

GINGERBREAD HOUSES • SLEEP AND HORMONES • GOLD COAST CONDO

# NORTH SHORE

CHICAGO'S GUIDE TO FINE LIVING

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## Digging *up the* Past





# NORTHSHORE

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BY ABIGAIL FOERSTNER

Today's North Shore suburbs have a richer past than you might suspect. Certain areas have been inhabited for thousands of years, but Native American civilizations left no written records. To find out how the first North Shore natives lived — and why they eventually disappeared — we must sift through the clues they left behind.



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# Living on Cloud



WHEN DONALD STELLATO DECIDED TO MOVE out of his East Huron Street condominium above the hustle of shoppers, tourists and office workers along Michigan Avenue, he had only one place to go: up.

"I wanted a better view of this great city," he says.

Stellato rode many elevators in search of the perfect vista, but he was often disappointed with the one-sided offerings of the high-rise buildings he toured. "Lots of places offer a view of the lake, or a view of part of the lake or part of the city, but I wanted more," he says.

As it turned out, the perfect view was literally over his head. Last year, Stellato, who lived on the 29th floor of his building, purchased two condominiums on the 38th floor, with a plan to make them one. After a nine-month reconstruction project that included taking down walls and re-routing plumbing and ductwork, the apartment now offers sweeping views of the lake and panoramic vistas of the city's North and West sides. "At night, the lights on the Ferris wheel at Navy Pier are mesmerizing," he says. "The only word I can use to describe this view is 'Wow.'"

**A high-rise Gold Coast condo has been remodeled**

**to give spectacular views of the city**

BY MARY MAGUIRE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAVERIO TRUGLIA



Dramatic views are often the main attraction for people who choose high-rise living. Buildings along Chicago's Magnificent Mile offer some of the city's most dramatic sights. Impressive lobbies, 24-hour staffing, indoor-parking facilities, fitness centers and close proximity to businesses, shops and restaurants are also part of the appeal.

"And, if you can't find the apartment you're looking for, create it," says Stellato, a Chicago attorney who moved into the condominium in November with his new wife, Paula.

Creating the ideal home in a high-rise can present challenges that those more familiar with adding a family room or a deck to the back of a suburban home can only imagine. Altering space, even minor tweaking, typically requires approval from condominium associations and patience from neighbors who can't be avoided by driving into a garage and snapping down the door.

Stellato, for example, needed permission from his building's association to acquire



six feet of common hallway in order to build-out his foyer. He negotiated a lease agreement and tried to appease neighbors by keeping dust to a minimum and making restorations. "It was a tough, tough struggle," Stellato says. "This was a major undertaking and it required serious negotiations, meetings and time." At 3,100 square feet, the newly combined apartment is spacious without being overwhelming.

Stellato says the key was having a "terrific plan." To plot the transformation, he turned to architect Scott Bloom, contractor JMD Builders, and designer Bill Parker of Deutsch/Parker Designs. "The mandate was to have an open floor plan and relate all things to the view," says Parker.

The first task was to take down walls separating the two apartments. Both started as two-bedroom, two-bath units. During





demolition, crews uncovered many ill-placed pipes, vents and support beams. "Those discoveries forced us to be even more creative in the design," says Parker.

To disguise supports, for example, Parker added drop ceilings. "They also help to define space and compartmentalize the rooms," he says. A bathroom located steps away from the front door was removed, creating a center hallway and linking the entry to the home's great room. A stunning north view greets guests upon arrival.

The foyer provides a beautiful entry. The colors here, like the rest of the apartment, are a soft, soothing ivory glaze covered with faux crackle. The color scheme offers a quiet glamour and "doesn't compete with the view," says Parker.

The floors in the foyer, as in much of the home, are oak with a walnut trim. A compass rose set into the floor defines directions. "It's a decorative use of the wood, but it also gives people a sense of where they are and what direction they're looking when they enter the apartment," says Parker.

Using the center hall to access the great room is the obvious choice, but in fact, there are three short hallways which all lead north from the foyer into the great room, which is arranged for three distinct functions: dining, living and entertaining.

The master bedroom and guest bedroom are also reached from the entry. The rooms stand at either end, the master suite to the east and guest room to the west. Three faux-tortoise shell lights hang overhead and a custom five-piece crown molding starts here and continues throughout. A punch of color comes from a large red painting aptly titled "Red Martian," by Craig Schumacher. It nearly fills an entire wall.

