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# Pied-a-terre?

Some would call it a studio,  
a loft or a downtown getaway

STAFF AND WIRE REPORT

**F**rom businessmen tired of hotels or trying to dodge the commute, to theatergoers who would rather chat about the play over a nightcap than head home over the Tobin Bridge, Boston is finding a growing pool of buyers who want a little place in the city to use a few nights a week, or a few weeks a year.

In a small way, the trend is even reaching downtown Daytona Beach.

The French call a small apartment like this a pied-a-terre, literally "a foot on the ground," and, to them, having a snug home-away-from-home in the city is as practical and egalitarian as wearing a shoe. Unlike in the United States, where "pied-a-terre" has an aura of elitism, in Europe they are considered quite middle class.

"In Paris, lots of people have them," said Charles Spada, a Boston interior designer who makes frequent buying trips to France and maintained a Paris pied-a-terre for

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five years until he sold it last spring. "It was much better than staying at a hotel, and you have a return on investment as well as a second home." As is common in Europe, he would rent it out when he wasn't there.

Usually small, and in prime locations, the pied-a-terre may never reach the middle-class market it enjoys in Europe, but in Boston, at least, real estate brokers and developers are reporting more and more buyers interested in having a place in town they can use impromptu.

"The market has been there," said Bradford Rowell of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Beacon Hill. "A lot of people who buy

small units are only using them part time."

He has a 350-square-foot, garden-level studio listed at \$259,000 that generated national interest when the New York Times recently featured it in a story on pieds-a-terre in its Escapes section.

"I got calls from California, from Florida, from New York," Rowell said. All of which he sees as affirmation of Boston's reputation as a world-class city with great cultural appeal.

Daytona Beach is a long way from France, or even Boston, but some residents here like the idea of having a home downtown.

SEE PIED-A-TERRE, PAGE 2F

## Did You Know?

Paris is more than 2,000 years old. Gauls of the Parisii tribe settled there

between 250 and 200 B.C. and founded a fishing village on an island in the river that is the present-day Ile de la Cite — the center around which Paris developed.



■ Known as Lutetia (Lutece) in ancient times, Paris was conquered by Julius Caesar in 52 B.C., and existed as a regional center under the Romans and in the early Middle Ages.

■ In 987, Hugh Capet, Count of Paris, became king of France, and under his successors, the Capetians, the city became the nation's capital.

# PIED-A-TERRE: Lofts make great escape from beachside special events

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1F

While she maintains a residence on the beachside, Janet White purchased a unit in Wall Street Lofts near downtown Beach Street, to use as a guest house and getaway until she retires.

"I had no plans to move into downtown Daytona Beach. It was the furthest thing from my mind," White said in a recent interview.

The problem, she said, was special events and the resulting traffic gridlock. Her plans changed, however, after the Daytona Harley-Davidson dealership moved its main operation to Ormond Beach.

White, who is the aunt of Wall Street Lofts developer Jack White, said she was sold on the design of the building. "I fell in love with it. Everything is in walking distance," she said in a recent interview.

Jack White, who is planning a second loft project, estimates as much as 25 percent of those who purchase units in the downtown area may do so with the intent of using it as an in-town place, somewhere they can stay the night after an evening at the theater or just to get away.

A good location also translates to convenience for those with pieds-a-terre. Foster and Ginger Aborn of Hingham, Mass., have owned a cozy two-bedroom condo in the Back Bay for 18 years. Foster Aborn, a former executive at John Hancock, still keeps an office at the Hancock tower. "It's great because you can decide at the last minute if you want to stay here or drive to Hingham," he said. "We can go to a movie in Cambridge and decide on the way out that we want to stay in town. You have your things right at hand — I always keep a suit here — so it feels comfortable. If we have an early flight out of Logan, or if we arrive at the airport late at night, we can just come here."

And even if they don't spend the night, they can come into town and shop or go to dinner and never worry about parking. The couple agrees that a big advantage is that the condo has a parking space.

Of course, the better the location, the higher the price, and bargain hunters may find themselves out of luck.

At 44 Prince St. in Boston, a 55-unit condominium complex now under construction in the

North End, developer Byron Gilchrest president of Gilchrest Associates, said "You can walk to everything from here." In the heart of Boston's Little Italy, his complex is close to the waterfront, Government Center, the Financial District and Logan Airport, and that has made his units appealing as pieds-a-terre.

He has already significantly tapped the market: Of the 40 pre-construction units sold, 10 were bought as temporary in-town homes. Chris Tuite of RE/MAX Waterfront Realty Ltd., the broker for the project, which is expected to be completed in January, said most of those are one-bedroom units, which range from 685 to 845 square feet and start at \$550,000. (A parking space in the 71-car underground garage can be purchased separately for \$70,000.) The buyers range from a Florida couple who plan to use the apartment for about one month a year, to a North Shore couple who hope to be in the city several times a month.

On Beacon Hill, Rowell has a few smaller units in renovated buildings at more moderate prices. A 455-square-foot studio is listed for \$329,000 and a

525-square-foot, one-bedroom condo is priced at \$349,000. "Either would make an ideal pied-a-terre. The well-established neighborhood has a lot of appeal," he said, "offering easy access to downtown and Back Bay as well as the many shops and restaurants right on the Hill."

Having a foot on the earth at 360 Newbury — a 1920s Art Deco building redesigned in the 1980s by architect Frank Gehry and currently being converted from office space into 54 condos — costs a minimum of \$500,000. Yet developer Curtis R. Kemeny said he has some buyers planning to use their condos as part-time city bases. One empty-nest couple from the Western suburbs, for example, "are just not ready to let go of their house. They want to try out city living first."

The prices at Wall Street Lofts in Daytona Beach also are a long way from Boston ones, ranging from \$165,000 for a 1,000-square-foot unit to \$500,000 for a 2,200-square-foot unit at the development on Magnolia Avenue.

*Business writer Valerie Whiney contributed to this Boston Globe report*