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REAL ESTATE IN-DEPTH

Official Publication of the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors

FOCUS ON THE BRONX

Arthur Avenue and Little Italy in the Bronx Offer A Taste of Old-Fashioned Family Traditions

By Mary T. Prenon

The mere mention of Arthur Avenue in the Bronx can often conjure up images of piping hot pasta with home-made tomato sauce, fresh colorful produce, crispy warm breads or rows of cannoli's, stuffed with gooey cream and chocolate chips. Now part of the Belmont Business Improvement District (BID), this world-famous culinary destination has been home to Little Italy for generations and offers a taste of old-fashioned family traditions in this northern New York City borough.

"It's definitely the food and restaurants that attract people to the area and keeps the local economy so vibrant," said Frank Franz, Treasurer

community, with people from the tri-state area as well as all over the world." Franz and current BID Chairman Pe-



Cosenza's Fish Market is celebrating its 101st Anniversary this year.

ter Madonia founded the BID in 2012 to help the more than 300 local businesses by providing sanitation and maintenance, public safety, visitor services, marketing and promotional programs, beautification, capital improvements and other "quality of life" needs.

"A lot of people who own businesses here live here as well, and it's a very safe community," added Franz. "We have an extremely low vacancy rate for commercial real estate, and even during the height of the pandemic, business was thriving."

The Belmont BID stretches from East Fordham Road at Southern Boulevard to Lorillard Place, and Arthur Avenue from

East Fordham Road to East 183rd Street. It also includes East 187th Street from Southern Boulevard to Lorillard Place and Crescent Avenue from East 187th Street to Arthur Avenue.

Franz noted that people are always inquiring about the area for potential business locations. "It's a great family neighborhood where our motto is 'a good taste of tradition,'" he said. "Even today, I'm still buying my breads, desserts and meats at the same places my father shopped."

In fact, Little Italy in the Bronx is often referred to as the "Real Little Italy," and features some of New York City's best authentic Italian restaurants, butchers, fish markets, delicatessens, pastry shops, artisan shops and specialty stores. Many local businesses are often owned and operated by generations of the same families who founded them nearly a century ago.

Madonia Bakery has been serving traditional Sicilian style bread since 1918 and Cosenza's Fish Market celebrates its 101st anniversary this year. Established in 1912, the Egidio Pastry Shop is the oldest bakery in the neighborhood.

Dating back to the 1700's, one of the Belmont neighborhood's first businesses was a tobacco company started by French Huguenot Pierre Abraham Lorillard in 1760, and it's still in operation today. The family also purchased a large piece of land along the Bronx River and built an estate named "Belle Mont."

In 1870, the tobacco manufacturing facilities moved to New Jersey and Catherine Lorillard Wolfe, Pierre's great granddaughter, inherited the estate. A great admirer of U.S. President Chester

A. Arthur, Wolfe named the main street of the local community, "Arthur Avenue," in his honor.

Over the past century, Belmont has become home to thousands of immigrants from Italy and all over the



Egidio Pastry, dating back to 1912, is the oldest bakery in the neighborhood.

globe. The area has also served as an inspiration for movies like "Marty," "A Bronx Tale," "The Godfather," and "The Sopranos." Rumor has it that actor Joe Pesci began his career after being discovered by actor Robert DeNiro at a local neighborhood restaurant where Pesci worked as the maître d. Franz added that a number of celebrities are also known to dine in the area to escape the limelight of Manhattan and enjoy

Continued on page 6



Little Italy Pizza Festival in 2019.

and former Chairman of the Belmont BID. "Little Italy brings in an enormous amount of business for such a small

Bronx Housing Market Thrived in 2021; Activity to Remain Strong in 2022

By Anthony Domathoti

Bronx's thriving real estate market showed no signs of slowing in the third quarter of 2021. The dwindling housing supply and rising demand have resulted in a steady flow of transactions throughout the summer months.

