan Group, the Lord Companies and RSC & Associates.

The stunning former warehouse is a showcase of warm exposed brick walls, floor-to-



The Huron Street Lofts building is a former warehouse that features exposed brick walls, floor-to-ceiling windows and pine beams.

SKY

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Timber beams top high ceilings

ceiling windows and soaring 11-foot to 13-foot high ceilings crowned with classic yellow-pine beams. It was converted to rental apartments from a warehouse in 1986.

"These are rare, SoHo New York-style timber-beam loft residences designed with an abundance of open space, wide galleries and large bedrooms," Mullen said.

Pierantonis agrees. "This is real deal, an authentic original 100-year-old timber loft. It's not one of those 'soft' lofts."

One of the best things about their loft was the ability for the duo to interpret the space the way they wanted. "You buy it as plain space, so we were able to put walls here and there," he said.

The couple has 800 square feet of space and 12- to 15-foot-tall ceilings as well as a desirable kitchen.

"We have 42-inch cabinets and 1¼-inch thick granite countertops. The countertops are a nice mix of dark colors — ebony with dark chocolate specs. We also have a whisper-quiet dishwasher and an oven with five heating elements and a warming drawer," Pierantonis said.

Twenty-five lofts remain for sale featuring one bedroom, one bath and from 685 to 975 square feet of space. Base prices range from \$250,000 to \$320,000. A nice selection of light-filled 1-bedroom corner residences with 945 square feet of space and exposed brick walls are available with dramatic southwest and northwest views.

"Some of the best units are the corner residences which have expansive windows and abundance of exposed brick. Some 6th floor units have skylights," Mullen said.

Pierantonis and Villalobos, who moved into their top-floor one-bedroom loft in April, opted for an upgraded amenity package of hardwood flooring and an extension of the countertops. Their unit will have a skylight.

As part of the upgrade pack-



Here is the dining room area in the Pierantonis/Villalobos loft at 225 W. Huron in River North. —SCOTT STEWART/SUN-TIMES

age, another of Pierantonis' favorite features is the laundry. "It is like a European laundry," he said. "The machine automatically dries the clothes after it washes them."

"Our contractor was a delight to work with and agreed to install the laundry machine in the bathroom to save space," he said. More space also will be added in the kitchen area when they extend the countertop to reach 6 feet by 4 feet across to make a breakfast bar with seating for up to four people.

The duo also are enjoying River North's amenities. "We have visited a number of galleries in the area," Pierantonis said. Scooz! is his favorite place for Friday night dinner. "It is just like old Italy," he said. "We are walking distance from Michigan Avenue and from so many restaurants."

Wall-to-wall carpeting and white laminate cabinets and standard appliances, including refrigerator-freezer, range and dishwasher, are included in the price. The developers also are providing a 1-year warranty on all appliances, faucets, water lines and heating and air conditioning systems. Initial deliveries are under way.

An interior upgrade package for the residences is available ranging from about \$15,000 to about \$32,000 depending on the size of the residence and types of selections made.

Available upgrades include Great Northern hardwood flooring and a renovated kitchen and bath. Kitchen upgrades include 42-inch oak or maple cabinets by Aya, granite or Corian countertops, Kohler faucets and a Frigidaire stainless-steel appliance package.

Unit 512, an upgraded 1-bedroom condominium model with 906 square feet of living area, is on display at Huron Street Lofts. The model was professionally furnished and decorated by interior designer David Yates of David Andrews Interiors.

The developers are rehabbing the building's lobby, halls and common areas, including low voltage wiring, high-speed Internet service and a high-tech laundry lounge.

The building has a security entrance, on-site dry cleaners, package delivery, individual storage lockers, bike storage, and an upgraded roof-top deck with gas grill.

"The downtown views from Huron Street Lofts' roof deck are breathtaking," noted Mullen. Huron Street Lofts also features 26,000 square feet of retail space that will be marketed by the developers as retail condominiums.

Three upscale retail businesses — Allen's Restaurant, the Ambiente Collection (a designer furniture store), and the Aldo Castillo Gallery, (one of 25 art galleries in the neighborhood) — now rent space in the building.

River North's Gallery District features new and established restaurants, cafes, boutiques and about 25 art galleries that are right around the corner for residents of Huron Street Lofts.

In addition to Allen's, a restaurant and sidewalk cafe at 217 W. Huron, there are many popular restaurants in River North. Choices include: Ben Pao, Big Bowl, Sushi Samba, Crofton on Wells, Cyrano's Bistro and Wine Bar, Klay

SKYSCAPES

WHAT: Huron Street Lofts, a 100-unit loft conversion.

LOCATION: 225 W. Huron, River North.

DEVELOPER: Huron Street Associates LLC, a joint venture including The Morgan Group, The Lord Companies and RSC & Associates.

UNITS: 1-bedroom lofts with 685 to 975 square feet of space.

PRICES: \$255,000 to \$320,000.

UNIT AMENITIES: Wall-to-wall carpeting, white laminate cabinets and standard appliances (including refrigerator-freezer, range and dishwasher) are included in the price. The developers also are providing a 1-year warranty on all appliances, faucets, water lines and heating and air conditioning systems.

BUILDING AMENITIES: High-speed Internet service, laundry lounge, security entrance, on-site dry cleaners, package delivery, individual storage lockers, bike storage and an upgraded roof-top deck with gas grill. Retail tenants include Allen's Restaurant, The Ambiente Collection, a designer furniture store and the Aldo Castillo Gallery.

INFORMATION: Call (312) 895-5638; www.HuronStreetLofts.com

Oven, Lino's Ristorante, Maggiano's Little Italy, Scooz!, Burrito Beach, Cafe Iberico, Frontera Grill, Mambo Grill, Japonais Restaurant, Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak and Stone Crab, Chicago Chop House, Erie Cafe, Harry Caray's and Magnams.

Fashionable clubs include: House of Blues, Naha, Clark Street Ale House, Baton, Excalibur, Hard Rock Cafe, and the Redhead Piano Bar. Popular art galleries include Bella Vista Fine Art Gallery, Blackman, Thomas & Associates and Ann Nathan Gallery.

Health clubs include: Leslie's Pilates, 213 W. Institute, Curves, 314 W. Institute, Crunch Fitness, 820 N. Orleans, and East Bank Club, 500 N. Kingsbury. Grocery stores include: Whole Foods, 30 W. Huron, Jewel, 550 N. State, Potash Brothers, 875 N. State, Treasure Island, 75 W. Elm and Dominick's, 424 W. Division.

You can find Huron Street Lofts steps from the CTA's Brown and Purple elevated trains and bus routes.

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