



REAL ESTATE

Want an apartment in NYC for under \$2,000 a month? Look here

By [Max Gross](#)

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The number dropped on our collective heads as lightly as an anvil: \$4,042. That was the average price of a two-bedroom rental in Manhattan, according to Citi Habitat's April 2014 market report. And even after the following month's numbers provided modest relief (less than 2 percent's worth of relief — it dipped to \$3,998), it will still cost renters an average — not for anything fancy, mind you — of \$48,000 a year to live in Manhattan with an extra room. The overall average wasn't much better (\$3,451).

Of course, for many New Yorkers, those obscene numbers is nothing approaching their actual budget. Most real estate pros recommend a rent that's one-fortieth of your yearly salary, which means if you take home the city average (\$84,100 in the private sector, according to 2012 stats from the New York State Department of Labor), you should be paying just over \$2,000 a month in rent.



Among the budget-friendly neighborhoods for renters: Bay Ridge

Photo: Tamara Beckwith/NY Post

And that's not even the worst of it — summer is the season when renters who are finishing up school or starting a new job pour into the city. “I was looking for three or four months,” says Kamille Upshaw, an actress who is planning on moving to the city from Baltimore and who had a budget of \$2,000 or less. “I was looking a lot while being out of town — but apartments go so quickly ... finally, I had a plan of seeing seven apartments” in one day before she found one in Washington Heights that she's moving into on July 1. In other words, the competition is fierce.

The good news is that, yes, there are apartments out there for less than \$2,000 a month — you just have to know how to look.

“The first and foremost thing is to keep an open mind,” says Gary Malin, president of Citi Habitats. “You have to be open to suggestions. You're not going to find something in the West Village or Soho absent incredible luck.”



The bustling Greenmarket in Jackson Heights

Photo: Zandy Mangold

“If you're intent on a doorman, get a video doorman instead,” advises Lee Williams, with Rutenberg Realty. “You still get [some level of] protection, you still get your packages and dry cleaning, but you're not paying for a staff member who's sitting there all the time.”

If you are comfortable in a walk-up, or a studio, there are options in extremely desirable neighborhoods. On the Lower East Side, according to Citi Habitats, the average studio rents for \$1,938 per month.

Tudor City is admittedly pretty far east and the apartments are small — but they're also well-kept, safe and a quick cab ride from everything. “You can rent a studio in any of the Tudor City buildings and you get an elevator, they all have gym access and you have a roof deck,” says Takk Yamaguchi of Urban Compass. “I would say the average studio rent is \$2,000.”

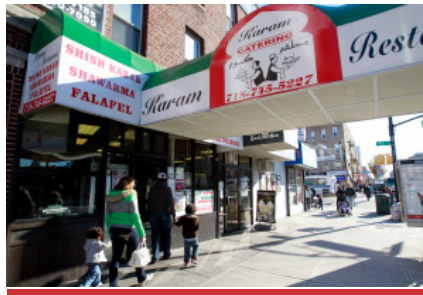
The neighborhood is, of course, the key to this whole question. While one might stumble upon a two-bedroom Tribeca loft for \$1,950, your luck won't be that good unless the landlord also goes by the name “Dad.” Rather, here are four neighborhoods with a plentiful supply of rentals below \$2,000 and why you should check them out now.

Bay Ridge



Photo: Tamara Beckwith/NY Post

Dieters need not apply for a Bay Ridge apartment; there's no reason to check out this far-flung Brooklyn neighborhood if you don't like to eat. Aside from the red-sauce Italian joints that have long made the neighborhood famous, and the more recent explosion of Middle Eastern places (like Tanoreen) which rank among the best in the city, there's everything from German (Schnitzel Haus) to Chinese (Grand Sichuan House) to even hipster-type places (Brooklyn Beet Company).



Among the eateries in Bay Ridge is Karam.

Photo: Tamara Beckwith/NY Post

As for the real estate? There's a nice mixture of apartment buildings and multi-family homes. "The mentality of some of the old-school landlords is they don't price apartments high because they don't like turnover," says Anthony Lolli, founder and CEO of Rapid Realty. "You can get studios or one-bedrooms any day of the week [for well under \$2,000], and you can even get some two-bedroom and a few three-bedrooms. Only the single-family homes are more expensive, obviously."

