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Exchange penthouse suite oozes character, charm

By: Todd Lewys

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There are those who say -- when you're looking for a home, that is -- that it's rare to find everything you're looking for in one tidy package.

That said, if you happen to be looking for a distinctly urban condominium that seamlessly mixes old and new design concepts -- with a superb location -- you might want to consider a penthouse suite at 110 Princess St. in the city's historic Exchange District.

According to Bill Thiessen -- a.k.a. The Urban Agent -- it's the best unit in the cavernous brick building, which now holds a total of 50 suites.

"In my mind, it's the nicest suite in the building thanks to features like a converted bank vault master bath, extra-high ceilings and big, arched windows that make living in this building such a great experience," he says. "And this unit, with its 13-foot ceilings, is truly a loft. The wonderful design really personifies that concept."

Simply put, suite 609 is a whimsical -- and well-designed -- synergy of classic and modern design themes: classic in the sense that you get a high, open-beam wood ceiling, exposed brick walls on three sides, and huge, arched windows that provide a panoramic view of the Exchange District that spreads out below; modern in the sense that the interior is open-concept in nature.

"In total, the suite is 1,452 sq. ft., which gives you lots of space to enjoy," says Thiessen. "Because you're on the top floor, the ceiling isn't covered with drywall, so the old beams give you a rustic, open feel. The floors are also pretty neat -- they're original Manitoba fir plank floors. It's an indigenous, natural theme that gives the suite even more character."

Found to the left of the open-concept great room area is an island kitchen that delivers utility and understated beauty by way of an eight-foot island, and tons of counter and cabinet space.

"I love the design. It's simple and efficient, where it just gives you a great, big, beautiful brick wall that isn't obscured by (natural maple) upper cabinets. They've been placed down low in that area. There's lots of storage space elsewhere. Doing that made the wall a focal point, just as it should be," he says. "And the countertops are a grey solid-surface composite that's similar to granite, and very durable."

Only steps away from the kitchen -- an ideal feature if you enjoy entertaining -- is a spacious dining area (currently with table for six) and a living room with space aplenty for lots of comfy furniture from which the host and guests alike can repair to for a chat and apertifs, or to watch a movie or sporting event.

"The large windows, brick and wood all work together to create a bright, yet warm interior feel. You also get a great view of the Exchange District to the east, and the morning sun," adds Thiessen.

Now, for the first of two features that make the suite unique (in a good way): a room with a pocket door and window found off the living room.

"It's a neat room," he says. "Right now it's being used as an office but it could easily be turned into a bedroom because the niche on the back wall could be easily turned into a closet. And because the right-hand wall is three-quarter height, it defines the room yet maintains the open feel."

Next is a master bedroom that qualifies as being unique in two ways. First, it has a corner window that allows daylight to filter lazily in from the great room. Second, the door to the ensuite, which used to safeguard a bank vault and is at least a century old -- now ensures no one will steal away your privacy while enjoying a hot bath in the long, deep and luxurious ensuite.

"It (the door) really is a showstopper. Inside is all you would want in an ensuite -- a 13-foot ceiling that adds to the feeling of space, a deep soaker tub set in multi-coloured granite, three walls of sealed and polished brick and granite, an espresso maple vanity," he says. "It's a great spot to relax in privacy and style."

Add to that a second (huge) bathroom with shower, in-suite laundry, heated underground parking and a location that's walking distance to downtown, The Forks, the MTS Centre and Canwest Park and you've got one fine slice of urbanity that offers the best of old and new design styles, says Thiessen.

"It's a different, modern and cool place loaded with character and history in an increasingly vibrant, urban area that's very safe -- and growing more with every passing day," he says.

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DETAILS

Address: 609-110 Princess St.

Style: Loft-style condominium

Size: 1,462 sq. ft.

Bedrooms: 2

Bathrooms: 2

Condominium fees: \$300 (approximate)

Selling price: \$324,900

Realtor: Bill Thiessen, RE/MAX Performance Realty @ 946-5638

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