

LIVING IN

Parkchester, the Bronx, Working as Planned



Danny R. Peralta for The New York Times

By Vera Haller

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Lara Miranda, 31, an administrator at Hunter College, and her husband, Steven Moran, 35, a waiter, spent four years living with a relative in Harlem, but earlier this year, with a second child on the way, they began searching for a place of their own. “Looking in Harlem and Upper Manhattan,” she said, “we realized we were not going to afford a two-bedroom there.”

They visited Parkchester, a 129-acre planned community in the eastern Bronx, where Ms. Miranda admired an apartment rented by friends. She decided on the spot that the huge complex was for them.

The grounds were well kept, the No. 6 subway train was there to take them to their jobs in Manhattan, playgrounds for their 5-year-old daughter were numerous, and the sidewalks were filled with young families like theirs, Ms. Miranda said.

On Sept. 1, a month after their second daughter was born, the family moved into a two-bedroom rental, paying \$1,605 a month.

They especially appreciate the family atmosphere. “Coming home around 5, I like seeing all these people, working people, leaving the train and going home to care for their kids,” Ms. Miranda said.



1970 EAST TREMONT AVENUE, UNIT No. 6F A condo with three bedrooms and one bath in the Park-chester complex, listed at \$210,000. (917) 960-8754 Credit Danny R. Peralta for The New York Times

Middle-class New Yorkers have looked to Parkchester for reasonably priced housing ever since the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company completed the complex in the early 1940s. “Nurses, police officers, firefighters live here,” said Felipa Manaiza, a saleswoman for Parkchester Bronx Realty, who is also a resident. “They come here because they have family or friends who already live here.”

What has changed over the years is the makeup of the population. Until 1968, only whites received leases, according to [a history of the neighborhood](#) on the website of Parkchester Preservation Management.

Now the approximately 41,000 residents include Hispanics, African-Americans and South Asians, said Ryan Moorehead, the chief executive of Parkchester Preservation Management.

Parkchester's diversity was one reason Michael de los Santos, 32, a porter for a residential building in TriBeCa, and his wife, Andelkyz, 33, a teacher, bought a one-bedroom condo there in August, for \$124,000. They have a 3-month-old daughter. "I want our daughter to be raised in a place where there are different colors and cultures," he said. "A lot of people say we can't get along, but that's not the case here."

According to the 2009-13 American Community Survey of the Census, 45.6 percent of Parkchester's residents identify themselves as black or African-American, 33.7 percent as Hispanic, 15.3 percent as Asian and 3.6 percent white.

What You'll Find

Parkchester is bounded by East Tremont Street to the north, Castle Hill Avenue to the east, Westchester Avenue to the south and White Plains Road to the west.

The apartment complex, 171 brick buildings clustered along tree-lined paths, makes up the bulk of Parkchester's real estate offerings. A handful of side streets, with a mix of attached two-story brick rowhouses and four-story apartment houses, are considered part of the neighborhood as well. Stores and restaurants line the complex's two main streets, Metropolitan Avenue and Unionport Road.

The Parkchester complex offers studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments split between sales and rentals. While all 12,271 units in the complex are condominiums, many owners rent them out. A block of 6,382 condos is held by an investor partnership that rents out units through the [Parkchester Preservation Management](#) company. The complex underwent a major renovation between 1999 and 2005, when upgrades were made to facades, windows and electrical and plumbing systems.

What You'll Pay

Mr. Moorehead said studios generally rent for \$975 a month, one-bedrooms for \$1,240, two-bedrooms for \$1,595 and three-bedrooms for \$1,890. But rents can vary, he noted, with units closer to the subway and those with upgraded kitchens and bathrooms commanding more than unrenovated units farther from transportation.

Ms. Manaiza said one-bedroom condos begin in the low \$100,000s and go up to \$130,000; two-bedroom condos range from \$140,000 to \$180,000; and three-bedroom units from \$165,000 to \$210,000.

Image



1314 VIRGINIA AVENUE, No. 1 FL A condo with one bedroom and one bath in the Parkchester complex, listed at \$130,000. (646) 483-4673 Credit Danny R. Peralta for The New York Times

The median condominium price in Parkchester, side streets included, for the year ending on Oct. 18 was \$115,000, compared with \$94,000 for the same period five years ago, an increase of 22.3 percent, said Jonathan J. Miller, the president of [Miller Samuel](#), an appraisal firm.

The Vibe

The heart of Parkchester lies in the Aileen B. Ryan Oval, formerly called the Metropolitan Oval, where residents relax on benches as they gaze at the water-spouting nymphs in the plaza's central fountain. Children ride scooters and parents push babies in strollers. A bulletin board in the Oval displays flyers for adult exercise classes and an international potluck Thanksgiving dinner at the [Boys & Girls Club](#). There are also art classes, salsa dancing and knitting circles, among other activities.

Supermarkets, clothing stores, restaurants, banks, hair salons, laundromats and a post office are at residents' doorsteps. The main commercial strip on Metropolitan Avenue has a Starbucks, an Applebee's restaurant and a Macy's. The recreational facilities include playgrounds, a baseball field and basketball and handball courts.

The Schools

The Bronx Charter School for Excellence, on Benedict Avenue, serves 642 students in grades K-8. [According to its 2014-2015 Department of Education Quality Snapshot](#), 48 percent of its eighth graders met state standards in English, compared with 30 percent citywide, while 61 percent met standards in math, compared with 35 percent citywide. P.S. 106, on Olmstead Avenue, has 1,217 students in grades pre-K-5. [Its 2014-2015 Quality Snapshot](#) shows 26 percent of its fifth graders meeting state standards in English, compared with 30 percent citywide, and 39 percent in math, the same as citywide results. Nearby parochial schools include St. Helena's School, with grades pre-K-8 and St. Raymond's High School for Boys.

The Commute

Residents catch the No. 6 train at the Parkchester/Westchester Avenue station or at the Castle Hill Avenue stop. The trains run express during the morning and evening commutes, taking riders to Midtown Manhattan and back in about 35 minutes. The Bronx M6 express bus reaches Broadway and 23rd Street in about an hour. In the future, residents could benefit from another connection to Midtown Manhattan — the Metro-North Railroad is planning a Parkchester stop. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority expects to complete environmental and federal reviews by 2017.

The History

At first glance, Parkchester's brick buildings look plain, but closer inspection shows the builders adorned them with some 500 terra-cotta statues, high on corners and over doorways — animals, human figures and mythical characters. Colorful jesters can still be seen on the facade of a former movie theater, now a Marshall's department store.