



# Hot or not?

It's a citywide pastime to try to predict the next big neighborhood (we're guilty too), but what's up with those areas now? By **Jaime Jordan**

## SUNSET PARK

**Pros**

"It's the highest point in Brooklyn, so you have fresh air from the bay, and the area is so green and residential," says Katherine Chec, who has lived here for almost 17 years. The area is also home to Brooklyn's Chinatown, which overtakes Eighth Avenue with its raucous pace and exotic produce. Says Chec, "Sunset Park is sort of a forgotten gem."

**Cons**

"[There are] not enough service spots, like hair salons and things," Chec says. Resident Ryan Quinn adds that city projects seem to drag on much longer than in other parts of town. "They've been doing work on the same ten blocks of Fifth Avenue for well over a year," he says.

**Chance it will really be the next hot nabe**



In spring of 2008, we highlighted this area's cheap rent, and New Yorkers caught on. "Prices have gone up at least 15 percent [since last year]," says Luke Constantino, a broker for RE/MAX at the Slope. "But I'm seeing more and more interest in the area due to high prices in Park Slope. So young professionals are buying and renting close to the border of Sunset Park."

**Recent listings**

A three-bedroom with a terrace and eat-in kitchen rents for \$1,750 a month; a two-bedroom in a four-family house three blocks from the D train is going for \$1,625; and a one-bedroom with hardwood floors is \$1,175.

## BUSHWICK

Since it's right near the North Brooklyn Industrial Business Zone, this ripe-for-development neighborhood is one place in NYC where you can actually find parking; plus, it's only 15 minutes from Union Square. "The pros? Latin music, block parties and all-night bodegas with ripe plantains," says resident Joey Drescher, who has lived in the area for three years.

Bushwick is still a bit rough in places, and not everyone appreciates the travel options. "The L train is shitty—it comes on a 15-to-20-minute basis," says resident Darren Kapahi. Aside from bodegas, there's not much shopping in the area yet.



In recent years, optimists were touting Bushwick as the next Williamsburg (us included), complete with displaced arty types. But the recession has slowed area development and renters don't need to brace for higher rents or lock into two-year leases just yet.

We found prices widely scattered: A two-bedroom, two-bath located three blocks from the L is going for \$1,550 a month; another two-bedroom by the Halsey Street stop is \$1,200; while a two-plus-bedroom with exposed brick and new appliances is \$1,650.

## LONG BEACH, L.I.

"I like getting off the train and walking home on the boardwalk overlooking the ocean and the sunset," says Lisanne Franchi, who moved from Brooklyn a few months ago to be near the shore. The nightlife is also a draw: Beech Street is strung with laid-back bars and restaurants that teem with young professionals on the weekends. And there's no shortage of brunch options.

Parking is tough all over, and commuting is pricey: A monthly LIRR pass will cost you about \$200. "They've made arrangements for more parking," says Maria Aramanda, owner of Gull Realty. "The area could use some more shops and stores on the boardwalk, but that will come."



"The demographics are getting younger, and the boardwalk is loaded with apartments, condos and co-ops," says Anthony Dalto, who writes the local blog *Sea by the City* ([seabythecity.com](http://seabythecity.com)). Aramanda agrees: "In the West End there are a lot of young people moving in, a lot of first-time buyers, mostly between 25 and 35." But let's not forget: This is still the suburbs.

A two-bedroom one block from the beach is going for \$1,500 a month; a one-bedroom within walking distance of the beach and the LIRR is \$1,450; and a four-bedroom with patio and garage parking spot costs \$2,600.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JERRY BOGOMAN

## SOUTH BRONX

## JACKSON HEIGHTS

## INWOOD

### Pros

SoBro, as it's annoyingly called, has relatively easy access to upper Manhattan, along with the appeal of an undiscovered enclave. "I really feel like a pioneer," says artist Alex Lipowski, who has lived here for less than a year. Little islands of development are sprouting around the Clock Tower building, like Alexander's Café, which serves ostrich burgers and kobe beef. Nevertheless, the arrival of hipness is slow.

Blah blah blah diversity, blah blah blah great food, and of course, larger digs for lower rents. "There are lots of beautiful apartments, some as big as three- or four-bedrooms with fireplaces," says Vladimir Simkhovich, a longtime resident and broker with Jackson Heights Properties Real Estate. "For me," says Ciara McLaughlin, who grew up in Jackson Heights and then moved back to the area after college, "it has the right combination of convenience, affordability and an evolving mix of ethnicities to keep it interesting."

It's cheap, and it's cheerful (hello, beautiful park!). "Inwood does seem to attract a younger crowd—it's most likely a combination of affordability and space," says Cole Thompson, a real-estate agent for New Heights Realty and the publisher of My Inwood ([myinwood.net](http://myinwood.net)), a website that chronicles the area where he has lived for almost a decade. "Even the studio apartments here feel enormous compared to their downtown counterparts."

### Cons

"The South Bronx doesn't have access to quality retail," says Mario Bodden, a vice president at the South Bronx Economic Development Corporation. "Good luck finding a bookstore or a decent food market." And then there's the image problem. "It has a bad reputation," Lipowski says.

"The nightlife, unless you're a gay Latino male, is sorely lacking," McLaughlin complains. And other than Travers Park, there isn't a ton of green space, so you'll have to travel for a walk in the park—or for a visit to your friends in old It neighborhoods.

"You're not going to find a lot of nightlife up here," says Thompson. "And it's a lot of time on the subway." The area has basic supermarkets (of the C-Town variety), but if you live on dried rambutan or spelt flakes, you'll likely be making regular trips to Riverdale or Harlem for your groceries.

### Chance it will really be the next hot nabe



Despite predictions that this was also going to be the next Williamsburg, the neighborhood has a ways to go. But rezoning for the new Grand Concourse project could kick-start more development; it just might take a while.



"For a while people have been saying that Jackson Heights is the next up-and-coming 'hood," says McLaughlin. "I have yet to see that fully realized." Simkhovich, however, notes that 85 percent of his customers are young, professional couples from Manhattan. "Now, you see people jogging, more strollers on the street," he says. "We have a Starbucks, which is a big change for us."



In *TONY's* 2008 Apartments issue, Curbed founder Lockhart Steele predicted that the area was "primed for a breakout." But things have changed, he says, and any possible surge here has been tempered by the current economic situation. "In 2009, the idea of the next hot neighborhood is almost anachronistic," he says. "In a down economy, people don't have to push quite as far to the edge to find something reasonable. You don't have to be a pioneer." The upshot: People will probably look downtown first.

### Recent listings

We saw an ad for an 850-square-foot "true artist loft" with laundry on every floor, near the 6 train, listed for \$1,425; a two-bedroom "new artist haven" in "an early Williamsburg" for \$1,695; and a four-bedroom third-floor walk-up in a brick home for \$1,600.

As of press time, you can get a two-bedroom in a gut-renovated building with access to a yard for \$1,600 a month. A newly renovated one-bedroom is listed for \$1,100, and a three-bedroom for \$1,750.

A one-bedroom in an elevator building with eat-in kitchen and laundry is priced at \$1,400 a month; we saw a one-bedroom walk-up for \$950, and a two-bedroom located a block from Inwood Hill Park and the A train for \$1,695.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JERRY GOODMAN