

Make yourself at *home*

*Custom condos corner
Phila Street market*

story by JUDITH WHITE
photographs by ERICA MILLER

In my dream, the new owners of the largest condominium on the fourth floor of the handsome new building at the corner of Henry and Phila streets in Saratoga Springs become close friends of mine and offer their precious property for my use during their frequent trips throughout the world.

I see myself sitting on the sheltered corner terrace in the morning, 50 feet or so above Henry Street, coffee mug in hand, watching the sun's first rays touching the yellow and orange treetops and the roof of the carousel in Congress Park.

Fast forward to Christmas, and I'm baking in the condo's fabulously appointed kitchen, where I cut my holiday cookies on the cool granite countertop of my large kitchen island/bar, while glancing out at the soft snow falling past the potted Christmas tree on the terrace. Later, I put in a few hours work in the home office, which has direct access to that same corner terrace, and I watch through the large windows as holiday lights are turned on in the dwellings and businesses below.

I'm listening to holiday music, of course, through the specially designed built-in sound system, so there's no need to test my digital or electronic capabilities on individual devices, and I have a cheery blaze radiating from the Mendota gas fireplace.

Similar thoughts and dreams and imaginings are likely going through the minds of most people who have toured one of the six recently ▶





At top left, the master bedroom suite boasts a full arch of windows. Above, the bedroom facing Henry Street features a half-arch shaped multi-paned window. Throughout the condos, large windows and skylights bring in lots of natural light.

completed condos in the new 54 Phila building.

The stunning views from the many windows and terraces of the six third- and fourth-floor condominiums are a tremendous selling point for these newly available luxury units, built by local developer Scott Trifilo.

Echoing the elegance of the finest older commercial buildings of Saratoga Springs, 54 Phila is a handsome downtown newcomer, refreshingly new, but so comfortable with itself and its position that

the structure seems to have been part of the neighborhood forever. "Modern living meets classic charm," is how one of the promotional fliers describes it.

"I wanted to create something timeless and intimate," Trifilo explained. "People who buy a home in a boutique building like this are like people who shop in boutique stores — they're looking for something unique, something not everyone else has. I think that 54 Phila offers an archetypical aesthetic and an originality that will appeal to that demographic."

The new building sits on a highly desirable downtown corner, its premier commercial occupant, the new Asian restaurant Phila Fusion, enjoying its Phila Street exposure. The second level of the boutique building is occupied by an investment firm, Wells Fargo Advisors LLC, and the Pilates Institute, owned by Natasha Lafayette. One single street level commercial space, 1,790 square feet, remains open, waiting for the right business.

Trifilo purchased the property as a vacant lot in the mid-'90s, but says he knew from the beginning that he would develop it as a multi-use building. His company, Terrace Homebuilders, has specialized in construction of custom homes since 1987. This is his largest project to date, costing about \$7.5 million, and taking more than two years to complete.

The Henry Street entrance to the upper three floors is guarded by two stone gargoyles, commissioned by Trifilo from stone artist Walter S. Arnold, who carved the gargoyles guarding the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

Entrance to the elevator or stairs is through a handsome 550-square-foot lobby, sparingly and effectively decorated with touches of art deco, but with clean contemporary lines and a classic sensibility.

Trifilo himself is responsible for both the exterior and interior finishings, including millwork and trim. The architect is Olsen Associates of Saratoga Springs.

An ingenious floor plan, generous use of transoms above doors, and deep, pyramid skylights above 9-foot ceilings make for extreme "sun management" in this condo. Natural light has direct entry to almost all the rooms in the fourth-floor condo I toured, the largest of three floor plans on each floor.

These stately condos measure from 1,890 square feet for a two-bedroom, two-bath unit with a single covered terrace, to a huge 2,925 square feet for a three-bedroom, three-bath unit with two covered terraces, a home theater/game room and an office/study. Terrace space is not included in the listed square footage. Prices range from \$724,200 for a two-bedroom condo on the third floor, to just under \$1.3 million for the largest unit on the top level.

Attached covered parking is included in the price of the units — two spots for each

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During the 2010 Showcase of Homes, Terrace Builders earned first place for Best Condo Kitchen, as did Zarrillos Custom Kitchen Design. The kitchen includes custom-made cabinetry, granite countertops, an under-counter microwave, a six-burner gas stove and a large Sub-Zero refrigerator/freezer.



Terrace Builders won first place for Best Condo Master Bath during the 2010 Showcase of Homes.

of the largest condos, and one for each of the others. Also included are storage areas for each condo in the common hallway on each floor. The largest units have an extra storage room inside the unit, located off the laundry room.

I really liked the choice of windows in this building, and the different flavor the

windows give to each of the exterior rooms. If you stand across either Phila or Henry streets and look, you'll see the pattern of shapes and understand how they work inside the condos.

The bedroom facing Henry Street features a half-arch shaped multi-paned window, a sweeping dramatic statement. A second bedroom, looking out on Congress Park, features straight, square lines in its windows, and the master bedroom suite boasts a full arch.

The master bedroom also has direct access to the unit's second terrace, which has a second entry from the great room.

One guest bedroom has its own bath; one shares its bath, directly across the wide hall, with the "house," and then there's the pocket-door master bath, located inside the master bedroom suite — a Victorian throwback pedestal tub and a huge, contemporary, marble-walled shower with four separately placed nozzles. The bathrooms all feature marble floors.

This bath design won Terrace Builders first place for Best Condo Master Bath from the 2010 Showcase of Homes.

Terrace Builders also earned first place for Best Condo Kitchen based on this unit, as did Zarrillos Custom Kitchen Design. It's easy to see why. The lines are clean and neat, the classic style perfect for the unit, which includes a Wolf under-counter microwave and

six-burner gas stove. A large Sub-Zero refrigerator/freezer seems de regueur.

Custom-made cabinetry in this kitchen is maple with an espresso stain and a classic cut. Cabinet hardware gives an unexpected, but appreciated, art-deco spin. A similar design touch is found in the shiny black mosaic tiles surrounding the room's fireplace, with its repeating white framework and mantle.

The builder should have won a prize for his doorway transoms, too, if there was such a category. Paned with clear-seeded glass, this feature of the condo is a magnificent winner, transferring natural light into hallways, bathrooms and even closets. The seeded-glass panes are repeated in the cabinet doors of the great room's Sub-Zero beverage center, conveniently located just a few steps from the game room, where a 3-D film plays on a large, wall-hung flat-screen Samsung television. A dedicated closet houses the electronic hardware, eliminating clutter possibilities.

I'm happy to share my dream of life at 54 Phila, but I'm guessing you have your own thoughts of what your life would be like in Unit 403.

Take a look at the floor plans at www.terracehomebuilders.com, and let me know when you want me to visit your lovely new home. ●