

Front St. about to get lofty makeover

Historic warehouses will soon be converted to 54 condo units

BY LINDA ROLAND
STAFF REPORTER

Three of Toronto's oldest warehouses will soon house 54 loft dwellings at Front and Church Sts.

Once perched on the wharves of Lake Ontario, the historic buildings went up during Toronto's "first great boom" in the 1850s.

Located on Front St., just west of St. Lawrence Market, the historic site will be developed by the Georgian Group and turned into St. Lawrence Lofts.

Michael McClelland of E.R.A. Architects Inc. says masonry work to the exterior of the buildings (77-85 Front St. E.) is being monitored by the Toronto Historical Board. E.R.A. Architects Inc. only works on historic buildings.

"They are remarkable intact," says principal architect McClelland of the Front St. buildings now housing retail stores and a coffee shop on the ground floor.

He believes the warehouses at 77 to 85 Front St., which predate confederation, are in fairly good shape.

Dating from 1858 to 1860, the warehouses sat on the original waterfront. One in the group owned by Alexander Smith has been hailed for its exceptional commercial architecture.

While most buildings of the era were made of stock red brick, it is composed of white bricks with limestone enrichments. Eight bays wide, the upper floor was offset by a row of arched openings.

McClelland calls the loft condo plan "interesting," adding that it is nice to see people "living in a building of this age."

He says masonry repairs are being made to the exterior of the warehouses, which are located on the south side of Front St.

"It's unique to find buildings of this age" in Toronto, says McLelland. He calls the plan to convert the building a "nice fit," adding that there are not too many commercial buildings of this stature left standing in the city. He says he cannot think of an example of another housing site of similar vintage that has been converted to residential



BERNARD WEIL/TORONTO STAR

TO MARKET: These Front St. buildings, just west of St. Lawrence Market, are likely to prove popular when they are converted into lofts.

units.

The Georgian Group, a large-scale residential builder, is tackling a small downtown project for the first time with its Front St. loft conversion.

The project will consist of condos ranging in size from 500 to 1,350 square feet and in price from \$140,000 to just under \$400,000. There will be 40 one-bedroom lofts and 14 two-bedroom penthouse lofts. The ground floor will be retail.

Ceiling heights will be 11 feet on the

second floor, 10 feet on the third floor and eight to 16 feet on the fourth and fifth floors.

Suites will have one interior wall of exposed brick.

The interior plan shows big beams and thick walls.

Some windows will be added to the south elevation but due to the site's historic designation no windows can be added to the north elevation. Skylights, however, will be added to the north elevation. There will be one ele-

vator in the centre of the complex.

Standard features will include hardwood floors throughout the suites, granite counters, oversized maple kitchen cabinets, sliding maple barn doors, granite floors and counters in the bathroom, stainless steel sink and tap set and black or stainless steel appliances.

Marketer Brad Lamb says every floor plan in the 54 suites is different due to the complexity of merging what is actually five small buildings that ap-

pear as three from the exterior. There will be no parking.

The ground floor of the site will continue to be retail.

In the late '80s Daniels Development Corp. had plans at the site for a low-rise condominium called Le Metropole, former longtime home of the jazz club, East 85th and Front.

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