The Bronx has also been one of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the highest job losses among the country's major metropolitan areas. Bronx has been recovering from the economic effects of the pandemic. The demand for housing is outpacing the supply favoring home sellers who are managing to hold good leverage in price negotiations.

In the third quarter of 2021, while some homebuyers chose to persevere through bidding wars, escalation clauses, and line-out-the-door open houses, others decided to put their buying on hold and rent for the time being.

Buyers in the Bronx paid 10% to 20% more than they would have pre-pandemic.

Buyers are shopping for properties all over the Bronx with Spencer Estates in Country Club, Morris Park, Pelham

Bay, Pelham Gardens as the most sought-after expensive neighborhoods in the Bronx.

Based on current market conditions, the supply and demand dynamics will likely push prices north again over the next 12 months. Mortgage rates remaining low, pent-up demand, and good discounts will keep the demand high in 2022. The New York housing market could favor sellers over buyers.

Despite the pervasiveness of sticker shock, some buyers are choosing to charge forward in today's less feverish market to secure a home and lock in a historically low (and rising) mortgage rate.

"Prices will continue to go up as long



as the mortgage rates remain low. Another reason for the housing demand going up is that the Millennials are buying properties more than ever" said Emran Bhuiyan with EXIT Realty Premium.

The Bronx housing market is still moving upward, albeit at a slow pace. That slowing, or so-called normalization, is expected to continue into next year: The housing market will cool off in 2022, but not by much.

I anticipate price growth will slow down in 2022.

Anthony Domathoti is President-elect of the Hudson Gateway

Association of Realtors, a member of NAR's RPAC Platinum President's Circle and Broker-Owner of EXIT Realty Premium in the Bronx.

Property Type	BRONX - Third Quarters 2018-2021				% Change 2020-2021
	2018 Q3	2019 Q3	2020 Q3	2021 Q3	
NUMBER OF SALES, 3RD QUARTER					
Single Family Houses	144	152	119	170	42.9%
Condominiums	46	49	34	78	129.4%
Cooperatives	163	138	94	196	108.5%
2-4 Family	182	164	114	222	94.7%
Total	535	503	361	666	84.5%
NUMBER OF SALES - YEAR TO DATE (9/30)					
Single Family Houses	400	402	327	514	57.2%
Condominiums	137	137	110	213	93.6%
Cooperatives	462	410	283	516	82.3%
2-4 Family	524	488	369	607	64.5%
Total	1,523	1,437	1,089	1,850	69.9%
MEDIAN SALE PRICE					
Single Family Houses	472,500	510,000	525,000	597,500	13.8%
Condominiums	248,500	280,000	312,500	299,500	-4.2%
Cooperatives	217,000	220,000	236,250	245,000	3.7%
2-4 Family	653,500	685,000	725,000	775,000	6.9%
MEAN SALE PRICE					
Single Family Houses	511,446	561,337	551,353	650,614	18.0%
Condominiums	336,137	307,411	363,672	368,777	1.4%
Cooperatives	233,073	242,361	274,517	276,139	0.6%
2-4 Family	654,884	689,876	737,573	772,207	4.7%
END OF QUARTER INVENTORY (9/30)					
Single Family Houses	230	240	256	253	-1.2%
Condominiums	78	94	123	158	28.5%
Cooperatives	273	309	414	525	26.8%
2-4 Family	331	325	371	378	1.9%
Total	912	968	1,164	1,314	12.9%

5

QUESTIONS

WITH

Bronx Borough President-Elect Vanessa Gibson

By John Jordan

Real Estate In-Depth recently interviewed and posed “Five Questions” to New York City Council Member and former New York State Assemblywoman Vanessa L. Gibson, who will be taking office in January 2022 as the new Borough President of the Bronx, succeeding Ruben Diaz Jr. who decided not to run for re-election after serving three terms.

