

No 'for rent' sign on this converted apartment

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Matt Speas decided to move into one of the units he helped create

When Matt Speas helped his father Mike convert two storefronts on Main Street in Belgium into three apartments, he found his new home.

"I wasn't originally planning to move here, but I fell in love with the apartment," said Speas, who works for his father's business Timberlake Investments, which usually does new construction but has done several renovations.

Speas' apartment features an exposed brick wall that was black when it was uncovered, a step-down kitchen area, original hardwood floors, original paneled ceiling and a spiral staircase that leads to a loft he uses as a bedroom.

There is also a living room and a second room with a window on Main Street that can be used as a bedroom or office.

The loft area was a nice surprise, Speas said. He and his father thought the building had a flat roof behind the facade, but during the construction process discovered the loft area, which may have been used as an attic or for storage.



"All we had to add was a window in each loft," Speas said.

Speas, 24, likes the character found in old buildings and furniture. He combines collectible pieces, such as an wooden trunk and stool, with new furniture in his bachelor pad.

Speas' apartment is one of two that were created in what was once a shoe store. A center wall divides the space in half. An adjacent building was converted into a third apartment.

The Speas also renovated the space for the Belgium House restaurant, formerly Curley's and Chrissy's Pub & Grill, which is in the same building as the two apartments.

Renovation started in February and took longer than expected, said Speas, who moved into his apartment in October.

"We had to do more in the basement than we expected," he said.

A fire wall had to be installed to separate the basement under the restaurant from the portion that is under the living quarters.

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There are also two apartments above the restaurant.

“As commercial properties, they were struggling,” Speas said of the former storefronts, which most recently housed an antique shop, tanning salon and coffeehouse.

All of the apartments are rented, he said.

Image Information: ORIGINAL HARDWOOD FLOORS and paneled ceiling, a loft and step-down kitchen area are among the features that appeal to Matt Speas in the apartment he and his father Mike developed on Main Street in Belgium. Photos by Sam Arendt