

# downtownliving

## The Lucky Ones

Downtown living is more than just an address it's a lifestyle

BY LAURIE BREKKE

Early morning delivery trucks rumble through cobblestone streets that are wide and empty. At this time of day a sense of urban peace temporarily takes over. The normal high energy of the Old Market is quieted for a few hours.

For those living in the renovated brick warehouses here, this feeling of downtown is lasting. They have no need to look frantically for parking or to rush to get to a show on time. Their community nestled within the city is an oasis because they are merely steps away from it all.

The people who have moved to downtown have a love of Omaha and its combination of big city amenities with small town friendliness. Some are transplants from other cities and others moved into downtown from different parts of Omaha.

Gerry Morrow and her husband Tom moved back to Omaha from their most recent home, a lake house in a small, rural town. They moved into the Paxton Manor in 2006.

"We had a house on lake Vermillion and were 25 miles from the closest grocery store. We always said we wanted to be in the city and do all the things that we had missed," Morrow said.

Her husband Tom was born and raised in Omaha and the two met when they both worked at Northwestern Bell, "in the old days," she said. They lived in the mountains and the east coast as well as their lake house before deciding that Omaha was the place to come home to.

"It was an easy choice for us," Morrow said. "Tom has a brother living here and he's a Creighton Prep guy, a Nebraska guy. It was like we never left."

Scott Kroeker moved to Omaha because he wanted to be in a city that was a better match to his lifestyle. He had lived in Lincoln since his college days, but as a frequent overseas traveler and owner of Global Sales



Management, an international consulting business, Kroeker said Lincoln was beginning to feel too small for him.

"Omaha has a good urban environment and yet is still casual. Other large cities are extremely urban with extremely too many people, but Omaha is a nice town to come home to. Also, my girlfriend lives in Omaha," Kroeker said.

Dr. Steve Torpy and his wife Jackie have always lived in Omaha, but after their children were grown they realized the demands of a booming medical practice and an 8-acre lawn didn't leave many hours in the day for the things they wanted to do on their leisure time.

Torpy said the vibrant downtown atmosphere, variety of people and ability to walk wherever they want to go were all big parts in their decision to move to one of the condos on the upper level of 1000 Dodge, downtown.

"We walk to the restaurants, we walk to Patrick's to do our shopping, we are close to the Qwest and Holland so we walk there, too," Torpy said.

The Torpys had bought some land at Bennington Lakes and had temporarily moved in to a friend's condo at the Ford Warehouse while their new home was being built. He said that the couple had lived there for only two months when his wife Jackie said to him, "we're not leaving". So four years ago they moved in to 1000 Dodge; one of the smaller, 3-story condominiums downtown.

The couple said they entertain more often now and have solved the sticky parking issue by leasing a parking space for guests in the Hilton Gardens across the street from their condominium.

Kroeker says he too is more social now that he has moved into the Old Market because

the area has a concentration of people walking to and from the restaurants, coffee shops, bars and boutique stores.

"I think the downtown area is a very social place. It forces you to be out and about rather than stay at home," he said.

Downtown is the entertainment district of Omaha and is home to some of the area's best restaurants and bars as well as the Orpheum Theater's large theatrical productions, the Holland Center's classical and contemporary musical guests and the Qwest Center's national acts. For residents of downtown, being able to walk to all of these places takes the stress out of parking and makes an evening out feel like a vacation.

"There have been times when it's been a week before I've gotten back in my car again," Morrow said. "Being in the heart of the city, there's always something going on and we just walk everywhere; I even walk to the Qwest Center."

The recent addition of Patrick's Market, a locally owned, gourmet grocery store located just west of the heart of the Old Market is a big reason why downtowners are able to leave their cars parked for days at a time.

"Patrick's been a huge addition to us down here," Torpy said. "We love the deli and they get good breads and their butcher shop is great."

The owners of Patrick's also run Blair Superfoods, a grocery store in Blair, Nebraska, which may contribute to the open, friendly manner that gives customers a sense of community when shopping at their own neighborhood grocery store.

"I will shop at Patrick's for the basics and then once every couple of weeks we'll go to the big grocery store like Whole Foods, but 90% of my life revolves around walking wherever I need to go," Kroeker said.

Mike Moylan is a condominium developer in the Old Market who has not only been creating spaces for people to live in; he has also been crafting a community within the buildings.

