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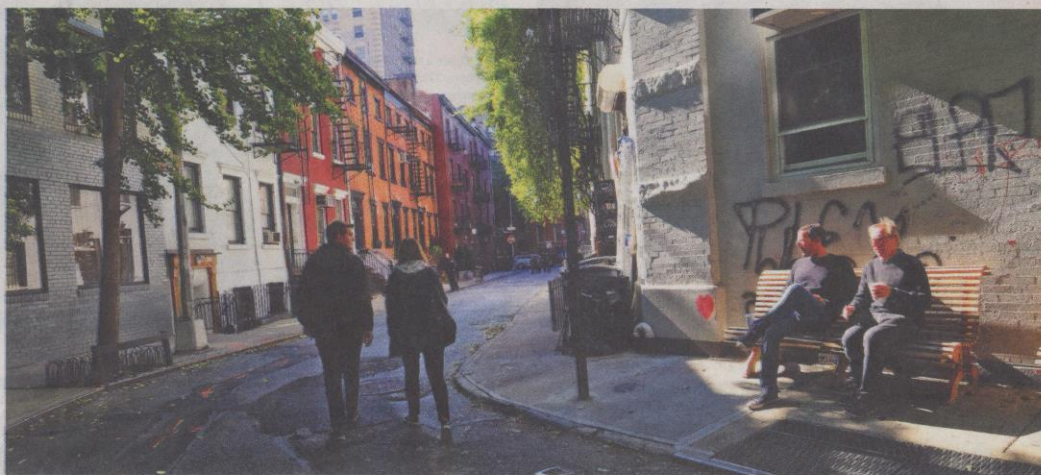
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Short and Sweet



PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDWIN J. TORRES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

New York's one-block streets are in big demand. That's because they tend to be long on charm.

By ROBIN FINN

One-block-long streets are, and have always been, the manifestation of a theory that seems almost heretical for New York City: Bigger is not better, smaller is. The traditional single-block residential street offers less of everything — noise, traffic, neighbors, garbage and parking spots.

For that matter, many one-block wonders don't have sidewalks, either. Just think of them as the introverts of the urban street grid. Hustle and bustle are absent. Charm is paramount. Yet they are bona fide public streets, as opposed to pedestrian-only mews or gated enclaves.

These mini-streets, some of them famous (like Jones Street, immortalized on a Bob Dylan album cover), some of them unsung (like sleepy Orient Avenue in Williamsburg), and many of them one-way (an implicit traffic deterrent), are not enjoying a renaissance or resurgence in popularity. They have never lost their audience. The appeal of their limited-edition

exclusivity and self-generated hush is undiminished even in this era of vertical glass Goliaths with infinite amenities. Single-block streets are in short supply, and the housing stock, often carriage houses and brownstones, that occupies them tends to be both expensive and difficult to come by.

"If you're looking to rent an apartment on one of those charming one-block streets in the West Village, believe me there is no haggling over the price, not even by pennies," said Scott Sobol, a salesman at Urban Compass. "The landlords realize they're holding on to a treasure. It's like

Top, a couple takes a necessarily short walk along Gay Street in Greenwich Village. Above, residential developers have discovered gritty Renwick Street, off Canal. Above left, one-block Arlington Place in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

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Short Streets, Long on Charm

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they tack on a \$400 premium on top of the usual Village premium."

Taking actual ownership of a piece of property on one of these rare single-block streets is even more difficult. Bidding was over circa 19th-century Bedford-Stuyvesant brownstones have become the rule and not the exception. For example, No. 7 Arlington Place, on the market for just two days in 2013, according to the buyer, attracted a dozen bids and sold for \$400,000 above its \$13 million list price.

The winning bidder, Liz Mandarano, a fourth-generation Brooklynite, was seduced by the time-encapsulated essence of Arlington Place before she'd even toured the 187 brownstone she is now restoring and, with partners, turning into an upscale bed-and-breakfast with just three guest suites. It won't open until next summer but its name has already been chosen: Arlington Place, Bed-Stuy & Breakfast.

"I had never heard of Arlington Place, but there was something about the street that felt magical and unique," Ms. Mandarano said. "It's a fascinating, intimate street and just incredibly beautiful, with Queen Anne-style homes on one side and Renaissance Revival brownstones on the other. And it's quiet. You don't drive down

this street unless you know it, and even though Fulton Street is just a half block away, you don't see it because there's a bend in the road."

Zachary Stackell and Josh Doyle of the Corcoran Group spent six months scouring Brooklyn for a suitable investment property for Ms. Mandarano, a lawyer with Bikel & Mandarano, a matrimonial firm.

"We ran the gamut from empty warehouses in Williamsburg to townhouses in Clinton Hill," Mr. Stackell said. "And then Liz began to be caught up in the idea of buying a historic home on a street that was not a conduit to anyplace else, was not an avenue or a number street. When I heard about Arlington, we jumped on it. Just walking down the street and seeing all the trees, she loved it."