Pluses: The streets are still populated with delis like Kasper (a Polish one) or Nordic Delicacies (a Scandinavian one), and even newcomers fit in with the non-branded vibe like Deliso Confections, a two-year-old chocolate maker, which makes the bulk of their goods in the store.

Minuses: There's no getting around it ... Bay Ridge is far. The train usually takes about an hour each way from Midtown, and the lines that service Bay Ridge — the N and R — are sometimes dubbed by the locals "the Never" and "the Rarely."

On the market: A renovated one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment with high ceilings on 82nd Street is renting for \$1,400. *Agent: Joe Azar, Citi Habitats, 212-937-8500.*

Inwood/Washington Heights



Photo: Angel Chevestt

“Anything above 110th, there’s big inventory in the under-\$2,000 range,” says Sarah Saltzberg, principal broker for Bohemia Realty Group.

We take her at her word — therefore, you’d be wise to check out Washington Heights and Inwood, the two northernmost Manhattan neighborhoods.

“In the past, you had college roommate shares and Europeans” coming to these areas, says Santiago Steele of Citi Habitats (who put Kamille Upshaw in her new apartment). “Now you’re seeing more families who needed a two-bedroom — and in the last two years, there’s finally been a turn where you have a critical mass of young people. These are the types of people who used to be going to Dumbo or Williamsburg, and it’s creating a demand for retail and residential.”



What a view! Check out the picturesque Inwood Hill Park and Nature Preserve.

Photo: Zandy Mangold

“I knew people in the area,” says Colleen Gibson, who moved to Washington Heights on Saturday from Philadelphia to start a job in publishing. “My friends said it was an up-and-coming neighborhood and much more affordable than the alternatives.” Gibson and her roommate found a two-bedroom for \$1,750 with Jenny Fitch of Bohemia Realty Group.

One can pretty easily secure a one-bedroom for less than \$1,500, according to Steele. Although that might be changing. “I’ve seen one-bedrooms as high as \$1,750 ... that was the price of a two-bedroom not too long ago,” he notes. Two-bedrooms hover on the border of \$2,000, but you “can still get an \$1,800 two-bedroom — but it’s a budget two-bedroom.”

Pluses: Aside from its budding population of young people, there are other things budding, too — namely the local parks! Did you know that the Olmstead Brothers (sons of Frederick Law of Central Park fame) designed the 67-acre Fort Tryon Park at West 190th Street? Then there’s Inwood Hill Park, at the very top of Manhattan. And along the banks of the Harlem River is Highbridge Park.

Minuses: Going out in Inwood/Washington Heights still means going downtown, and if you’re tipsy after a night of boozing and carousing, you’ll have to deal with an endless train ride or a punishingly expensive cab ride.

On the market: A two-bedroom, one-bathroom unit for \$2,012 in Washington Heights. *Agent: Lindsay Nelms, Bohemia Realty, 603-312-0319.*

Jackson Heights



The view from 74th Street in Jackson Heights

Photo: Zandy Mangold

Queens — goes the current saying — is the new Brooklyn. Meaning it's the cheaper, less-developed alternative to Manhattan. Or, actually, does that make it the alternative to Brooklyn? Who knows. But if you look at the waterfront neighborhoods of Queens (Astoria and Long Island City), it rings false, anyway. Prices are starting to look positively Brooklyn-esque.

However, if you go farther inland, this aphorism holds true, and one of the best places to look is in Jackson Heights.

Jackson Heights is a mishmash of great Indian and South American restaurants and the birthplace of the garden apartment community. From 37th Avenue to Northern Boulevard, the streets are jammed with massive buildings (mostly co-ops) with some of the city's best communal courtyards — as well as some extremely picturesque row houses.



Check out this charming piece of property in Jackson Heights.

Photo: Zandy Mangold

"A lot of those are co-op, and they don't allow rentals," warns Jennifer McLean of Charles Rutenberg Realty — but a healthy smattering of the boards don't seem to mind, and these apartments are usually light-filled and spacious.

"A typical one-bedroom is between \$1,450 and \$1,600," says McLean. Even two-bedrooms often clock in at under \$2,000.

