



Uptown Living

By JANIS D. FROELICH, The Tampa Tribune

Published: January 19, 2008

Updated: 01/17/2008 05:15 pm

DOWNTOWN - Dan Sefair stands at his front door and muses that he might live in the only place in the urban core where a person can skip out to the street and be on the city's main drag.

That's because Franklin Street City Lofts has been built as town homes - not as a residential tower or condominium building like the rest of the housing coming to downtown.

Walking up the steps to the front door, which opens onto the curvy brick street, gives a strong sense of life in a renovated neighborhood. Less than five years ago, the shady north end of Franklin Street suffered from a 30-year bout of neglect.

Sefair and partner Jay Mize have developed multiple inner-city residential projects. Sefair said the four-unit Franklin Street City Lofts, 1220 N. Franklin St., represents a small contribution to the area's rebirth.

"But it's a spark, and sometimes that's all you need to get going," he said, standing on the small fifth-floor patio, which has a sink and counter space for entertaining.

Three units have sold, with prices from \$900,000 to slightly more than \$1 million. Sefair's 3,440-square-foot unit has three bedrooms and 4 1/2 bathrooms. A third-floor catwalk leads to a balcony, and there's an elevator in the garage.

"I run up and down the stairs," Sefair said, "but bringing the groceries in without the elevator would be work."

Jamal M. Wilson recently opened Leverage Financial, a real estate and mortgage company, across the street from City Lofts at 1213 N. Franklin St.

"Who would have thought we'd have million-dollar condos on this end of downtown?" he said. "But you really have to see those units. They are very unique."

Wilson bought his office in The Arlington, a renovated 1910s hotel.

"We walk downtown every day to all the restaurants," he said.

Sefair said more places to eat in addition to Fly Bar & Restaurant, 1202 N. Franklin St., would be great. He's confident the redevelopment will continue.

"I'm seeing the start of a walking crowd," said Sefair, adding that he and his fiancée walked recently to Spain Restaurant & Tapas for dinner and then to Fly for a drink.

"It was great. But that's what this area is all about," he said. "We aren't connected enough, though, to Ybor City and the Channel District. But I hope that's to come."

Sefair also hopes Herman Massey Park at Franklin and Tyler streets will reopen. Last year, the city earmarked \$100,000 for renovations to the park, closed since August 2005.

Linda Carlo, the city's parks and recreation spokeswoman, said design work is being done for the park, which is surrounded by a chain-link fence. A public meeting will be held in February or March to discuss the plans.

"Right now, there are some maintenance issues," Carlo said. "Skateboarders marred the granite seats, and some of the tree roots have caused damage to the brick. But it should all come together soon."

That's good news to Sefair.

"Massey will really be the cornerstone," he said.

Reporter Janis D. Froelich can be reached at (813) 835-2104 or jfroelich@tampatrib.com.

<http://southtampa2.tbo.com/content/2...n-living/?news>