

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

February 23, 2012

## GREATER NEW YORK

# Brooklyn Feels a Pinch

*Few Family-Size Apartments in Borough*

By LAURA KUSISTO

Brooklyn may be the new urban suburb, but developers are catching on late to the borough's family values.

In Williamsburg, where tattooed moms and mustachioed dads trailed by toddlers are an increasingly common sight, the area is suffering from a shortage of family-size apartments with three bedrooms or more. Just 13% of the for-sale housing inventory in Williamsburg is 1,500 square feet or larger, according to MNS, a real-estate company.

In downtown Brooklyn and Fort Greene, just 7% of apartments are larger than 1,500 square feet.

Compare that with the Upper West Side, where nearly two-thirds of the inventory is larger than 1,500 square feet.

The squeeze on family-size apartments comes after a build-

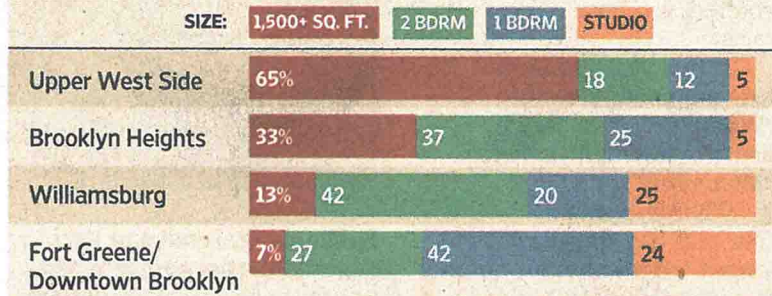
ing boom in Williamsburg and downtown Brooklyn, where towers such as the Edge and Toren rose high into the sky. Some developers now acknowledge they failed to fully anticipate the coming explosion of young families and were betting instead on young singles seeking solo pads.

"When we started developing, Williamsburg was pretty much recognized as a creative community—artists, musicians, galleries, cafes, vintage clothing. As time passed, years turned hipsters into parents," said Jeffrey Levine, of Douglaston Development, which built the Edge, with its 565 market-rate condos on the Williamsburg waterfront.

The market is starting to correct itself, slowly. For instance, about 5% of the units in the Edge are three-bedrooms, but Mr. Levine said it will be 10% in his next condo project on a neighboring lot.

### Smaller Spaces

Brooklyn neighborhoods have a shortage of large apartments on the market compared to residential Manhattan neighborhoods such as the Upper West Side.



Source: MNS

The Wall Street Journal

Meanwhile, young parents said they are making do in smaller apartments while fruitlessly scouring the market for an apartment big enough to fit their growing families.

Katy Pymm, a 31-year-old Pilates instructor with an infant son and another child on the way, rents a small two-bedroom apartment in Williamsburg with

her husband and has been searching for a larger space for three years.

Ms. Pymm said they've seen almost nothing that fits their soon-to-be family of four. "We've looked at everything—new condos, older buildings, loft-style. There are a few three-bedrooms, but they tend to go

*Please turn to page A20*

# Brooklyn Feels Pinch For Families

*Continued from page A17*  
quickly," Ms. Pymm said.

Despite their problems finding an apartment, she said they won't consider leaving because other neighborhoods lack Williamsburg's restaurants and sense of place.

The couple's broker, Mary Crocker, of Prudential Douglas Elliman, said she has seen this with other clients as well. Families started moving in about four years ago, she said, and since then "there's been kind of a snowball effect."

In the meantime, Brooklyn is experiencing a condo development crunch overall, with fewer buildings being built after a slew of projects converted to rentals. The number of listings for three-bedroom or larger apartments in new developments has fallen 35% in Williamsburg and 9% in

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**'It would be nice to live by the river and have more space,' said Katie Reimer.**

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Brooklyn in the last year, according to StreetEasy.com. Meanwhile, the number of such units in Manhattan has remained basically stable.

In a classic Brooklyn twist, some couples are even putting apartment planning ahead of family planning.

Katie Reimer, 32 years old, said she and her husband own their 2-bedroom condominium on North 10th Street between Bedford and Berry streets but are looking for more room.

Ms. Reimer gave birth to her first child six months ago. "We had the baby unplanned," she said. "And now we're thinking about growing our family." She said they might wait to have a second child until they find a suitable home. "It doesn't seem like there are many options," said Ms. Reimer, a schoolteacher. "It would be nice to live by the river and have more space," she said. So far, they've only looked at a few units.

Developers are often loath to gamble on larger units, especially in neighborhoods that are considered up-and-coming. A \$1 million three-bedroom unit that doesn't sell is a much greater liability than a smaller unit.

A few developers that gambled on larger units are seeing those bets pay off. At 144 North Eighth St., formerly nicknamed Williamsburg's "Finger Building," GFI Development Co. altered layouts of the units on the top four floors to help create three-bedroom units.

"It was a bit of a gamble," said Steven Hurwitz, a vice president at GFI. "We always thought that down the road, as the market matured, it will go from smaller units where singles were buying, to a bigger market where people would be buying larger units."

—Jessica Firger  
contributed to this article.