

## NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH



# High expectations

Hudson River views — like this one from a terrace at 140 Cabrini Boulevard — tempt a lot of buyers north to Hudson Heights.

BY JOHN MAJESKI

Uptown neighborhoods are known for offering more space for less money, and Hudson Heights is no exception.

“For what you can get on the Upper West Side, you get much more room up there,” said Barak Realty’s Francisco Menendez. “Apartments are normally in original layout, so they haven’t been chopped up. You can get a classic six with formal dining room.”

A neighborhood dominated by pre-war co-ops, Hudson Heights prices can be had for \$299,000 for a one-bedroom, though full-service buildings and other factors can increase the price significantly, Menendez said. He said rents can run as low as \$1,200 for a one-bedroom.

While the boundaries may vary slightly depending on whom you ask, Hudson Heights is generally considered hemmed in by 181<sup>st</sup> Street to the south and Broadway and the Hudson River to the east and west, respectively. To the north is Fort Tryon Park, a 66-acre expanse of greenery that includes The Cloisters, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s collection of Middle Ages art and architecture. The park serves as the neighborhood’s “backyard,” Menendez said.

In actuality, Hudson Heights is a neighborhood inside a neighborhood. It sits within the vibrant, Dominican enclave of Washington Heights, though it has its own distinct vibe.

“It’s very calm,” Menendez said of the region. “It has all the feel of suburbia, but you have the (subway) train. You also have easy access to the George Washington Bridge and New York Thruway.”

At one time, the area was referred to as Fort Tryon and, after World War II when a growing number of German Jews began to move there, Frankfurt-on-the-Hudson. Today, English, Spanish and Russian are likely to be heard spoken here. The Hudson Heights nickname began to be used about 10-15 years ago, said Belynda M’Baye of Harlem Lofts.

What’s the biggest draw of the neighborhood? “It’s the pricing, but it’s also for people who want to be a bit on the outskirts of things and in a quieter setting,” she said. “Here, you can be part of the city, but out of it a bit.”

The A express train can take residents to Midtown in less than 20 minutes.

Manhattan’s highest natural point is in Hudson Heights at Bennett Park. Residents of Hudson Heights

often appreciate the area’s greenery.

“The enticement for this particular area is about scenic views — a mixture of worlds — city views lined with bucolic streets, avenues and boulevards,” M’Baye said. “For those who want to be slightly away from the hustle and bustle, some blocks in this area are quiet and serene compared to other close by areas of the city.”

The commercial strips are along 181<sup>st</sup> and 187<sup>th</sup> streets. On the neighborhood’s edge is also Broadway, which carries shopping and eateries.

Hudson Heights is a well-established neighborhood but things have been slow with the downturn in the economy. Then again, “everywhere has been on hold,” M’Baye said.

One of the most recognizable living spaces is the historic Castle Village, a complex of five buildings built in 1939 that overlook the Hudson River and offer full-service amenities. Menendez currently has a listing here, 140 Cabrini Boulevard, Apartment PH-138. The asking price for the junior 4 listing is \$643,000.

If a housing shopper is looking for new construction, this is not the area for them. There are some renovation and conversion projects — including Fort Tryon Gardens that overlooks Fort Tryon Park — but Menendez said everything is built out here.

“There was a patch that was pure rock and I don’t know what happened. Obviously it was too expensive (to remove the rock or build around it) and I think they have given up,” he said.

Hudson Heights maintains a strong sense of community. “There are different organizations for parents, singles, artists,” Menendez said. “There’s a lot of artists.”

In the past 10 years, Menendez has seen the community change, from many older residents giving way to an

explosion of new families moving in. “As time goes by, those apartments come to market and younger families take over,” he said.

Menendez predicts that Hudson Heights will continue to be a neighborhood where buyers get more bang for their buck, offering an escape from the hustle and bustle of the Big Apple. The interest extends across generational lines.

“It will continue to attract the people who don’t want to be caught up in the middle of the high density midtown,” he said.

“People who are starting families are looking up there. A lot of retirees are moving up there. They can also come out and feel relaxed. There’s a bit of an appeal for everyone.”

Any drawbacks?

“Sometimes it can be too quiet,” Menendez said with a laugh.



Francisco Menendez and Belynda M’Baye