



Vive La France Street!

Originally built in the 50s to house lumber, La France Street Lofts is now home to some stylish residents.

Story by Tom Eubanks
Photography by Amy Herr

After Livable Developments tapped Smith Dalia Architects to convert a defunct 94,000-square-foot lumber warehouse into a “haven of urban seclusion,” they were quickly rewarded with strong sales and numerous awards. Which should come as no surprise: Smith Dalia, who notably restored Piedmont Park in the 90s, was one of the first firms in Atlanta to tackle the adaptation of such large industrial buildings. And La France Street Lofts was no exception. Currently, all 89 residential units at La France Street are occupied.

The loft development features 20-foot wide pedestrian paths, private gardens, a 1,300-square-foot community center, an exercise room, an outdoor kitchen with fireplace, and a saltwater swimming pool. Designer and architect, Glenn Grossi, who spearheaded the renovation, says the biggest challenge was to “cut up a fairly large assemblage of buildings” ranging from the early 50s through the 70s “while expressing and acknowledging all periods of time.”

Jurists of the 2005 American Institute of Architects Georgia Awards called Smith Dalia’s completed project “an exchange of heroic adaptive reuse” and “gutsy,” creating “a neighborhood where people get to know each other.” Indeed, of all the awards La France Street has been given, the most important accolades are those offered up by its residents, who frequently gather on one another’s backyard gardens for cocktails.

LoftLife visited four units at La France Street Lofts and spoke with residents about their personal style and how it affects their own spaces within this very stylish loft community.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Julia Stedman, astride her People scooter, contemplates a trip to gather materials for her next decorating project. **Judging from the layout, location, and his cinder block wall, Don Mcallister assumes his unit was once “some sort of loading area.”**





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JOE AND JENNIFER REMLING: He's co-owner of ai3, an interior architecture firm; she's a recruiting consultant for technology companies. They've been together 13 years—as long as they've had their dog, 'Eifis,' a stray saved by Joe from an "awful job site covered with EIFS" (an insulation material). The Remlings have lived in their unit since October 2004.

LOFTLIFE: WHO DECORATED YOUR SPACE?

JOE: We did. We actually bought pre-construction, so we had time to plan out what we wanted to do before we moved in.

JENNIFER: When we moved, we got rid of just about everything. We wanted it to be really low-slung, kind of 'loung-y,' but usable.

LL: WHO DO YOU DECORATE FOR, YOURSELF OR GUESTS?

JOE: A little bit of both. We definitely like to entertain. (Our style) definitely represents us, our tastes, and our use.

JENNIFER: We wanted to create a retreat, a sort of Zen-like feel, because we're both really busy people—when we're home we like to completely chill out. We also don't like to have anything too precious. We both lived with mothers that were like: "That's the formal living room, you're not supposed to go in there!"

LL: DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE.

JENNIFER: To me it's uncomplicated, simple, clean, relaxed . . .

JOE: One thing I would add is focused. You can try and design and paint every wall in the place, but for us what we really like is to have a couple things to focus on.

JENNIFER: We generally have the same tastes. I defer to him because he's a designer. I talk about what I like and he makes the bigger decisions.

LL: "PRIZED POSSESSION?"

JOE: There are things specific to this unit that wouldn't translate to another space, but I'd say the sectional couch (see page 77).

☞ Inspired by modernist architect Richard Neutra, the Remlings used wood for the ceiling and white synthetic marble tile for the floor of their living room. With only two exposures, this clever inversion "bounces the natural light" and brightens their space considerably.

“I definitely decorate for myself. But this is a great floor plan for entertaining, and I do entertain a lot.”

CHIP IVIE: A single realtor who hosts frequent visits from his nieces and nephew, Chip has been a resident since September 2004. He lives in the “former model unit,” which means that “everybody’s been in (his) unit, because this is where (Livable Developments) sold all the other units.”

LL: WHO DECORATED YOUR SPACE?

CHIP: I did. But I do have a lot of upgrades because this was the “model unit,” so they tricked it out.

LL: WHO DO YOU DECORATE FOR, YOURSELF OR GUESTS?

CHIP: I definitely decorate for myself. But this is a great floor plan for entertaining, and I do entertain a lot.

LL: DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE.

