

On the Market: Updated and pristine, a Midtown lakefront co-op is listed at \$2.895 million

REAL-ESTATE

Andrew Houlahan has enjoyed 'a different dynamic' in the lakefront co-op he renovated facing the Town Marina.

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Like so many others, Andrew Houlahan's route to South Florida was a long, circuitous one that started when he came with his parents as a child to Ocean Ridge from Connecticut to escape cold winters.

Much later, he lived in Massachusetts, eventually moving from Concord to Martha's Vineyard. In search of warm weather, he sojourned for a period of time in Santa Barbara, California, before making his way to [Palm Beach](#), where he bought a condominium and became a full-time resident.

"The problem with Florida, it's hard to get (the home) you want because not much is available," he explains.

In 2018, a friend from Massachusetts introduced Houlahan to the [Lake Drive Apartments, a co-operative building](#) facing the Intracoastal Waterway at 455 Australian Ave. in Midtown Palm Beach. His friend had owned her apartment in the building for nearly a decade.

"I went over to her place with other friends from Martha's Vineyard," he recalls. "And when I was taking the elevator down, an occupant told me that apartment 4E was going to go on the market. I bought it that afternoon."

A major selling point was that windows in all of the main rooms offered views of the lake beyond the [Palm Beach Marina](#).

The building also is among Midtown's most recognizable, thanks to its distinctive Nautical Modern-style architecture designed in the late 1940s by [noted architect Howard Chilton](#). Two blocks from Worth Avenue at the corner of South Lake Drive and Australian Avenue, the four-story building was designated a landmark by the town's Landmarks Preservation Commission in 2018.

Houlahan, who is retired from a varied business career, has since bought another apartment, 50 feet down the hall from his original one. His second apartment filled a simple need, he explains: "I wanted more space, and this one has three bedrooms. There are only three out of 24 units in this building with that."

But having two apartments is one too many, he says, so he has decided to sell the first co-op he bought. With two bedrooms, two bathrooms and 1,256 square feet of living space, inside and out, the apartment is priced at \$2.895 million, and the furniture is available separately. Brown Harris Stevens agent Grace Brown holds the listing.

Co-op buildings are far less common in Palm Beach than condominiums and have a different ownership structure. In buildings such as Lake Drive Apartments, owners buy shares of the building instead of owning their units outright.

The foyer of the apartment Houlahan is selling leads immediately into living and dining areas, which access the terrace. The kitchen is off the dining area. On the other side of the unit are the main bedroom suite and the guest bedroom, with a bathroom immediately adjacent.

Houlahan worked with contractor Brian Chrzanowski of B&A Design Builders of West Palm Beach to renovate the top-floor apartment completely.

“Everything was done, almost every surface. The walls are like iron,” he explains. “We couldn’t drill into the walls, so we took the walls out 3 inches to run electric wires to outlets.”

Crews added double doors to open up the guest bedroom to the living room. That change allows the bedroom to be used more easily as a den. In the main bedroom suite, two small closets became a single walk-in closet.

The design team also concentrated on the kitchen, renovating it with custom Shaker-style cabinetry, quartzite counters and stainless-steel Bosch appliances. “It was too narrow and like a corridor, so we moved the wall out about 9 inches into the living room to make a real kitchen,” Houlahan notes.

He describes the careful thought process that went into designing the custom built-in unit that takes up an entire wall in the dining room.

“If you open the left side, it’s a dry bar,” he explains, with places to store glassware, a spot for mixing drinks and a drawer fitted with a wooden wine rack. In the center of the cabinet, a flat surface can be used for buffet service. And hidden on the right side is a mini-home office, with space for a computer and printer.

All of the windows and doors in the apartment have been fitted with impact-resistant glass. In most rooms, the floors are covered in 20-inch-square ceramic tiles with a marble pattern. But the main bedroom is carpeted.

The apartment has its own laundry room and will be sold with garage parking for one car. “The building is great,” Houlahan says. “It’s a very quiet place with very friendly people. A couple others are from Martha’s Vineyard, and during the summer, it’s only 20% occupied.”

The building has a room for social gatherings and a gym, and it has services that include a full-time property manager and 24-hour door personnel.

“All services are taken care of. You can order food, and the doorman will bring it up. But the real thing is, it faces Lake Worth. Everyone (else) wants to look at the ocean, which is beautiful, but Lake Worth is interesting, with a different dynamic,” Houlahan says, adding that he also appreciates his views of the newly refurbished marina and its [adjacent Lake Drive Park](#).

To see more photos of No. 4E at 455 Australian Ave. in Palm Beach, click on the photo gallery at the top of this page.

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For more than 20 years, Christine Davis has written about Palm Beach real estate in the "On the Market" feature in the Palm Beach Daily News.