

# TOP 10: Loft Cities in America

BY JICKIE TORRES

IT'S DIFFICULT TO RECONFIGURE THE IMAGE OF A DOMESTIC AMERICA DEVOID OF STRIP MALLS, tract homes and urban sprawl. But that's exactly what is happening. As phrases like "walkable communities" and "smart growth" replace outdated ideals like the white-picket fence, the loft has emerged as the symbol of the modern American dream. Today, local governments and metro-hungry residents are wising up to the ways of the loft life. Spatially efficient and economically logical, metropolises large and small are making a push for the kind of building conversions and civil engineering that make loft dwelling convenient, competitive and, of course, possible. With that in mind, *Lofts* devised a list of the best places across the country for the loft lifestyle. Be they the places of loft legend, towns with the most potential or just the most overlooked municipalities on the urban map, our top 10 picks will support, encourage or inspire the loft dweller—and change some minds about where you should live.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF RESEARCH LOFTS

### 5. Detroit, Michigan

By 1970, Detroit had become a dilapidated footprint in the economic mud of a threatened domestic automotive industry. Employment was low, and crime was on the rise. City officials, sentimental over the Motor City's proud history, finally decided to take a stand by launching the Detroit Renaissance Project, a long-term strategy to encourage sweeping changes. New housing, improved public transportation, revamped parks and increased arts funding brought about a slow and steady metamorphosis. By the mid-'80s, a Loft Housing Ordinance promoting the adaptation of underutilized commercial buildings into housing was passed. It took some time until the vision was realized, but today a loft scene is booming across Detroit's neighborhoods, from downtown to Corktown. Detroit has retained its gutsy, hard-edged vibe while, at the same time, supporting small businesses and a fine arts culture that rivals the nation's great cities.