Gibson currently represents the Bronx’s 16th Council District where she has advocated for affordable housing, low income families, seniors, LGBTQ rights, gender equity, employment access, and meaningful opportunities for our youth and is serving her second term of office on the New York City Council.

During the 2014-2017 session, Gibson served as Chair of the Council’s Committee on Public Safety, and has the distinction of being both the first woman and first person of color to hold this role. As Chair, she had oversight of the operations and budget of the NYPD, the Civilian Complaint Review Board, the District Attorneys and the Special Narcotics prosecutor, and Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice.

Gibson has been a leader in school safety reform, championed criminal justice reform legislation, and is a vocal proponent of anti-gun violence programs.

Currently, Gibson is a Deputy Leader, Co-Chair of the New York City Council Women’s Caucus and the second Bronxite to Chair the Committee on Oversight and Investigation. She formally served as the Chair of the Subcommittee on Capital Budget from 2018 – 2020, where she helped oversee the city’s capital investments and changes to the capital process.

Upon being elected to the New York State Assembly in 2009, Gibson embarked an ambitious agenda to improve the quality of life of her constituents in the 77th Assembly District and residents throughout Bronx County. She led efforts to support more education on lupus, championed efforts to support public education, access to affordable housing, higher education at SUNY, affordable and quality healthcare, senior services and youth services. After serving two terms in the State Assembly, she was elected to the New York City Council in November 2013.

The Morris Heights resident is a life-long New Yorker, graduate of the city’s Public-School system, and an alumna of SUNY Albany (undergraduate) and Baruch College, where she received her MPA.

1 **Real Estate In-Depth:** The Bronx was the most hard-hit borough in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic with an unemployment rate that reached 25%. The jobless rate has since dropped to 12.4% as of September 2021 but is still the highest of all the boroughs in New York. What will you do to try and get more Bronx residents back to work?

Gibson: So, I appreciate the question and certainly am aware of the high un-

employment rate that we are facing now as a result of COVID. One in every four Bronxites lost their income as well as their employment due to the pandemic. A lot of the jobs we lost in the Bronx are in the hotel and retail industries and as we rebound and return to normalcy, I do believe that many of those workers will eventually go back to work, but the question is when, because obviously it goes hand-in-hand with tourism, nightlife, Broadway, with sports venues and really everything we know and love about New York City coming back to normal. So, as Borough President I will work feverishly with the administration, with Eric Adams, on making sure we can find ways to create new jobs.

I think we have to look at the tech industry. We have to look at worker cooperatives. We have to look at ways that we can build out entrepre-



neurs and also support small business. If we provide them with tax incentives and other support, we can get businesses to hire more locally right in their own communities—our supermarkets, the grocery



stores, the bodegas. I really want to make sure we are investing in the small “Mom and Pop” shops and merchants that have been really decimated during the pandemic.

I recognize that a lot of our larger employers are Montefiore, the health industry and the District Attorney’s Office. But, what we are now learning is not every Bronx resident wants to physically go back to work in an office setting and I think that is concerning for a number of reasons because people have been used to these two years now of working remotely, of doing a lot of things at home that we didn’t know that we could do before and we now can. So, I think there is a little bit of anxiety and hesitancy on many residents returning back to a work setting that is in an office with people and consumers and clients visiting. I think it is a lot of building that we have to do and a lot of part-

nerships working with the Merchants Association, our BIDs, the Chambers of Commerce, working with the administration to find ways to get Bronxites back to work.

2 **Real Estate In-Depth:** During your campaign, you stated that New York City Housing Authority tenants continue to face mold, rat infestation, leaks, malfunctioning elevators, poor lighting, a lack of security, lead paint and asbestos. You characterized NYCHA as “the worst landlord in New York City.” What must be done to turn around



Gibson: Public housing needs a serious makeover starting from the federal government to the state and local governments. We have to find ways to reinvest. We have to look at instituting



more Section 8 vouchers for residents to live in public housing. But, from a local level, we have to make sure that NYCHA spends the money that we give it. This administration under Mayor (Bill) de Blasio has invested billions of dollars in NYCHA from new boilers, new roofs, elevators, facades, a lot of infrastructure. But, guess what, NYCHA is not spending the money and drawing down on the funds as expeditiously as it could. I think that speaks volumes to the capital process and the procurement process; what is happening from the point of the allocation to the actual groundbreaking. Do we have enough designers and architects? Do we have enough vendors that are actually applying for these RFPS (Request for Proposals) so they can be awarded contracts?

