

Loud or Quiet? What Nabe's Right for You?

By Lucy Cohen Blatter

6/13/12

<http://www.amny.com/urbanite-1.812039/loud-or-quiet-what-nabe-s-right-for-you-1.3781028>

New Yorkers can usually be divided into two types -- the die-hards who would never leave the city for all the backyard space in the world, and suburban-dreamers who long for a calmer, more serene life among the concrete.

Here are five neighborhoods for each type of New Yorker.

SERENITY NOW

1. West Village

Sure, the neighborhood is full of great shops and popular restaurants, but "when you're on the side streets of Perry, Charles, even West 12th and Greenwich, you can't believe you're in the city," said Alejandro Beitler, a broker with MNS who has lived in the neighborhood for 12 years. "It feels like you're in a quaint town, with cobblestone streets and town houses."

The West Village is "pindrop quiet" on Sunday mornings or any day in August, Beitler said. He often likes to grab a mellow, out-of-the-hustle and bustle breakfast at 'sNice on Eighth Avenue.

And those willing to live in small one-bedrooms and studios can find good deals -- even below \$2,000, he said. "There are buildings with courtyards, terraces and roof decks. You can have tremendous views of the Hudson," Beitler said.

But, "If you want Sex and the City, it'll cost you \$9 million to buy a town house."

2. Hudson Heights

"People can't believe they're still on the island of Manhattan," says resident and Corcoran broker Jessica McCann of this mostly residential enclave of Washington Heights. "The price per square foot is probably two-thirds that of the Upper West Side," she said, adding that many families priced out of the UWS have moved up to Hudson Heights.

"I love that I'm not fighting people to walk down the street. It feels like a neighborhood -- people know each other from the parenting community and the dog community," she said. McCann lives in one of the neighborhood's picturesque Tudor Style co-op complexes, Hudson View Gardens.

Though 181st and 187th streets are the main retail drags, the neighborhood isn't known for its nightlife. "It doesn't have the same nightlife you'll find further downtown, and you don't have your choice of 25 restaurants within a five-block radius the way you do on the Upper West Side."

But you do have a park -- Fort Tryon in this case replaces Central Park.

3. Clinton Hill

A Brooklyn up-and-comer, Clinton Hill has got the tree-lined streets and single- and multifamily houses for which many suburb-dreaming New Yorkers long.

It's also a great neighborhood for New Yorkers with cars.

"In almost eight years of living here, I've never not found a parking spot on my block," said Pamela Young, a broker at Corcoran.

"I love the peacefulness of it all," she said. "It has a smaller-town feel."

"I like that when you talk to your neighbors, they tell you when garbage pickup is," she added.

Young lived in Manhattan for 12 years before moving to Fort Greene. When she found that the "peace and quiet" of Fort Greene was disappearing, she sold her home for a large profit and moved to Clinton Hill. She plans to do the same again. "Now I have my eye on Bed-Stuy," she said.

4. Battery Park City

Though it's recently welcomed new restaurants -- including Shake Shack and North End Grill -- this downtown nabe has a mostly residential vibe (though said residences are primarily high-rise buildings).

Wei Min Tan, a broker with Rutenberg Realty, lives with his family in Battery Park City. He appreciates the proximity to Rockefeller Park, South Meadow and North Meadow as well as the Hudson River. "It's like an oasis by the water," he said.

Manhattan Sailing School offers different lessons on the water, and Tan said he often sees people jet-skiing and kayaking.

But one of the things that makes Battery Park City feel removed from the rest of the city is a 10-minute walk from the subway, which may be a dealbreaker for some.

Another potential downside: Because the area is on a landlease, the carrying costs (common charges and taxes for condos, and maintenance charges for co-ops) are double those across the rest of Manhattan.

5. Bedford-Stuyvesant

This solid up-and-comer has the town houses and brownstones for which Brooklyn is famous, but lower price tags than its surrounding areas.

Melanie Willey moved to Bed-Stuy from Williamsburg where she "took \$1,000 off my rent, and got a much bigger space." She has the top floor of a brownstone for which she pays \$1,700.

"I've never lived anywhere in New York where it was so quiet," Willey said. "I hear birds in the morning."

For the most part, Willey feels safe in her neighborhood. "It's up-and-coming, but not everyone's gotten the memo yet. I'd say about 95 percent of residents are families and amazing people. But there are certain corners I don't belong on past certain hours."

IN THE HEART OF IT ALL

1. Union Square

Aside from all the NYU students who live nearby, tourist and shoppers flock to Union Square's big-box stores. The park itself is busy almost everyday with protests, sunbathers and the farmer's market.

Karen Ruttner has lived in the neighborhood for six years. "Union Square is always busy. Not only is it a hub for all of Manhattan (commuters, etc.), it's at the top and center of the villages and the outskirts of the Meatpacking District, so tourists always manage to find their ways over," she said in an email.

On the upside: "It's essentially the center of everything ... The East Village and Williamsburg are easily accessible ... And there's a Whole Foods, a Trader Joe's, a Trader Joe's wine shop, and [tons of] drugstores and Starbucks in spitting distance."

Some downsides: The lack of a real neighborhood vibe. "Union Square just seems like a big spot to pass through. Or to protest in," Ruttner said. Plus, it's a "perfect storm of rowdy bars, and with the smoking ban and warmer weather approaching, sleeping with my windows open is nearly impossible."

2. Times Square

It's certainly lost a lot of its grit, but Times Square hasn't lost any of its bustle. To live here, you'd have to love bright lights, noise ... and tourists.

Rutenberg's Tan has sold several Times Square-area condos to Chinese buyers. "It's a matter of preference, some people like the hustle and bustle and like to have easy access to the Theater District. From a foreign perspective, it's exciting to be there -- plus you're near all the subway lines, too."

Condo buildings like the 43-story Platinum on West 46th Street and all-glass Orion on West 42nd Street are very good quality, Tan said.

3. Meatpacking District

"The Meatpacking District used to be really quiet, but on the weekends, you can barely walk," said Tracie Golding, a broker with Stribling. That's thanks to the Highline park, myriad upscale restaurants and elegant designer boutiques.

Sasha Hundle, who lives in a house between Greenwich and Horatio ("Christian Loboutin and Theory are my neighbors"), said Wednesday through Sunday nights tend to be busiest, but there is some respite from the crowds.

"Places like Pastis, the Apple Store and Spice Market and Chelsea Market are touristy, and the areas around them are busy, but there are also neighborhood places like Recette and Mojo."

The Highline, too, which is "crazy on the weekends," can be peaceful during the week, Hundle said.

4. Downtown Brooklyn

"The area attracts Manhattanites who want the hustle and bustle of the city, but don't want the prices," said Corcoran's Young about this neighborhood, mere minutes from downtown Manhattan.

Downtown Brooklyn has seen several upscale high-rise developments spring up in recent years. And with the Barclays Center sports arena and entertainment complex set to open nearby in September, the neighborhood will see even more foot and car traffic.

5. Williamsburg

While Brooklyn is home to many serene neighborhoods, Williamsburg is not one of them. This area -- which has become incredibly popular for 20-somethings -- is overflowing with bars and restaurants.

On weekends, it can be hard to walk down Bedford Avenue, the neighborhood's main commercial street, according to resident Angelina Santana.

And while the neighborhood does live up to its hipster stereotype, it's also really fun. "It's a great place to live when you're young," Santana said, especially since most residents fall "somewhere in the 21- to 35-year-old range."