

Reproduced with permission of Publication Services of America, Inc.—January 2004





# Modern Perspectives

*A Creative Blending of the Old and the New*

by Janelle Martel  
Photography by Deverman Advertising, Inc.

What evolves when you take a tired, old abandoned warehouse that's oozing from its foundation with raw industrial character and apply an innovative, forward-thinking vision of the future, ingenious enough to create a modern-inspired urban lifestyle right in the heart of downtown Peoria's cultural epicenter? You get big city, loft-style living with the spark of revitalization so intriguing it gives an invigorating breath to what was once merely another past-its-prime, long-forgotten manufacturing and storage site.

Through the long-standing vision of former Peoria mayor Bud Grieves and the creative imagination and artistic touch of Kert Huber, owner of Huber Brothers Corporation, the general contracting company that breathed new life into the building owned by Iron Front LLC, a partnership between Huber and Dave Golwitzer, this rundown storehouse was masterfully rejuvenated and transformed into "The Lofts at 401 Water Street."

A charming old building with a lively past, 401 Water was built in 1905 by the owners of the Larkin Soap Company of New York and was then sold to Hiram Walker, who used the warehouse to store whiskey barrels. Next owned by Foster & Gallagher, the building was used as a home base for the company's mail operations before it was donated to the City of Peoria and used for Police Department SWAT team training. Now facing a whole new millennium, the warehouse was in for a modern facelift and a whole new purpose.

After a bidding process that lasted for most of 1999, demolition and construction began on 401 Water, and the first residential tenant was in for Christmas of 2000. The building is comprised of two distinct environments, a residential portion and a commercial area. The residential portion



includes retail businesses, an inviting commons area, and 50,000 square feet of loft-style condominium space. The 124,000-square-foot commercial side is home to anchor tenant Phillip Swager & Associates, who was instrumental in developing the building's overall flair through the creative eyes of their designer James Kemper, who worked hand-in-hand with Gene Peterson, designer for Huber Brothers Corporation.

Home to what one resident refers to as "an older, but lively crowd" of nearly 20 residents, the Lofts at 401, which are 80 percent full, range in size from 650 square feet to 3,500 square feet, with the average size of roughly 1,100 square feet. Located in the hub of downtown Peoria's "riverfront cultural district," with enticing restaurants, lively entertainment, and art venues within walking distance, an exuberant creative energy and the scenic beauty of the Illinois River flows freely in an atmosphere that Huber describes as a "microcosm of New Urbanism."

According to Huber, New Urbanism defines a wildly successful movement in the U.S. that shies away from the urban sprawl and refocuses on urban living, creating "pedestrian-friendly areas, a cultural mix, unique dining establishments and shops, and inviting commons areas designed for meeting other residents for a friendly chat." The Lofts at 401 Water fit this lifestyle model perfectly, with an ambiance that echoes a quaint "town within a town" dynamic.

A bevy of services are available on the lobby level of this "unique urban village." Residents can drop off their dry cleaning and grab the morning paper and a cup of cappuccino on their way to work, savor a steamy cup of soup and a sandwich for lunch, order flowers or buy a gift for a birthday, and have their cocktail party catered with the convenience of a phone call.

A glimpse inside one of the lofts at 401 Water reveals the artful mastery and creative blending of the old with the new. An imaginative mind and innovative flair for minimalist modern design give this 2,450 square foot loft space an "unmistakable modern perspective." According to the loft's owner, local contractors Tom and Tim McClintick of T.E. McClintick "put their hearts and souls into this 'lofty project' to interpret his ideas and bring them to life."

Upon entering the loft, you are immediately bathed in warm, natural light from the huge windows scattered throughout, and embraced by the vast expanse of open space created by the lack of interior walls and the soaring 13-foot ceiling. There is no feeling of being overpowered by the space, but rather a relaxed, liberating feeling of freedom that washes over you and invites you to visually explore the delicate coexistence of the past and the present.

Raw industrial character and textural interest shine through in original architectural elements such as bricked interior walls, steel





beams, and exposed flat silver-finished ductwork and water pipes. The building's original wood plank flooring, metal-wrapped support columns, and massive metal-over-wood freight elevator door, which the homeowner uses as a master bedroom door, are all reminders of the storehouse's colorful past.

Beyond contemporary, the stark minimalist modern décor of the loft offers a simplified, uncomplicated design that is brilliantly orchestrated. Guests are beckoned into the home through a long, narrow corridor art gallery featuring pieces by local, national, and international artists.

The home's main living space is split between a media area and a living room area. The media area is the "room" where the homeowners spend a lot of their time, watching TV, listening to music, working on the computer, reading, and relaxing. Clean-lined furnishings offer a captivating contrast of mediums including a flannel and leather mix couch, two suede and metal "frog chairs," and a glass table on casters. A balcony offering a breathtaking view of the river is located off the media area.

Further mixed mediums define the décor in the cozy living room space. Custom wood shelves blend form and function while Scandinavian Modern furniture designs of leather, fabric, and suede lend posh sensibility and visual interest.

Tucked back into the building's original elevator shaft, the small 11-by-12-foot kitchen does not feel the least bit cramped. Featuring all the modern conveniences including stainless, commercial-quality appliances and stunning black granite countertops, the kitchen is conveniently located adjacent to the inviting dining area, which features a glass and metal dining table, and a wall-mounted buffet with stainless steel shelving.

Floor-to-ceiling gray tone marble, glass block, stone, and a polished aluminum sink all add modern overtones to the guest bathroom, while the master suite features another marble bathroom complete with an irresistible soaking tub and two sculptural green glass bowl sinks. A large window infuses the master bedroom with light while a glass block wall allows diffused light to spill into a large walk-in closet, shedding clarity on its contents.

Overall, this loft and all of the others like it, no matter how they are decorated—modern or traditional—are an artistic statement of what can be achieved with a raw expanse of space begging to be sculpted and molded like clay into a personal lifestyle reflection. At 401 Water, it's all about contrast. It's about subtly melding the old with the new, the weathered with the polished, and the past with the present. At 401 Water, life is about the here and the now, with a glimpse into the future. ::::