The contracting process needs to be seriously reformed, involving the (City) Comptroller’s Office. So, residents of NYCHA have been far too patient for too long. They are living with rodents, with rats, with mole infestation and it is just disgusting. And there was a time years ago when it was attractive to live in New York City housing. Since then we have seen disinvestment from the federal, state and local governments. In my own capital budget in my eight years on the (City) Council, I have invested my own dollars—\$10 million to be exact—to transform my developments (in her

district) because I know that if I wait for NYCHA things will not get done. I am the one putting the lighting, the LED lights, the playgrounds, the basketball courts and we’re putting in cameras and other security measures. So, we have to do a lot better, but I think that with the new administration, with a new regional administrator that we are getting in Alicka Ampry Samuel, I think we will see a lot of changes happening.

3 **Real Estate In-Depth:** Another key issue you identified in your campaign was the need for more affordable housing in the Bronx and you also said that you would work with partners in the city’s public housing properties?

government to facilitate new construction that prioritizes veterans, seniors, youth aging out of foster care, grandparents raising their grandchildren and LGBTQ Bronx residents. How can you make this happen?

Gibson: I think you make that happen by building a coalition, by working with labor and the (building) trades industry. I am going to formulate a working group with Laborers Local 79 as well as mason tenders, electricians and carpenters because we want to make sure we are having conversations at the beginning of projects before they go through the ULURP process. We want to make sure there are guaranteed jobs, local hiring provisions, MWBE set-asides so that we can have local businesses apply and get access to these job opportunities. We also want to make sure formerly incarcerated men and women are able to get a lot of these jobs as well. We support prevailing wage and union wage and good-paying jobs that provide a real pathway to the middle-class. When we work with the Adams administration, we will be working with (NYC) HPD to look at the existing term sheets to see if there could be areas of improvement, programs like SARA (Senior Affordable Rental Apartments) and ELLA (Extremely Low-and Low-Income Affordability Program) that drive certain types of development. We support extremely low-income housing, but we also support mixed-income housing because we have a lot of two-parent households that are making incomes above minimum wage, but they are not wealthy. They are working class people that need affordable and quality housing.

I also am going to champion ownership opportunities. I want to build more homes because I want people to own property. I don’t think we should envision being tenants the rest of our lives and when you look at initiatives like Community Land Trusts, that is the way to build economic wealth and power in the Bronx. I am going to be championing that with Northwest Bronx, Nos Quedamos, and Banana Kelly and so many organizations that are on the ground that have been building in the Bronx for many, many years and now that we have the opportunities in economic development, I want to make sure that we are getting local jobs and MWBE apprenticeship opportunities and we are really creating the access middle class people will need to affordable housing, good jobs and sustainable living.

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\$48 Million Supportive Housing Development in Bronx Completed

NEW YORK—New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced on Nov. 3 the completion of a \$47.9-million supportive and affordable housing complex in the Claremont Village section of the Bronx that will serve individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, including those with a serious mental illness, veterans with disabilities, and the elderly.

Supported with \$6.5 million through the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program, the Park Avenue Apartments provide 115 units of affordable housing, including 69 units with supportive services funded through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative.

“Too many New Yorkers experiencing homelessness in the city are often facing multiple problems that are contributing to their housing instability,” Gov. Hochul said. “Projects like the Park Avenue Apartments are essential to eliminating homelessness by providing housing and assisting New Yorkers with the supportive services they need, allowing them to live in independent settings.”