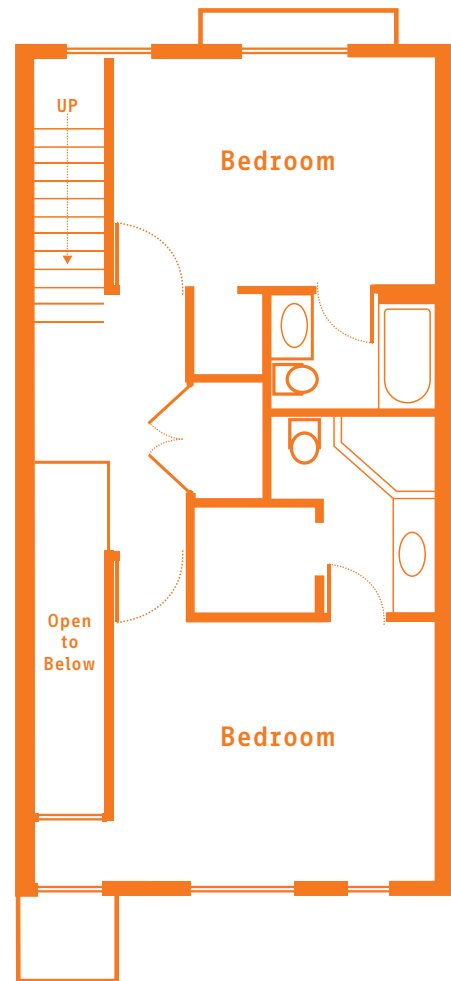
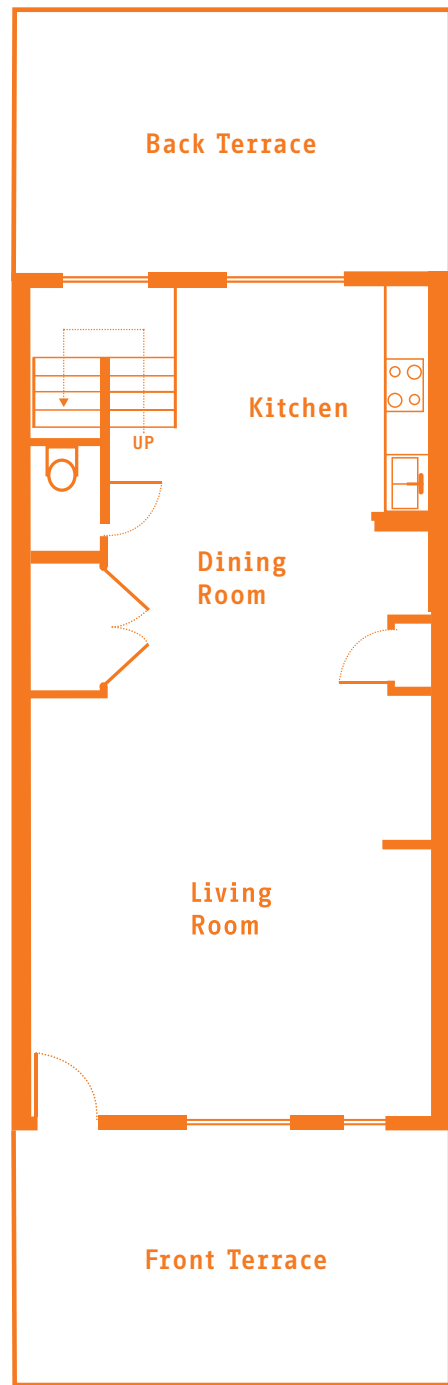
CHIP: Eclectic, but warm. My furnishings are quite varied. I’ve got some old pieces, I’ve got some new pieces. I’ve got a couple of nice pieces, I’ve got a bunch of junk. It all kind of comes together.

LL: “PRIZED POSSESSION?”

CHIP: I have this 1920s burlwood armoire in my bedroom that I could not replace. I’m also crazy about this antique pressed tin armoire from the YMCA in Athens, GA (see page 77).

☞ Although Chip Ivie likes the location of his loft for several reasons (e.g., two parking spaces just outside his door), the natural light from his unit’s north- and west-facing windows makes his easy-going personality that much sunnier.





