

THE SWANN SONG

While you can't bring yourself to leave DC, you've always dreamt of sitting on that Manhattan brownstone stoop, having just bounced home from the boutique down the street with a Phillip Lim ensemble in one hand and a frothy latte in the other. Is such a realty reality an impossible dream in DC?

Not on the painstakingly preserved Swann Street, where correct change is at hand. The little-but-luxe Northwest neighborhood straddling stylish Dupont Circle and the super-hip U Street Corridor is one of the hottest spots in town for a newly deluxed domicile. All five brief blocks running between 14th and 19th Streets have undergone a renaissance recently, as developers and decorators have turned the street's Victorian row houses into swish, modernist condos. "For Sale" signs adorn at least three converted row houses on Swann, six chic condos have sold in the past few months and still more development plans are being penned.

"This area is a pocket that hasn't been discovered," says Jan Evans, a realtor with W.C. & A.N. Miller and the listing agent for 1617 Swann Street, one of several buildings to receive the condo conversion treatment. "Now, all of a sudden, people are taking notice."

Developers set their sights on Swann because of its location—a quiet, gingko tree-lined street set at the crossroads of two bustling retail corridors chockablock with new stores opening by the month. But it is the modern juxtaposition of the charming architecture—turrets, old stained-glass windows and stunning stonework—with minimalist concrete, metal and frosted-glass interiors that sells the fantasy.

"We've been able to preserve the beautiful architectural details on the outside, while providing really modern functional spaces on the inside," says DC über-designer Barbara Hawthorn, who's working with Potomac Construction to modernize a property recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Fabulous fixtures, finishes and flourishes, including bleached bamboo floors, stainless steel accents and appliances from Jenn-Air's Floating Glass collection intermingle with restored chandeliers, exposed brick and French doors to give a modern mood to the restored row house.

And although the still-under-the-radar chic street doesn't necessarily beget a bargain—\$800,000 for 600 square feet—it does mean you'll be the first to get bragging rights.

"You wouldn't even know Swann Street exists," says Evans. "You're walking distance to everything, but you have your own little community."



The gingko trees and quaint façades of Swann Street belie the modernist, minimalist manses just inside. *Opposite page:* Early adapters Joe and Yvette Freeman started Swann Street's redevelopment in 2000, and have a new project that just debuted on the avenue.