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Yorkville gets a boost as deBlasio family moves in



Gracie Mansion

New York City's incoming mayor, Bill de Blasio, and his family announced last week that they will be moving in to Gracie Mansion, the official mayor's residence overlooking the East River in the neighborhood of Yorkville.

The two-story, Federalist style mansion has been without a full-time resident for the 12 years that Mayor Michael Bloomberg has held the city's highest office.

"I'm sure it's a conversation all across the neighborhood," said Richard Steinberg, a broker with Warburg Realty. "It gives more status to the neighborhood, now that the mayor is going to live there again."

The return of the city's first family will be just one more selling point for brokers working in the staid-but-ritzy neighborhood, located between 72nd and 96th Streets from Third Avenue to the East River.

Current listings in the area include a five-bedroom, five-bath penthouse condo at 10 Gracie Square for \$18.9 million and a one-bedroom co-op in 315 East 80th St. for \$660,000. The average price per square foot for the 255 listings on StreetEasy.com is \$1,017, with a median price of \$678,500.

Inventory in the neighborhood is low, along with the rest of Manhattan. Evelyn Katz, an associate broker at Fox Residential who lives on East End Avenue, said she has sold five apartments in Yorkville in the past year. The sales were mostly family apartments, sold to young families or couples looking to start a family. "People come here for the private schools, for the shopping and for the quiet," she said.



Evelyn Katz

The new mayor will be accompanied in his move to Gracie Mansion by his wife and their two teenage children. The announcement of the move was posted on de Blasio's website in a message from the entire family.

"For generations of New Yorkers, Gracie Mansion has been the home of the city's Mayors and their families. It is a place where we celebrate the city and its people, a place where history doesn't just reside, but is experienced by our fellow citizens,"

the announcement reads.

The Mayor's residence sits in the 14.9 acre Carl Schurz Park. One of the neighborhood's most touted amenities, the park features a playground, waterfront promenade and two dog runs.

Yorkville is almost suburban in its quiet, according to brokers, something that might not count as an attraction to two teenagers from Park Slope.

But Michael Moran, of Douglas Elliman, said the de Blasio kids shouldn't find the transition too difficult.

"They're going to be 15-20 minutes away from all of their friends who are going to be coming into Manhattan, and they're going to have the most beautiful back yard," he said, before he thought of Central Park and corrected himself: "Second most beautiful back yard."

The proximity of the Chapin and Brearley Schools, two private girls schools, might be a selling point for the incoming mayor's teenage son, Steinberg suggested.

Yorkville's biggest controversy is the planned waterfront waste transfer station under construction at the end of 91st Street, which has met with fierce local opposition.

The incoming mayor has said that he supports the general plan to distribute waste transfer facilities throughout the boroughs, according to DNA Info, but has not taken a firm stance on the East 91st Street location – soon to be in his own neighborhood. Katz, who has lived in Yorkville for 28 years, said that her neighbors might be over-reacting to the threat of the transfer plant. There was a transfer station near that location that closed 15 years ago, she said.

"There were some garbage trucks. It was no big deal," she said.

But even if the transfer station might have a negative impact on property values, another project, nearing completion, will push them in the opposite direction. The neighborhood has been waiting for decades for the opening of the MTA's Second Avenue subway line.

In the meantime, residents looking to leave the neighborhood have access to a Water Taxi ferry, and cab shares are popular among commuters on their way to work, according to Moran. He also downplayed the distance the Yorkville residents need to hike to get to the 4/5/6 line.

"If it takes you 15 minutes to walk from East End Avenue to Lexington, you need to walk a little more often," he said.

Yorkville is well supplied with wine shops and German butchers, the latter a legacy of the neighborhood's immigrant heritage. The main shopping thoroughfare, on 86th Street, recently got a new Fairway Market. Yorkville offers everything you need, according to Katz.

"You could live your life up here and not really venture too far, if that's your inclination," she said.