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Yorkville: Growing Above and Below Ground



Yorkville has come a long way since emerging from the shadows of the elevated trains that once ran above its avenues. The neighborhood, nestled in the northeast corner of Manhattan's Upper East Side, was once home to primarily German, Irish and Eastern European immigrants who filled tenement buildings.

Then the Second Avenue El came down in 1942 and the Third Avenue train in 1956. Now those small tenements, as well as single- and multifamily buildings, are shadowed over by the tall luxury rental and condominium towers that began popping up in the 1980s. In recent years, more uber-luxurious high-rises have opened, further altering the neighborhood's skyline and bringing more buyers seeking some slight relief from higher-priced housing to Yorkville's west.

Among the area's new developments is Cielo, built in 2006 by J.D. Carlisle Development Corp. The doorman building on East 83rd Street and York Avenue features floor-to-ceiling windows, a concierge and other amenities. A studio there is listed for \$640,000.

Other new developments include the Robert A.M. Stern-designed Brompton, a 22-story luxury condominium tower on East 85th Street near Third Avenue that features 24-hour concierge services. Available four-bedroom units start around \$4 million.

Construction on the 58-unit Georgica at 85th Street and Second Avenue began in August 2007, and sales on the 20-story building, now 80% occupied, began in March 2008. Available two-bedrooms start at \$1.81 million, and

four-bedrooms at \$4.25 million. Building amenities include a concierge, a fitness center and a Wii activity room.

The latest building to open, the Azure on East 91st Street and First Avenue, made news during construction in 2008 when a crane collapsed at the site, killing two construction workers and damaging nearby buildings. All signs of the damage are gone, and buyers are now moving into the 128-unit building, which had a grand opening in April.

The 34-story tower offers views of the East River, Queens and the George Washington Bridge, says Doug MacLaury the senior vice president of the Mattone Group, which developed the project with the DeMatteis Organization. Residences feature floor-to-ceiling windows and Brazilian wood floors.

Like the rest of the Upper East Side, prices for condos and co-ops have held strong in the past few years. Yorkville median sales prices increased to \$698,500 in the third quarter of this year from \$582,500 in the third quarter of 2007, according to real-estate appraisal and consulting company Miller Samuel Inc. Median sales prices on the Upper East Side, had a smaller jump, increasing to \$992,500 in the third quarter from \$895,000 in the third quarter of 2007.

While no new developments are under way in Yorkville, the face of the neighborhood will continue to change as construction on the long-planned Second Avenue subway progresses. The first of four phases of construction, which involves an extension of the Q line between 59th and 96th streets, began in 2007, and the Metropolitan Transportation

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Jay Ferrari, left, with 3-year-old grandson Fox Ferrari-Parker in Yorkville.
Photo: Brian Harkin for The Wall Street Journal

Authority estimates that portion of the work will be completed by the end of 2016.

When the overall subway project is completed—that timeline is unclear—the new line will run from 125 Street to the Financial District. The construction has been fairly disruptive to the businesses along Second Avenue, but the area is expected to eventually benefit from the increase in foot traffic. And the new line would aid residents at the most eastern ends of the neighborhood—who now must trudge over to Lexington Avenue to catch the train—better access to transportation.

Parks and Recreation: Carl Schurz Park features basketball courts, playgrounds, dog runs and a promenade with views of the East River, Roosevelt Island's Lighthouse Park, the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge and the Astoria neighborhood of Queens.

The park is also home to Gracie Mansion, an 18th-century home that once housed the Museum of the City of New York but is now the official city residence for the mayor and the mayor's family if hizzoner chooses to live there (Michael Bloomberg doesn't).

Volunteers from the nearby ASPCA often walk dogs in the park. This weekend, the Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is hosting the 38th Annual Gracie Square Art Show, where visitors can buy paintings, photographs, sculptures and other works from regional and national artists. Tours of Gracie

Mansion will also be available by appointment. Proceeds from the two-day art show go to the upkeep and restoration of the park.

Asphalt Green, an athletic complex at the northern end of the neighborhood, includes a pool and a field for flag football, baseball, softball and soccer. The nonprofit also has yoga, pilates, martial arts and other programs for adults and children.

Schools: Yorkville's schools are in District 2 and include M.S. 114 East Side Middle School, which just opened. It has a gifted-and-talented program, a peer tutoring program and a book club. P.S. 198 Isador E. Ida Straus, at Yorkville's western boundary, has an ESL program and partnerships with Vivendi Universal, which provides the school with mentors. It also has programs with the Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center Arts Connection and the Center for Arts Education.

In 2009, 92.6% of students in District 2 received a proficient score on the math exam, and 85.8% of students received a proficient score on the English Language Arts exam. In 2006, the results were 78.5% for math and 73.8% for reading.

Yorkville's private schools include the all-girls Brearley School, which was founded in 1884 and moved to Yorkville in 1929. The nondenominational school has about 700 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The St. Joseph's School-Yorkville, founded in 1880, is a Roman Catholic school for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The Trevor Day School currently has three buildings for students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and has a focus on activity-based education.

Dining: Yorkville has several restaurants that harken to the neighborhood's German and Eastern European roots, including Heidelberg Restaurant and Andre's Café, a Hungarian restaurant and bakery. Also try the Ethiopian Restaurant, Ruby Rocks Asian Eatery, Panorama Café, Italianissimo or Hummus Kitchen.

For dessert, try cakes, pies, scones or cupcakes at Two Little Red Hens, an American Bakery. Also try the café at the Vinegar Factory, a 9,000-square-foot food market that Eli Zabar opened in 1993.

-Andrew Grossman contributed to this article.