



The Address

353 W. Fourth St.

Parker Flats adds sleek contemporary design to downtown.

In 2004, Bob and Erin Marie Schwartz left sleepy Youngstown behind for more exciting prospects in the Queen City. By late 2008, the couple was in their early 40s, settled into their careers (Bob works in network operations and Erin Marie is a social worker), and ready for the next step. “We knew we wanted to own, but we also wanted to stay downtown,” Erin Marie says. They heard about Parker Flats, six floors of new condominiums at the corner of Fourth Street and Central Avenue, and decided to investigate.

Loft-style living appealed to the Schwartzes, and Parker Flats had a number of attractive features: contemporary space filled with natural light, edgy design, and reasonable home owners’ association fees. But one element stood out. “What really sold us was the door,” Bob says, referring to the retractable, garage door-style window that opens the living room up to the balcony. “It really brings the outdoors in.”

All the modern design elements—the industrial feel, concrete floors, steel beams, 16-foot ceilings, and open mezzanines—earned the development a Jurors’ Special Mention in the American Institute of Architects’ Cincinnati Congress of Residential Architecture Residential Design Awards earlier this year. Floor-to-

ceiling windows give residents fantastic views of downtown, and the building is so close to Paul Brown Stadium you can almost hear the fans’ exasperated sighs. Just over half of the 57 condos are occupied; two are still unfinished.

Christine Schoonover, Huff Realty listing agent for Parker Flats and a downtown resident herself, describes the area around the building as “emerging.” “It’s a growing neighborhood with new restaurants, galleries, and salons,” she says. Clubs, bars, and the occasional retail shop—including sneaker-and-T-shirt shop Unheardof—round out the eclectic mix.

“One thing people underestimate about living downtown is what a tight-knit community it is,” Erin Marie says. “Whenever we walk to Fountain Square or to dinner, we see someone we know.” Bob chalks it up to the common bond of the out-of-towner. “The majority of people have the same story: They’ve moved here from somewhere else because of a job and are taking advantage of everything there is to do,” he explains.

Five years after leaving Youngstown, Bob says the couple couldn’t be happier with their home. His wife agrees: “I can’t imagine living anywhere else.”

—ELIZABETH BRONSON