

CONDOMINIUM OF THE WEEK

Kirkwood School Lofts

Historic site at center of intown excitement

By **LORI JOHNSTON**
For the Journal-Constitution

Karen Baxter is glad her real estate agent did his homework to find her a great urban pad.

She wanted a place with history, so he pointed her to Atlanta's Kirkwood School Lofts, which has retained the chalkboards, coat hooks and other schoolhouse fixtures used by children and teachers for decades.

"I was interested in a loft, but I wanted something historic, or at least unique. I was not interested in new lofts," Baxter explained. "I connected with a real estate agent that specializes in lofts. He took me over here, which I'm glad he did, because I did not know about this area." The revitalization of Kirkwood appealed to her as she was considering whatever place she bought as a long-term investment.

The school, built in the 1930s for elementary students in what was then the city of Kirkwood, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was redeveloped as



CHRISTOPHER OQUENDO / Special

Dirk and Karen Baxter relax in their home office at Kirkwood School Lofts. They are near recreation, shopping and entertainment at the lofts, located in a renovated 1930s school building.

apartments in 1998 and converted to condos two years ago.

Units were created out of the old gym, cafeteria, principal's office and classrooms. Residents now use the original playground for their dogs to play.

Baxter, 36, purchased her unit in May 2004. Her husband Dirk, 34, who is president of the homeowners association, moved in last fall after their wedding.

Units at Kirkwood School Lofts are priced from the high \$200,000s to the low

\$300,000s.

Baxter works from home, and her loft has room for an office. She also loves the location. "Between Little Five Points and Decatur and East Atlanta, I have everything I ever want."

Those options have increased with new retail developments such as Edgewood Retail Center, which includes Target, Lowe's, Barnes & Noble, Best Buy and Kroger.

Baxter said the community also is close to popular recreation spots. The couple often plays tennis at Bessie Branham Park, named best park in 2005 by the Atlanta Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs and Park Pride, a nonprofit organization. They also work out at the East Lake YMCA, which is just three minutes away.

Because the Baxters, who are psychologists, often travel for their jobs, having the airport just 20 minutes away is a big bonus, Karen Baxter said.

Their 1,800-square-foot loft has the original wooden floor, high ceilings and 8-foot windows.

"One thing that's really nice about this one is that we have a yard around the school," she said. "I have trees and grass outside of my window as part of the loft."

She also likes the old flagpole. "We wish we knew how to work it," she said.

AT A GLANCE

Address: 138 Kirkwood Road, Atlanta

Information: 404-246-6486

Price range: mid-\$200,000s to high \$300,000s

Year built: 1930s

Standard features: original hardwood floors, 8-foot windows

Amenities: parking space, schoolhouse features such as flagpole and original playground

Number of units: 24

Square footage: 500-1,500

Association fee: \$200 a month, which covers maintenance, insurance and security

Developer: Henry Finkbeiner

Schools: Fred A. Toomer Elementary, Coan Middle, Grady High

More on schools: www.ajc.com/schoolguide

GETTING THERE

From downtown Atlanta, travel DeKalb Avenue west toward Decatur. Turn right at Rocky Ford Road, passing underneath MARTA tracks. Turn right onto College Avenue. Turn left onto Kirkwood Road. Kirkwood School Lofts is half mile on the right. Map on Page 2.