The house, one of four on the street by the architect George P. Chappell, turns out to have been a bit of a movie star: Spike Lee featured it as the family home in his film "Crooklyn." Although her original intention was to buy a property and convert it to a four-unit rental, Ms. Mandarano redefined her mission once she came upon 7 Arlington Place. "There was no way I could chop that brownstone into four apartments," she said. "I felt a need to honor and respect the history of the street. I'm vested here. This is no flip."

Developers have, inevitably, noticed the cachet inherent in one-block streets and are swooping in on streets not previously known for their residential attributes and rebranding them as desirable destinations. A prime example of this re-identification

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syndrome is happening in Manhattan on Renwick Street in the recently rezoned Hudson Square area downtown. Once a gritty, industrial afterthought between Canal and Spring Streets, it has become condominium catnip for several canny developers, including IGI-USA and Related.

At 15 Renwick, IGI-USA, the Manhattan arm of Izaki Group Investments of Israel, is erecting an 11-story, 31-unit property. Designed by ODA, the project includes four penthouse duplexes and three triplex townhouses.

The bold marketing plan, winking at the young titans of Wall Street it envisions as buyers, celebrates "the insider nature of the single-block street" and encircles the complex with a fictitious moat in renderings at its sales office. The ulterior message: Insularity has its privileges.

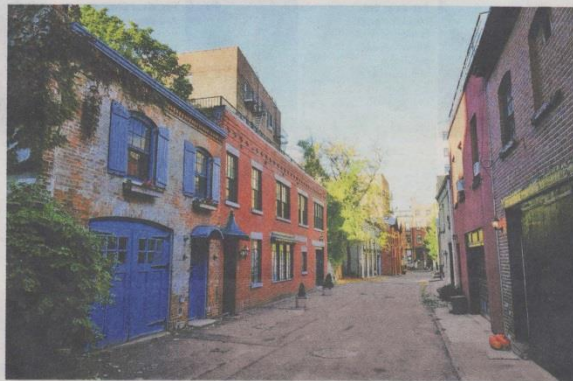
The price points range from around \$2 million (for a two-bedroom apartment) to \$10 million (for the largest penthouse), but all residents of the complex will be able to enjoy a Zen garden and a gym with a boxing facility. The anticipated completion date is fall 2015.

Eldad Blaustein, the chief executive of IGI-USA, described the transformation of Renwick as "a vision for the future that is unique in New York City because it's almost like a secret street. Whoever comes to Renwick either lives on Renwick or is lost," he said.

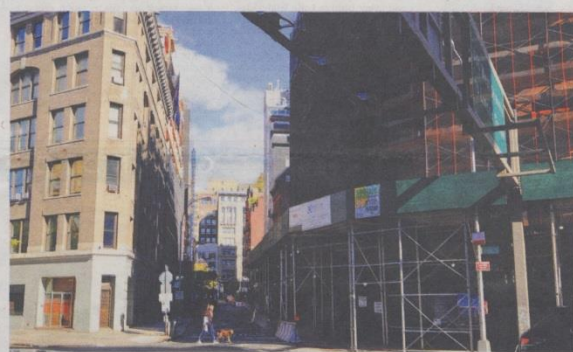
"This is not going to be a view building," he added, "but it's going to be like living in a private club on your very own street. You can be secluded here, but SoHo, TriBeCa and Greenwich Village are stages away."

In TriBeCa, HFZ Capital Group is re-amping a 1910 office building at 11 Beach Street into a 27-unit luxury condominium that incorporates terra-cotta embellishments and an internal origami glass pyramid as key architectural motifs. The left-style interiors are by Thomas Juul-Hansen and the re-envisioned exterior by BSK Architects. The price began at \$4.5 million and one of the project's three townhouses has already sold for \$10 million. (Each townhouse has its own private spa and pool.)

According to Christophe Lagrange, the director of acquisitions for HFZ, the panache of a one-block location drove the project. "In terms of location, building on a single block makes sense," he said, "because you have a finite amount of space, and that allows you to offer something more exclusive, but in an intimate setting. We were never talking about taking the existing building down and putting up something shiny and glassy. I think we're en-



SHORT HOPS From top, left to right, Sleepy Hunts Lane in Brooklyn Heights; Orient Avenue in Williamsburg; and Flay Arceo, a resident who considers Orient "a quiet oasis"; Renwick Street in downtown Manhattan; Liz Mandarano and leafy Arlington Place in Bedford-Stuyvesant; and Strong Place in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn.



hancing the character of the street and providing a positive face-lift."

In Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, Brennan Real Estate has transformed an eyesore of a parking lot on Strong Place into three contextually appropriate brick-above-brownstone townhouses, two of which are spoken for. The largest of them, 2 Strong Place, a corner townhouse with a detached carriage-house-style garage, just entered the market at \$7.5 million.

In Brooklyn Heights, a portion of Monroe Place is morphing into mansion row courtesy of the Kushner Companies, which acquired six unremarkable apartment buildings there from Brooklyn Law School for \$38.5 million. Kushner recently listed 38 Monroe Place for \$13 million and 27 Monroe for \$16 million.