The Bridge, which sponsored the project, reserved 23 units for elderly individuals that are frail or disabled, 23 units for veterans with disabilities, and 23 units for adults with mental illnesses. The remaining 45 apartments are reserved for low-income families and seniors from the community.

The development includes a multi-purpose room with a warming kitchen, a laundry room, computer lab, a playroom and outdoor recreational space with access to a community garden and a walking path. The seven-story building was constructed over a vacant lot in the Claremont Village area of the Bronx.

Administered by the state Office of Temporary Assistance, the New York



The 115-unit Park Avenue Apartments was developed on a vacant lot in the Claremont Village section of the Bronx.

State Office of Mental Health is providing \$1.7 million in annual funding for services and rent subsidies for the supportive housing units through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative and an additional \$195,500 in program development grant funding for the 23 apartments serving people living with mental illness.

New York Homes and Community Renewal financed the project with \$6.5 million in tax-exempt bonds, \$7 million through its New York City 100% affordable program, and an allocation of federal low-income housing tax credits that will generate \$17.7 million for the development. The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development also provided \$7.4 million

in financing.

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Executive Deputy Commissioner Barbara C. Guinn said, “Developments like the Park Avenue are central to our efforts to address homelessness in New York State because they provide both stable housing and the services that vulnerable New Yorkers can rely on to address the issues that contribute to their housing insecurity.”

Homes and Community Renewal Commissioner RuthAnne Visnaukas added, “All New Yorkers deserve the dignity and security of a good home. Thanks to The Bridge and the investment of our state and local partners, the Park Avenue Apartments will provide critical services that help individuals age in place safely and break patterns of housing insecurity. With 115 apartments, this is a transformative development for Claremont Village aimed at ensuring that the Bronx remains a place where everyone has the opportunity to live and thrive—especially those servicemen and women who served our country with honor.”

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From left, Donald Arace of Hudson United Mortgage, the RPAC Luncheon Sponsor; Richard Haggerty, HGAR CEO; Crystal Hawkins-Skska, HGAR President; Westchester County Executive George Latimer; Carol Christiansen and Anthony Domathoti, HGAR RPAC Co-Chairs.



The HGAR 2022 Board of Directors



From left, Anthony Domathoti, HGAR President-Elect and winner of HGAR's Spirit Award with Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past HGAR President and Chair of HGAR's Recognition Committee



From left, Marie Tychyn is presented with an award for 30 years of service to HGAR by Richard Haggerty, HGAR CEO



From left, Cheryl Williams, winner of HGAR's Up & Coming Award with Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past HGAR President and Chair of HGAR's Recognition Committee



From left, Vicky [Name partially obscured] an award for 30 years of service from Richard Haggerty



From left, Tony Ruperto, winner of HGAR's Up & Coming Award with Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past HGAR President and Chair of HGAR's Recognition Committee



Dennis Giannetti, keynote speaker



From left, Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past HGAR President and Chair of HGAR's Recognition Committee and John Barrett, winner of HGAR's Excellence in Commercial Real Estate Award



The American Pro...



Allan Block Insurance has been a long-time exhibitor at Members Day.



From left, Felix Tapia accepts the award for HGAR Affiliate of the Year for David Singer of Robison Oil from Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past HGAR President and Chair of HGAR's Recognition Committee



From left, Anthony Domathoti, HGAR President-Elect; Crystal Hawkins-Syska, HGAR President; Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past HGAR President; Tony D'Anzica and Carmen Bauman, HGAR Board of Directors; and Richard Haggerty, HGAR CEO



From left, Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past HGAR President and Chair of HGAR's Recognition Committee and Richard Haggerty, HGAR CEO



Mark's Inspections was among the 50 exhibitors at the Annual Member Appreciation Day.



HGAR Realtors enjoy the Celebration Cocktail Party.



