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NY REAL ESTATE RESIDENTIAL

Putting the Pieces Together in Inwood

With the Opening of the Area's First Starbucks, Inwood Looks a Little More Like the Rest of Manhattan



DISTRICT 12, a beer garden and lounge that opened last summer. *MARKA ADKINS/QUIP FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **LANA BORTOLOTT**

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Known for its plenitude of parks, the far north neighborhood of Inwood just came a little closer to looking like the rest of Manhattan with the opening of the area's first [Starbucks](#). The ubiquitous coffee-shop chain opened at 4761 Broadway on the corner of Dyckman Street on Dec. 26.

But just a block north, another development is under way that is unlike any other in Manhattan. The Stack, the city's first multistory modular apartment building, is anticipated to come on the rental market this month. The seven-story building was prefabricated in a Pennsylvania factory, shipped to Inwood in 56 modules, and was assembled on-site in the 50-by-150-foot lot at 4857 Broadway.

"We wanted to try out a modular approach and see if we could reap benefits from that, not only in providing a well-structured building, but one that would be conscious of good design," said Jeffrey Brown, who developed the Stack with design firm Gluck+. "We wanted to provide spaces that aren't really available to people in this neighborhood."



The high ceilings, modern finishes and family-friendly layouts of the apartments in the modular building have won points for design functionality and cost-efficiency. Mr. Brown estimated construction savings of up to 20% compared with traditional methods—savings he can pass on in rental rates. The building includes six affordable-housing units and 22 market-rate apartments, with rents estimated from the mid-\$1,800s for studios to the high \$3,000s for the three-bedrooms units.

“People who are interested in new development will seek it out because those kind of price points don’t go very far when you’re farther south in Manhattan,” said Clifford Finn, the Douglas Elliman agent who is marketing the building. And, although highly designed, Mr. Finn said not to expect high-end luxury.

“Boutique buildings of this size [are] typically not about the amenities, they’re about the personality of the building,” he said.

The modish building is nearing completion across the street from P.S. 176 in a stretch of storefronts and low-scale apartment buildings. But it is at the beginning of a corridor ready for a makeover. Next door, nearly half of the storefronts in the block-long Hawthorne Gardens retail promenade are vacant, but in transition. Leases have been signed for a fitness studio and Go Greenly, a frozen-yogurt chain in Westchester and Connecticut opening its first Manhattan shop.

Elliott Dweck of Besen Retail, which represents the Hawthorne spaces, said that “retailers want to be there” and anticipates completing leases for the remaining stores in the first quarter. He notes Inwood’s small scale will keep the neighborhood real.

“People want services and more of a community where they come from their buildings and have lunch, get their nails done or buy their insurance,” he said.

To that point, Nick Lidakis and his wife, Nichole, opened Darling Coffee in 2012, sandwiched between two popular eateries—the Inwood Local and the Garden Café. They thought it was a good place to raise kids and do business in a neighborhood where the competition wasn’t fierce.

“We knew there was a huge vacuum...and we knew there were potential customers,” Mr. Lidakis said. “My gut feeling from what I saw is that this is going to be one of the next neighborhoods. I don’t know if it is going to be another Brooklyn, but I see a lot of hipsters around here.”

Sidney Whelan, a real-estate agent with CORE, lived in Inwood for six years in the mid-'90s. While it always attracted musicians, artists and entrepreneurs, he said it took awhile for the neighborhood to come on the map.

"There were very few agents from the big firms working up there, but now there's a lot more interest," he said. Mr. Whelan routinely takes clients on the rounds if they're looking for more space or want to live in Manhattan but need quick access out of the city.

"A lot of times you're dealing with two people in a household with split communities—New Jersey and Westchester. Not everyone I've sold to works in Manhattan," he said.

Aside from the established parks, expanded access to waterfront recreation is in the works for Inwood. Last week, the city parks department cut the ribbon on the first phase of a \$30.4 million restoration of Fort Washington Park, on the southern edge of Inwood. Two more related parks projects farther north are under way. On the east side of Dyckman, the Sherman Creek Waterfront Esplanade, which will open access to the inlet, is about 20% complete, anticipated to open in the fall.

But the bucolic is counterbalanced by the boisterous as the Dyckman Street corridor—what one resident calls "Alcohol Alley"—becomes a destination for late-night clubbing. The recently refurbished La Marina, a popular nightclub, sprawls over 75,000 square feet of Hudson River waterfront, drawing crowds from the tristate area. Nearby on Broadway, the 300-seat District 12 beer garden and lounge opened last summer.

"Dyckman is getting more and more vibrant, but it's a mixed bag: We just worry that we're losing the basic needs of living in a neighborhood and getting too many restaurants and bars," said the resident, James Carroll, a 25-year local. "It's packed, it is a street scene and it was never meant to be. This was a bedroom community."

Angelina Ramirez, director of the Washington Heights Business Improvement District, which serves Inwood, said she has been studying trying to establish an improvement district for Dyckman and points north for over a year.

"We do recognize there's been a huge renaissance on Dyckman and overall," she said. "The turnaround has happened quite quickly and there are always growing pains."

Corrections & Amplifications

A photograph of Broadway and West 207th Street was incorrectly identified as West 205th Street in an earlier version of this article.