Where zoning makes it possible and the Landmarks Preservation Commission endorses it, various reinterpretations and re-incarnations of one-block streets are underway, but even the most sophisticated projects are still trading on the traditional charm and drawing power inherent in the notion of an address on a single-block street. Reinventing a classic requires a certain restraint and site sensitivity: Quaintness and intimacy are the desired templates, not height and height.

Donald Brennan, the developer of three new townhouses on Strong Place, a one-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDWIN J. TORRES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

way street bookended by DeGraw and Kane Streets, said previous plans for a condo development on the parking lot had not been warmly received by the neighbors. "I reached out to make sure the community's expectations did not clash with mine," he said. "The block is all residential, and townhouses seemed to be the right fit. To me, small streets like this are reminis-

cent of a time when there was less congestion in the city, and they definitely provide a gentler environment than a typical through street. Strong Place is not by any means suburban, but it is perceived as quiet and safe."

Barbara Wilding, a saleswoman with Brennan Realty Services, which is marketing the Strong Place properties, lives in a 150-year-old carriage house on Hunts Lane, a single-block, dead-end street in Brooklyn Heights. She and her husband bought it 12 years ago and gut-renovated it five years ago. (The renovation process proved so educational that she left a career in finance and switched to real estate.)

There are just five houses on the rest of the street, Ms. Wilding said, and no sidewalks or traffic. "It's a throwback street, very sentimental and romantic. Our kids ride their bikes and play soccer on the street. It's like stepping into another world. But you can always walk down to Henry Street and hail a cab and return to reality."

The street is popular with filmmakers, she said. "Last year I opened my front door and there was Colin Farrell, 10 feet away, sitting on a big white horse."

Mr. Sobol, the salesman with Urban Compass, recently recommended a fifth-floor rental apartment on Gay Street in the West Village to his client Halle Johnston. She had spent the past five years living in London and was nostalgic for the Notting Hill vibe she'd left behind.

"I didn't know about Gay Street before I moved," said Ms. Johnston, a vice president at Momentum Worldwide, a sports and entertainment marketing agency. "But I instantly fell in love with the quirky street, the architecture and the people who live there. I was looking for apartments that had exposed brick, crown molding and a sense of history and character."

Ms. Johnston doesn't mind the fact that Gay Street's reputation for charm and historic ambience is hardly a secret. "It does get quite lively with tourists and photo shoots, but I think that adds to the character of it," she said. "I love seeing tourists 'take' a quintessential New York West Village photo on the street, and I feel grateful to live there."

Flay Arceo and her boyfriend, Daniel Petrow, felt the same way after finding a one-bedroom, \$2,000-a-month top-floor rental on Orient Avenue in Williamsburg, which Ms. Arceo, a video producer for Pandora, described in an email as "a street no one has ever heard about."

"In a city where most covet the traditional brownstone block, this neighborhood feels so much like a street out of a 1950s TV show," she said, "but while our street has a small-town feel, we're right off bustling Metropolitan Avenue, so we're never far from city life when we crave it."

The couple previously lived on what Mr. Petrow, an actor and director, called "a very special street" in Harlem: after deciding to move to Williamsburg to be closer to friends, their quest was at a standstill until Mr. Petrow noticed a freshly posted online ad for the apartment. "As soon as I saw the apartment, I loved it," he said. "The street had an Old World charm and reminded me of a lot of places I've stayed in Europe. Very private, with views of trees and sky."

Sandra Salander, the Town Real Estate saleswoman who listed the apartment, said Orient Avenue, a street composed mainly of three-family Victorians built in the late 1890s and often handed down like family heirlooms from generation to generation, is a one-block gem that's not for everyone.

"It's like a sanctuary," she said, "and it feels like everything else in Williamsburg is evolving except here. You either don't get it or completely fall in love with it."

Uptown on the Far East Side sits one of the most invisible single-block streets in Manhattan, Mitchell Place, a one-way, one-sided sliver between First Avenue and Beekman Place that runs parallel to but levitates a few stories higher than East 49th Street just north of the United Nations.

The painter Henri Matisse was a frequent visitor to the charming roof deck at 10 Mitchell Place, a.k.a. Stewart Hall. There, a framed 1930 photograph in the 1928 co-op's equally charming lobby, which has a large fireplace, shows him resting on a canvas deck chair, pondering the East River views. The co-op emanates an antiquated Left Bank sensibility.

"One of the attractions is that Mitchell Place is a relatively unknown street," said Deborah Ribner, a saleswoman for Warburg Realty. "But people who know the building tend to stay and wait for that perfect unit to show up." Ms. Ribner represents No. 9B, a renovated one-bedroom apartment priced at \$699,000.

"The building is run like a tight ship," she added. "The service is impeccable in an old-fashioned way. They deliver your mail right to your door, and if you need wood for your fireplace, the shop on the corner delivers it. It's quaint and elegant and one of a kind."

Just like the street it inhabits.