Hotel & Conference Center, Tarrytown, Oct. 25, 2021



HGAR leaders enjoyed the 105th Annual Member Appreciation Day



From left, Mike Cullen, Rich O'Donnell, Laura O'Donnell and Rich O'Donnell Jr., the Premier Sponsors of HGAR's Members Day



Gonzalez is presented with 25 years of service to HGAR by Gail Fattizzi, HGAR CEO



From left, Maryann Tercasio, President of the HG Realtor Foundation and winner of the HGAR Stephanie Crispinelli Humanitarian Award with Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past President and Chair of the HGAR Recognition Committee



From left, Jana Currier was presented with the President's Award from HGAR President Crystal Hawkins-Syska



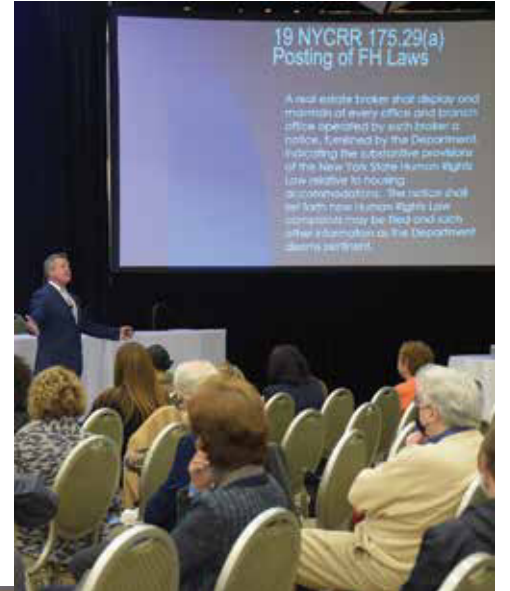
From left, Brian Phillips and Bonnie Koff



The American Promise, the HGAR theme of 2021



From left, David Moore, Jennifer Studwell and Donald Arace of Hudson United Mortgage, Sponsor of the RPAC Luncheon



Brian Levine, HGAR Director of Legal Services, presented an Ethics Class at HGAR's Members Day.



Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past Chair of the HGAR Recognition Committee presented the Stephanie Crispinelli Award to Carmen Bauman, winner of the Stephanie Crispinelli Award



Irene Amato of A.S.A.P. Mortgage Inc., the Cocktail Party Sponsor of HGAR's Members Day



Geico Westchester welcomed its Gecko spokesperson at their exhibitor table



From left, Ron Garafalo is presented with the HGAR Realtor of the Year Award from Gail Fattizzi, Immediate Past President and Chair of the HGAR Recognition Committee



Alex Montalenti of Real Grader presented a workshop on Google Marketing at HGAR's Members Day.



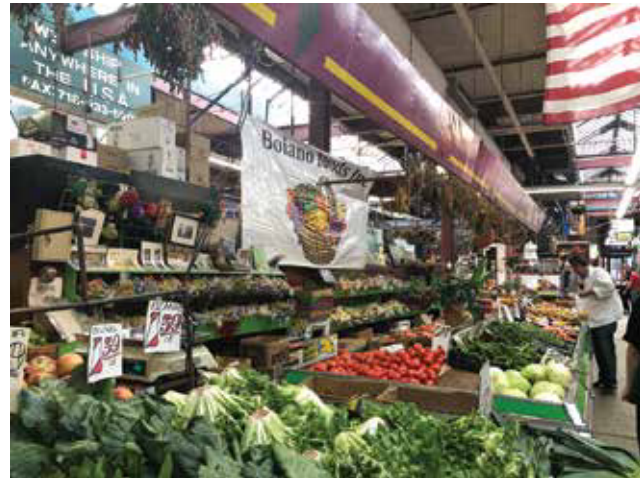
Robison Oil has been a long-time exhibitor at HGAR's Members Day.

