

Condo Living is Perfect for Those Who Love Downtown

By Ronda Robinson, Special publications correspondent

Although Daniella Cracknell lived in a tiny neighborhood near Central Park in New York, she paid \$2,000 a month for a one-bedroom apartment with plumbing that often didn't work and a landlord who wasn't swift to do repairs.

"Every time it rained, the ceiling would fall in," recalls Cracknell, a 30-something career woman who has found her bliss living in downtown Knoxville. She recently moved here to work as public relations director for Fine Living TV Network.

The condominium she bought in the Burwell Building above the Tennessee Theatre is still under construction, but Cracknell has been renting a space above Oodles Restaurant and becoming acclimated to downtown. She anticipates moving into her new digs soon.

"I could never own a home like I own in Knoxville in New York or L.A.," says Cracknell, who spent 10 years in those metropolises. "I've never bought anything before, so I think it's really, really exciting. What you could afford in New York you just don't want to buy, because it's a shoebox."

As a single professional, she believes condo living will fit her needs well. "The thought of having a house by myself is too daunting, too much work."

Other condo dwellers at various stages in life share the same sentiments. Edgar and Ghislaine Miller owned houses in the United States and Brazil, where he was a foreign

correspondent. They moved to Sequoyah Square Condominiums at 1993 and embrace the convenience of that lifestyle.

"We really prefer it to houses at this point," says Edgar Miller, a 72-year-old retired newsman and college journalism instructor. "Ghislaine likes to have her flowers, but she can do that on the balcony. I'm not much of a fixer-upper. And I hate mowing lawns. I don't like cleaning gutters. And I don't like flooded basements."

Such issues don't consume his time anymore. A monthly condominium fee covers upkeep in the common areas and any inside leaks that could damage another unit.

Georgene and Walter Tipton also appreciate leaving the outdoor maintenance to someone else. They have lived in Promontory Point, a condo project on Knoxville's downtown waterfront, since December 2005.

"Condo living is very convenient and comfortable," says Georgene, 56. "You don't have a yard, but if you want to go pick a weed, you can. It really is nice."

The Tiptons have owned houses before and know the amount of work involved. "Basically, if I have a yard, I'm out in it all the time," Georgene says. "I enjoy that up to a point. Then it gets to be drudgery."

When they go away, the Tiptons feel safe knowing their neighbors will watch the property for them. That's one of the benefits of living in close proximity, says Georgene.

"The type of people who live downtown are friendly," she says. Cracknell agrees. Although terrified of moving to Knoxville and being bored, the PR professional found a different spin on life here.

"I've not been bored one day since I've moved here. It's an incredibly friendly and welcoming town," she says. Meeting neighbors downtown has enhanced her social life.

Cracknell dubs them the "fine-living crowd," educated and cultured city dwellers who take advantage of theaters, shops, restaurants and the farmer's market, as she does.

Trinity McDermott, who lives in a condo a few blocks away, has learned to give herself an extra five or 10 minutes walking to a downtown destination, because inevitably she will run into someone she knows and stop to chat.

She resides at the Pembroke, 508 Union Ave. Her husband, Mark, owns Sapphire, a bar and restaurant on Gay Street. "That's certainly one of the things that keeps us down here," she says, "the opportunity to participate in downtown redevelopment."

McDermott and her 17-month old son stroll to the library as well as the YMCA, post office, bank, coffee shop and other places. The Pembroke, with its concierge, pool, garage, and marble counters made of flooring from the old S&W, is a charming home. However, for McDermott, it's more than that: "It's a lifestyle."