DON McCALLISTER: This “born-and-raised” Atlantan, a single graphic designer, lives with his dog, Poptart. Don moved into his unit in August of 2004, and because the couple that moved in to La France 12 hours before he did moved out two years ago, he now boasts “seniority.”

LL: WHO DECORATED YOUR SPACE?

DON: For better or worse, me. Everything here is either picked out by me or assembled by me.

LL: WHO DO YOU DECORATE FOR, YOURSELF OR GUESTS?

DON: I’d say 70/30, me. I want guests to feel comfortable, but I’m here 95 percent of the time. So, is it has to be for me first.

LL: DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE.

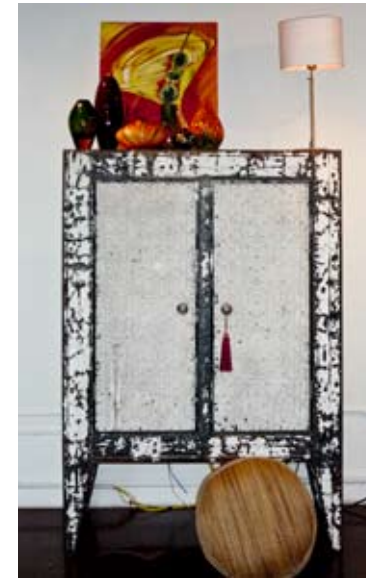
DON: Modern, clean, and I like blending old pieces with modern classics. I think it’s reflective of my work. The sites I design are very clean, legible, but not ‘stripped down.’ I like the same feel with my space.

LL: “PRIZED POSSESSION?”

DON: I love my vintage Nixie tube clock (see next page). I got it on eBay.

JULIA AND ERICH STEDMAN: She’s a construction consultant; he’s a senior environmental specialist. Married twelve years, the “only Empty Nesters” in the complex moved into their unit in January 2005.

➔ In Chip Ivie’s living room, this armoire—crafted from pressed tin salvaged from the ceiling of an Athens YMCA—is the perfect place to stow away the flotsam of daily life.



➔ Don McCallister’s clock is made from Nixie tubes (from “NIX I”, or “Numeric Indicator eXperimental No. 1”). An early precursor to LEDs, Nixie tubes are no longer made, but “a lot of people make a hobby out of making clocks from them.”



☞ You can take the girl out of Louisiana, but you can’t take the Louisiana out of Julia Stedman. Her favorite piece sits upstairs on a leopard print rug, beside a one-of-a-kind table collaged with images of Marilyn Monroe.



☞ Before Joe and Jennifer Remling bought their sectional, they thought, “Who wants a sectional? It’s 80s, you know? Kinda’ bachelor pad.” But, they use it every single day. Says Jennifer: “It’s really the set-up that makes it work.”

LL: WHO DECORATED YOUR SPACE?

ERICH: That would be Julia.

JULIA: Pretty much me. And it’s ever-evolving. *Ever-evolving.* You know, I get bored.

LL: WHO DO YOU DECORATE FOR, YOURSELF OR GUESTS?

JULIA: How would we be comfortable if our guests weren’t?

ERICH: We changed our seating area, so it would be more guest-friendly.

JULIA: And we put in a round dining table to encourage people to be social.

LL: DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE.

ERICH: I wouldn’t even know where to begin.

JULIA: I kind of like my furnishings the way I like to dress myself. I always try and dress to where I’m soft, so that a little kid could

come and hug me and not go, “Shoulder pads?! *Really?!?*” I want my space to be easy to ‘hug,’ easy to live in. So, comfort, yes; but stylish as well.

LL: IN TERMS OF DESIGN OR DÉCOR, WHAT’S YOUR “PRIZED POSSESSION?”

ERICH: Mine would have to be the dandelion photograph on canvas by Walter O. LeCroy (see page 68). We were walking down the street in Charleston. It was in the back of the gallery, but it still caught my eye through the window. The boldness of it struck me.

JULIA: And a day later, he had Momma spendin’ a comma!

ERICH: Her prized possession would be the bedroom.

JULIA: There’s been times in my life where I’ve literally lost everything. Possessions? Sure they matter, but I can always get more shit. So, it’s difficult to say. But I really do love my chaise lounge (see above).

EXIT