Arthur Avenue and Little Italy in the Bronx Offer A Taste of Old-Fashioned Family Traditions

Continued from page 1

delicious authentic ethnic cuisine. Franz noted that the area has about 6,000 residents, including seasonal Fordham University students. "It's a very dynamic community, and part of Fordham Road as well as Third Avenue have been rezoned for retail and housing," he said. Irene Guanill, an agent with Century 21 Dawns Gold Realty in Yonkers, believes the new construction planned for Third Avenue could be mixed-use with retail on the first level and apartments above. "The market rate for rentals is based on the median income of the neighborhood, so rents may go

for about \$1,800 to \$2,000 for a one-bedroom," she said. Home sales in the area are infrequent, she added, since so many people have been living in the area for such a long time. "It's rare when things come on the market—nobody is trying to leave that neighborhood," said Guanill. "It's close to everything—great food, shopping, the New York Botanical Gardens, the Bronx Zoo and St. Barnabas Hospital." When homes do come up for sale, pricing is competitive, with two-family homes often garnering \$700,000 to \$800,000, and single-family homes,



Arthur Avenue Retail Market

can, Chinese, Albanian, Greek and more. The Clinton Hall Beer Garden is also a new neighbor, attracting those who want to try the latest craft beers.

Meanwhile, the Belmont BID is already gearing up for the holidays, kicking things off with the annual Christmas Tree Lighting event at Ciccarone Park later this month. During the weekends in December, singing groups dressed in Victorian garb will be found caroling through the streets, and of

course, Santa is expected to show up as well. "For me, this place has always been home," Franz said. "I was born in the same house that my grandfather built, and I've been deeply rooted in the local community. This area will always have a special place in my heart."

While best known for its Italian cuisine, the area now offers many different ethnic dining choices such as Mexi-



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Report: Many Bronx Multifamily Owners in Holding Pattern as Eviction Moratorium is Extended

NEW YORK—It’s a “tale of two markets” for Bronx rentals.

Sweeping regulations, shutdowns, and economic stimulus have had little effect on slowing the upward rent trajectory for New York City apartments, which once again have the nation’s most expensive rent.

Meanwhile in the Bronx, where asking rents have reached peak levels with a median ask of \$538 per room, this has not yet led to a windfall for owners who still struggle with collections and increasing costs. Apartments are being warehoused at 2020 levels with availability at 28% of March 2019.

That’s the trend according to the “Bronx Neighborhood Apartment Rent Survey & Analysis” released by RM Friedland. The Special Report highlights pricing and availability trends across the multifamily sector in the Bronx Borough. The report explores the complex relationship between the eviction moratorium, and basic rules of supply and demand in the multifamily sector.

According to Marco Lala, Senior Broker and Team Leader at RM Friedland, “Within months, there was a 30%-50% decrease in values of rent stabilized properties. Reports, studies and interviews all showed the value destruction. Low interest rates and families that are entrenched in the business are what’s keeping most of the market alive right now,” he said.

Lala added, “The eviction moratorium will end but not without ‘residual’ guidelines and policies that will continue the collection battle. For example, right now, a condition of getting ‘relief’ is that you can’t evict the tenant for a certain period of time. That is a backdoor way to extend the moratorium!”

Michelle Lala sees owners and inves-

tors remaining uncertain yet optimistic. “The uncertainty of these past few years has led landlords to question their every move, which is completely understandable considering the circumstances. It might be hard to believe but some landlords do remain optimistic,” she said.

She also noted that the silver lining is found in the faith people have in New York City. “Multi-generational real estate families have seen New York go through many of its downs but they have also seen it come back again. Between New York’s resilience and the fact that a new administration is coming into office, it is actually possible for some to remain optimistic in their decision to be a New York landlord,” she said.

Jack Lala says owners are doing their best to adapt. “It looks like the rents are stabilizing and may possibly dip a bit with the insecurity of employment for tenants. I’ve also seen expenses and building material prices spiking within the last six to 12 months. This inflation combined with recent legislation is making it nearly impossible for landlords to keep up with the maintenance of their properties. The owners I’m speaking to seem to have a better grasp on how to manage the situation as opposed to last year. They are rolling with the punches, bidding time and waiting on the sidelines for the next political cycle,” he said.

