

Home Sweet Home

Victoria Hagman, founder and owner of Realty Collective, chats to Dan Mathers about bricks, mortar, and good food

IF YOU want the lowdown on an area, talking to a real estate expert is a good start. Especially if it's someone like Victoria Hagman, who also happens to be a major local food advocate. In an interview with *Brooklyn Bread*, Victoria gave us the scoop on her favorite parts of Brooklyn.

You started the agency in 2005? Yup.

When you were 23? Actually, I was 24.

That's a lot of pressure for someone so young to be starting a company? I was excited by it. I kinda feel like I can do anything. I have the skills, and I knew all the resources were available to me to make it happen. It seemed like a no-brainer – I was good at what I did, and I felt like the people I was working with beforehand – if they could do it, I could do it.

What were you doing before starting your company? I was in college. I've never done anything else.

Never done anything else? In high school I worked at an amusement park every summer. I started there when I was 14, working the ticket booth. By the time I was in college I was running the tickets and the gaming – I ran all the games, had a bunch of employees. So, I figured if I could have a bunch of employees at 18, I'd be fine now.

Why real estate? I started doing real estate when I was in college at Pace University. I went to school for art history and by the end of college I knew that I didn't want to work in a gallery or a museum. So, it was going to be a little difficult for me to go anywhere.

What do you offer your clients that makes you different? I think that we offer a more laid-back atmosphere. You're not meeting somebody who is wearing a suit and tie. We don't rush people because we know it's important to take time and make the right decision. Now, if you wait too long it's not going to be there, but you don't want to pressure people into making a decision that they could regret. We also offer other things like giving advice on renovation. We do staging for when you're selling so you don't have to get somebody else to do that. We offer a lot of in-house things that other people just don't have. For example, we have two architects on the team, and I'm getting my masters in historic preservation.

How is the Brooklyn market right now? There are a lot of buyers out there right now. Everyone realizes this is a good time to be buying if you have money. If you can get a mortgage, you can get something great for your money. The problem isn't the real estate



Victoria in the well-appointed kitchen of her Red Hook apartment – she's a member of the local CSA. Dan Mathers

market – it's the mortgage market. Banks don't want to lend to anyone who doesn't have great credit and a lot of money to put down.

And renters? You can get a great space in Brooklyn, and it's cheaper than Manhattan. I mean, Brooklyn is just better – c'mon.

You are an advocate for the local food movement. How so, and how did you get into it? I live in Red Hook, and we have a CSA that is amazing. They have not only a variety of different things that they bring, but they also have people come in and demonstrate recipes on the day of the CSA pick-up. They hand out recipes for the ingredients that are available that Sunday. And, it runs all the way through to Thanksgiving. It's also great for the Red Hook community because they have all the kids from the projects and the Red Hook initiative all come in and maintain this farm that is right here in Red Hook.

Is there one particular area of Brooklyn that is showing a lot of change? Gowanus. Because of the Superfund and Whole Foods coming to the area I think a lot of people are starting to look past the projects which really used to make it a very tough sell.

Anywhere else? I think the Columbia Waterfront District has changed a lot. There are a couple of big condo developments that have been built, so there are a lot of people moving in. Because of that it seems like a lot of the businesses that have opened in recent years have been staying open.

Take me through a day in the Columbia

Waterfront District. What would you eat for breakfast? I don't eat breakfast.

Coffee? I don't do coffee. I drink chai. If I eat anything for breakfast I eat like a banana and oatmeal at home. I love like runny, greasy eggs, but that is like a brunch kinda thing for me and brunch is strictly on the weekends.

So, what is your first stop for food during the week? For lunch I would get the sausage and broccoli rabe at Ferdinando's Focacceria on Union Street. It's a neighborhood secret that it's an off-menu special that's always available. It's that or Kotobuki, the sushi place on Columbia. They have an awesome lunch special: \$8 gets you salmon, bok choy and rice.

Dinner? House of Pizza and Calzones on Union Street. I'd also go to Calxico, that taco place? They have some amazing sauces.

Favorite spot for a drink? I used to go to Lido on Columbia, but it just reopened as MicNic and I haven't been in, but it looks cute. Sometimes I go to B61 or Moonshine. I probably get out to drink more in Red Hook, so Bait & Tackle, and Brooklyn Ice House.

Any good shopping ideas? There is an amazing place across the street from us called Brooklyn Collective. You can go there and buy handmade gifts from artists in Brooklyn.

Anything else worth mentioning? Margaret Palca. It's an amazing bakery on Columbia with great pumpkin cheese cake and a carrot cake that's really good. They make really good sandwiches also, but the guy takes his time, so don't go there if you're in a hurry.