Nascent art collectors, the couple is starting to fill their home with paintings, prints and sculptures. Three ink drawings by Jamali hang in the main hallway, which is also known as the gallery. An oil painting by the same artist hangs over the dining room's buffet. African masks and textiles, such as Kuba cloth, are also part of the collection. A bronze statue of a winged female called "Luna," by Tom Corbin, stands on a pedestal in front of the west windows of the dining area, appearing like a goddess flying down from the heavens.

"When it comes to art collecting, Bill is showing us the ropes," says Stellato, who says it's a hobby he had longed to start. "We've toured several local galleries together and it's been quite fun."

To be sure, it's an inspired collection, but as stunning as the artwork is, it's the view that commands attention. "Thunderstorms roll across the sky and it's quite a spectacle,



especially when they come in with great force," says Stellato. "And the colors from the sunrise and the sunset are amazing."

The sunlight can also be bright. (Visitors are advised to bring sunglasses.) The homeowners are considering shades for the east and west windows. "Until then, I'll just keep picking a shady spot on the couch to read the morning paper," says Stellato.

The homeowner keeps his computer, fax and paperwork behind the doors of a custom built-in cabinet — complete with a flat-screen television — in the entertainment area of the great room. "It's a real pretty place to work. I just put in a CD and get down to business," says Stellato, an admitted workaholic.

The cabinetry has a diamond patterned inlay to shadow a single, black-centered diamond. "That's the speaker for the TV," says Parker. "We couldn't hide it, so we decided to use it in the design." The area is complete with a sofa and piano. The homeowners don't play, but Stellato has a law partner who does. The couple plans to entertain family, friends and business associates throughout the year, so the piano won't remain silent for long.

The living room is in the center of the great room. Two facing sofas are separated by a coffee table, with a pair of round tables nearby. Seating is complete with two side chairs. Two long tables stand behind each sofa, both topped with granite from







Brazil. The same granite is also used on the wet bar and in the kitchen.

The dining room is on the west end of the room. The glass top of the round table seems to float on the polished and brushed steel base. Six upholstered chairs patterned with a cloud-like design surround the table. Two more chairs flank the built-in side table suspended on the wall. The table off the foyer is also hung on the wall and both are lit from underneath.

"All of the design elements evoke a sense of sky and height and being among the clouds," says Parker.

Three hand-made rugs from Tibet help define each portion of the great room, as do the drops in the ceiling and partial walls.

The kitchen is located off the western hallway, between the foyer and the dining area of the great room. Working with DeGuilio Kitchens in Chicago, Parker made a workspace worthy of a serious cook. A center island includes the cook-top and custom drawers to hold pots and pans.

The hood is steel rimmed with glass to minimize any chance of blocking the view. The refrigerator, wall oven and warming tray are covered in burnished steel. Two dishwashers are hidden behind wood-paneled fronts. There is ample storage space, including upper and lower maple cabinets and a wall of glass-fronted cabinets to display china.

Two sets of windows run virtually floor to ceiling with two glass-topped breakfast bars set before them. When it comes to integrating design elements, Parker is a master. No detail is too small and nothing is left to chance. Even the silverware, which has brushed silver and gold handles, echoes the doorknobs, which display a similar pattern.

"Good design shouldn't hit you over the head," says Parker. "Each detail builds an overall effect."

The Stellatos have a spacious master bedroom suite, with his and her dressing rooms and a generous bath with a tub set under a large east window. There's a separate shower area and a television perched on the wall across from the sinks, making it possible to watch the morning news by mirror during a shave.

Brown granite tiles with pale flecks and striations cover the tub surround, floor and some wall space. It's matched with deep, red walls. "There may be a temptation to use a light colored paint, but that would make the tile look too heavy and overwhelming," says Parker.

In the bedroom, panels of light colored wood cover the wall behind the bed. Built-in shelves and drawers serve as bedside tables. Across the room is a built-in cabinet with glass shelving. There is also a spectacular east view. "It's possible to see the lake and a string of buildings that line Michigan Avenue," says Stellato.

As he starts his marriage and continues building his law practice, Stellato has created his ideal home. "I wanted it up high," he says. "In the clouds."

Mission accomplished.