Marco Lala continued, “Some investors speculate that one day this will all get better. I’ve heard three-to-seven-year timelines. As long as there is cheap money out there and the city continues to show small sparks of life, people will fill in the vacancies. I just returned from a trip to Florida, where cap rates remain anemic. This keeps many ROI hungry investors looking locally for opportunities



Multifamily building at 2414-20 Westchester Ave. in the Bronx.

that may have been overlooked.”

According to the RM Friedland Special Report, the Median Ask Per Room in September was \$538, up from \$499 in March 2019. The Median Ask Per Apartment in September was \$2,050, up from \$1,850 in March 2019, but down from a peak of \$2,100 in July 2020. The availability of apartments for rent in the Bronx has plunged in recent years from 2,810 units in March 2019 to 775 units in September 2021.

“Despite many financial and regu-

latory challenges, we are still seeing a bullish outlook from investors as they take advantage of ‘cheap’ money through refinancing and acquisition loans. In the short run, looks like pricing will be strong as inventory is lacking. Strap yourself in for 2022,” said Marco Lala.

For a complete copy of the RM Friedland Bronx Neighborhood Apartment Rent Survey & Analysis, contact Team Lala at 914-968-8500 or e-mail info@rmfriedland.com

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5 Questions

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Real Estate In-Depth:

During the campaign you said improving the Bronx's low vaccination rate would be a top priority. According to city data, 69% of all Bronx residents have received at least one shot of the COVID vaccine, the second lowest rate of all five boroughs, and below the citywide average of 74%. What can be done to get more Bronx residents to take the shot?

Gibson: A lot of education and outreach and honesty, I need medical professionals of color to come into communities of color and talk to the residents. Many in the communities that I serve today, immigrant communities of color, there is a deep-rooted history around vaccinations and so many people of color are worried about side effects, they have underlying health conditions and they just don't trust and believe in science. I support vaccines, I support mandates, I support any effort to keep people safe and healthy and I have lost too many people. The Bronx has the highest death rate due to COVID due to underlying health conditions like asthma, heart disease, obesity and diabetes to name a few.

So, what do we need. We need community-based health centers and we need a real community-oriented approach with cultural diversity and sensitivity, language access and we need to be able to have affordable, convenient locations in the Bronx where we can meet people where they are. The number one issue of why people are not getting vaccinated revolves around transportation—they can't get to and from locations. So, we have to make it easy and affordable and meet people where

they are in their own communities.

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Real Estate In-Depth:

There had been a significant amount of residential and commercial investment in the Bronx prior to the pandemic. Are investors returning to the Bronx and are there any specific projects of note you would like to point out that are either under construction or in the pipeline?

Gibson: Absolutely, there are a lot of capital projects that are now re-starting as a result of the pause during the pandemic. I am working on the Bronx Children's Museum, the Universal Hip-Hop Museum. We have \$100 million invested to transform Orchard Beach, specifically the Pavilion, we are expanding Metro North with four stations in Co-Op City, Morris Park (Hunts Point, Parkchester and Van Nest) in the East Bronx. We are also looking at a lot of development in the South Bronx; the old Spofford (former Juvenile Detention facility); La Central on Westchester Ave. and 149th St. We are opening community centers in the Northeast and South Bronx. There is a lot of economic development and jobs and a lot of opportunity. Unfortunately, a lot of construction and noise, but it is temporary pain for our long-term benefit. And I will be making sure that I am overseeing all of these projects as Borough President and working with the developers. I have a groundbreaking on Thursday (Nov. 17) on River Ave. for a development with more than 600 units of affordable housing by Mack Equities.

There is a lot happening and I am excited and I also look forward to expanding on that in other neighborhoods that don't necessarily have a lot of affordable and moderate-income housing.

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