Pluses: Good food. Diverse atmosphere. Big apartments. Oh, and did we mention that Jackson Heights is located on five different subway lines? In Queens — where if the 7 train decides to take the weekend off, certain neighborhoods are trapped — this matters a great deal.

Minuses: If you're not scoring one of the landmarked co-ops, the real estate can be rundown. And while the locals swear by the

Indian or the South American cuisine, there's certainly a share of bad ones in the mix.

On the market: A two-bedroom in a co-op at 37-51 86th St. is on the sixth floor and is going for \$2,000 a month. *Agent: Jennifer McLean, Charles Rutenberg Realty, 917-842-8563.*

Yorkville



Low-rise buildings line the streets of Yorkville.

Photo: Christian Johnston

How much do you want to wager that the Second Avenue subway line opens as expected in 2016? If you're willing to bet an apartment on it, move to Yorkville now, while the rents are still low.

Back in the day, Yorkville — which stretches from 79th Street up to 96th Street, from Third Avenue eastward — was one of the city's hubs of German life. And while there are certainly plenty of dorm-sized towers for recent grads, there's also a healthy smattering of low-rise buildings with surprisingly reasonable rents — especially compared to its West-of-Lex neighbors.

“You can definitely find a studio in a walk-up, maybe in an elevator building” for \$2,000 per month or less, says Luciane Serifovic, executive vice president and director of rentals for Douglas Elliman. But as “for a luxury doorman building? Definitely not.” Well, you can't expect it all.

Pluses: Safety and proximity are the two buzzwords for this neighborhood. And by proximity, we mean both the fact that you can leapfrog to pretty much anywhere in Manhattan fairly easily, and you're next door to some of the poshest real estate in the world.



Yorkville as seen from East 85th Street and 2nd Avenue

Photo: Christian Johnston

Minuses: The word “sleepy” definitely applies. While waiting for the Second Avenue subway to open, you will have to schlep back and forth from Lexington Avenue every day if you plan on taking the 4, 5 or 6 line to work. The apartments are not going to be big — and they definitely won't be new.

On the market: A studio at 227 E.87th St. with a spacious kitchen, a walk-in closet and lots of sunlight is listing for \$1,700. *Agent: Alyson Klein, Douglas Elliman, 212-350-8500.*

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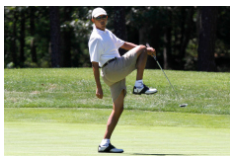
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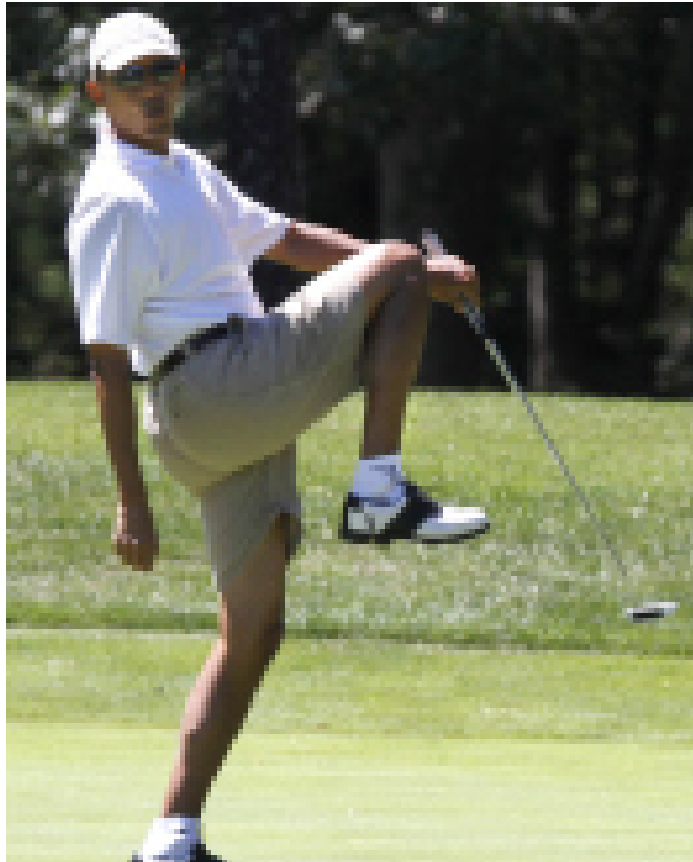
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