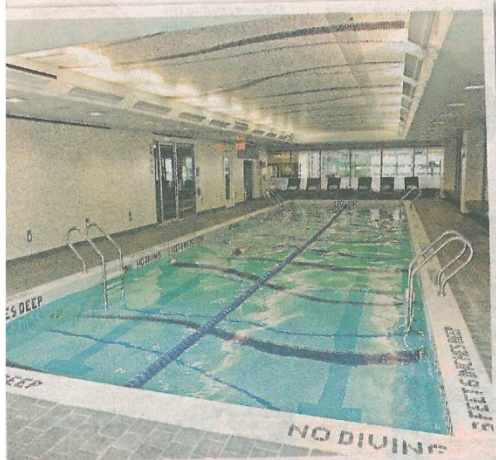


May 9, 2014



## FAMILY CENTRAL

Midtown is attracting more and more people with kids



MiMA, a luxury building near Times Square, has a fireplace-equipped lounge (top) and a pool, among other amenities.

It's a swath of the city best known for its swarms of tourists and honking cabs, but more and more, New York families are opting to move to Midtown Manhattan.

Real estate attorney Ian Brandt and his wife, Megan Seltz, moved closer to their respective offices in Midtown this year with their two children, 7-year-old Hannah and 10-month-old Leo. It was a temporary measure, designed to tide them over for a few months after their home in Queens was damaged in a fire, but now they're in no rush to leave.

Sure, the couple's cost of living has tripled, but Brandt and Seltz are enjoying the advantages of the fast-moving city center, including easy trips to the ballet and walks in Central Park with their dog.

"We were Queens snobs," Brandt said. "We

thought Queens had better food, a better cost of living and a more middle-class feel. Now that we live here, it's been great. It's nice to be able to walk out of your apartment and do what you've gotta do."

Brandt and his family aren't the only ones taking advantage of Midtown's convenience and building amenities like pools and gardens.

"More parents are bringing their children so that they don't have to commute and they can actually pop in and see their kids during the day," said Carole Bloom, a vice president at Manhattan Skyline, a landlord and developer with several buildings in the city, including one called Claridge's at 101 W. 55th St.

"There are always kids sitting on the stairs with their nannies at lunch waiting for their parents coming home from work," Bloom said.

Ten years ago, moving to Midtown would have raised even more eyebrows.

"The area has become so hot and sought-after over the last couple of years," said Ashley Murphy, a publicist who grew up on Central Park South around the turn of the millennium. "It was not that way when I was a kid. It was a no-man's land. When we were done playing in the park, all my friends would go back to the Upper West Side or Upper East Side. We were sort of roughing it for a while."

Midtown is hardly a bargain compared with Queens, or even brownstone Brooklyn, where there's a preponderance of strollers, but living there is still cheaper than in more traditionally family-friendly 'hoods in Manhattan.

The median price for a two-bedroom co-op apartment in

*Continued on next page*



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**This area has become so hot over the last couple of years.**

Anthony Pacelli, wife Atesa and toddler Marisa on MiMa's patio

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Midtown was \$1.1 million in the first quarter, up from \$988,000 in the first quarter of 2013. For condos, the median price was \$1.66 million, up from \$1.4 million last year, according to Pete Culliney of CityRealty, who tracks condo prices.

By comparison, the median price for a two-bedroom condo downtown was significantly higher: \$2.28 million.

On the rental side, the average price for a Midtown East one-bedroom apartment was \$3,646 in March, compared with \$3,770 one year earlier. In Midtown West, it jumped from \$3,877 to \$4,058.

In SoHo and Tribeca, the average rents for a one-bedroom were much higher: \$4,974 and \$4,525, respectively.

Anthony Pacelli, a New Jersey real estate developer, found a relative bargain for a luxury rental in Midtown in 2011. He snapped up a three-bedroom pad at MiMa, a high-end glassy building on 42nd St. near Times Square, for him, his wife, Atesa, and their now 1-year-old daughter, Marisa.

He declined to specify what he paid for the unit, but said that it was a lot less than similar units in other areas of the city were asking. MiMa is well known for its flashy amenity spaces, which include a private Equinox gym, a heated indoor lap pool, a full-size indoor basketball court, a volleyball court and a pet spa.

"Your budget has to be \$20,000 a month to get a (similar) three-bedroom

downtown," Pacelli said. "A lot of our friends moved up to Harlem and bought brownstones (when they had children), but for us, that was just too far. As a value proposition, we were able to get things like central air and amazing views within our price bracket in Midtown."

Pacelli is not unaware of Midtown's downsides. He still tries desperately to avoid Times Square, where he has to dodge pedicabs and skirt tourists. It can be a challenge to navigate to the Times Square subway station elevator, which he has to take now that he has a stroller in tow, he said.

The amenities at MiMa and Claridge's are a large part of the reason that families move there. If your kids can't ride their bikes in Park Slope, they can at least kick a football around the basketball court or crawl around the neatly manicured lawn on the building's communal terrace.

Another perk of living in a building with amenities: the staff. They're not baby-sitters, but their presence is comforting for parents, who can always use an extra set of eyes.

"When people first come in the building, they sometimes think it's a hotel," Bloom said. "We're fully staffed, and the uniforms of the staff were based on those at the Claridge's (hotel) in London. We have a doorman, we have a lobby attendant and we have a concierge. That really wows them."

Midtown certainly has its perks. Alexandra Ramniceanu, a

Claridge's resident, loves to be near to the city's museums. She frequently takes her 2-year-old daughter, Nora, to the Museum of Modern Art and to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on 55th St., where the toddler takes a dance class called Tiny Steps.

"When we first arrived in New York, a friend of ours lent us his studio in SoHo," said Ramniceanu, who moved from France six years ago with her husband, a UN economist who likes to walk to work. "I love going to SoHo to have brunch and do some shopping, but when we started looking for a home, it was not for us. Little by little, we just came closer to Midtown."

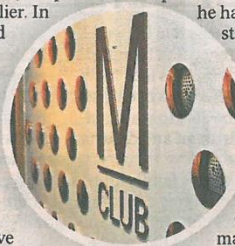
James Healey and his partner, Jason Mann, owners of the Ben & Jerry's ice cream outpost at 30 Rockefeller

Center, said they also live at Claridge's so they can pop home to see their daughter, 13-year-old Kelsey, when they have a free moment. The central location of their apartment makes it a popular meeting point for Kelsey's friends and their parents.

"For her, being an eighth-grader, there are sleepovers and parties," Healey said. "We tend to always be the meeting place because everyone can get to us."

Healey and Mann intend to stay in Midtown for the long term and have already upgraded their apartment in the building four times.

"For everyday living, it may seem like an odd place, but it really does work for us," Healey said. Central Park is so close, "it's like we have the biggest backyard in the world."



The lobby of MiMa's amenities area, above; at r., Pacelli and family

