



In search of a larger apartment with character at an affordable price, Christina Poletto and son Theodore recently moved to Sunset Park.
Annie Wermiel

REAL ESTATE

This Brooklyn neighborhood is cool — and still affordable

By [Adam Bonislawski](#)

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Nikki Grossman had her eye on Sunset Park for some time.

Formerly a resident of the Lower East Side, Grossman moved to area rental building The Hamilton in June. She says she was drawn to the 98-unit development, which opened two years ago at 968 60th St., by its amenities (which include a fitness center, landscaped roof deck and screening room) and reasonable rents (studios from \$2,200, one-bedrooms from \$2,350).

Though less hyped than other, more celebrated Brooklyn nabes, Sunset Park's affordable prices and low-key vibe have been luring residents from other city spots and even other counties in the state. Take Christina Poletto, 42, and her 5-year-old son Theodore, who recently relocated to the neighborhood from Rockland County.

For Grossman, who grew up in nearby Gravesend, it was also a repatriation of sorts.

"I had been living in Manhattan just for proximity to work, but I had been wanting to come home," says Grossman, 40, a nurse at New York University's main hospital. "When I learned about [The Hamilton] and all its amenities, I was very interested."



Nikki Grossman moved into The Hamilton, one of the few Sunset Park buildings to boast amenities like a gym and a screening room.

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Little wonder — despite a wave of commercial development and a steadily rising profile, newly built, amenity-rich apartment buildings are still a rarity in Sunset Park. That could be changing, though, as a number of new residential projects are poised to transform the south Brooklyn neighborhood in coming years.

One of the largest is Raymond Chan Architects' proposed mixed-use development at 6208 Eighth Ave. In the works since 2014, the project has undergone significant revisions in response to community feedback. According to Chan, the most recent version of the complex has been adjusted to include more outdoor space and shrink the height from 17 to 12 stories.



Slated to start construction in 2023, 6208 Eighth Ave. will include 250 apartments.
Raymond Chan Architect P.C.

Slated to begin construction in 2023, the development will consist of 250 residential units along with a school, a library, medical offices, retail, an 11-story hotel and a 1,900-plus-space parking garage spread across three buildings. The Department of City Planning held a hearing to glean feedback on the project last month and the period open to public comment closed on Sept. 17.

Chan says he envisions the complex serving the area's thriving Chinese community, in particular.

"Sunset Park has become a major hub for a lot of Chinese" New Yorkers, he says, adding the neighborhood doesn't have sufficient parking or public space to serve this growing population.

"Hopefully this [project] will help address that situation," says Chan.

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A major new development has also been proposed for 6205 Eighth Ave., just across the street. In August, real estate website New York YIMBY published renderings of a multi-use three-building project from developer New Empire Corp. by DXA Studio for the two blocks between Eighth Avenue and Fort Hamilton Parkway between 61st and 62nd streets. The land is owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which in December 2017 put out a request for proposals for a mixed-use development on the site. New Empire and DXA did not respond to requests for comment.

Somewhat smaller, but closer to fruition, is a joint project by the Brooklyn Public Library and Fifth Avenue Committee to build a new, expanded Sunset Park branch at 5108 Fourth Ave. that includes 49 affordable rental units.

Construction on the project is slated to begin shortly, says Christine Hunter, a principal at Magnusson Architecture and Planning, which designed the building's residential component.

The development "represented an opportunity to enlarge the library and at the same time provide affordable housing," Hunter says. "It's a creative mixed-use approach to two things the neighborhood needs."

And, she adds, given the pressures in Sunset Park and across the city for new housing, "we anticipate this will probably be just the first of what is to come."

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A 25-unit condo development, 4907 Fourth Ave., launched sales this summer with one-bedrooms from \$480,000. It's repped by Sunset Park native Daniel Chen of the brokerage KeyWorthy.

That said, most activity in the area remains focused on its stock of townhomes, where buyers priced out of ritzier spots like Park Slope are seeking bargains, says Andrew Barrocas, CEO of brokerage MNS Real Estate.

Prices are on the rise, though, adds Drew Fabrikant, CEO of real estate analytics firm Scout. Over the last six years, the average price per square foot in the neighborhood has more than doubled from \$311 to \$634. Average closing price in that time has gone from \$554,000 to \$1.1 million.

That average closing price is equivalent to more established Brooklyn neighborhoods like Prospect Heights, which also posted an average closing price of \$1.1 million, Fabrikant notes. However, Prospect Heights is twice as expensive on a price-per-square-foot basis (\$1,238), which is a result of the larger sizes of the properties available in Sunset Park.

Driving this rise are recent arrivals from more established Brooklyn neighborhoods, says Frank Cullen of Parkview Terrace Realty.

"People who, say, own a condo in Brooklyn Heights and want to buy a townhome," he says. "They're coming in, exposing the brick, bringing up the ceilings, repairing the fireplaces — all the things people have been doing in the other brownstone neighborhoods."

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VHT Studios - <http://www.VHT.com>

Sunset Park brownstones in good condition can run in the \$1.4 million to \$1.7 million range, with prices slightly higher in blocks near its namesake park, Cullen says. A four-bedroom, two-bathroom townhouse with prewar details at 451 37th St. is asking \$1.59 million with Michele Silverman of Corcoran.

He adds that he has also seen an uptick in inquiries from people living along the L train who are looking to flee before the line's shutdown.

And while large-scale residential development has lagged in Sunset Park, the area has seen a commercial boom in recent years, kicked off by Belvedere Capital and Jamestown's 2013 redevelopment of Industry City, the 6.5 million-square foot commercial complex along the neighborhood's waterfront at 274 36th St. In addition to commercial tenants like Brooklyn Sports & Entertainment (parent company of the Brooklyn Nets, which has built a practice facility at the complex), the development features dining spots like Burger Joint and Filament and retailers including ABC Carpet & Home and Design Within Reach.

Also eye-catching, a seven-story mural by artist Camille Walala that covers the façade of one of the complex's buildings.

Last year, Industry City's developers applied for a rezoning that would add another 1.3 million square feet to the site while expanding its retail offerings and adding a pair of hotels.

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Madison Realty Capital

Others have followed. For instance, Madison Realty Capital purchased a former warehouse at 14 53rd St. for \$82.5 million in 2015 and converted it to a 500,000-square-foot commercial property called the Whale Building. Tenants include recreational facility Soccerroof and event production business Satis&fy. The firm also owns Sunset Yards, a 200,000-square-foot

office building under construction at 341 39th St. near the waterfront. Space will be available for occupancy by the end of the year.

Ultimately, this commercial boom will likely translate to a residential one, predicts Barrocas: "I anticipate more work, more jobs being created in the area, and that job creation is really the number one driver of residential growth in an area."

Those working outside the neighborhood can catch the N and R trains along Fourth Avenue. "You can jump on the [express] at 59th Street [and Fourth Avenue] and you're in Midtown Manhattan in five stops, which is pretty awesome," Grossman says.

NYC Ferry opened a stop last year at the Brooklyn Army Terminal at 58th Street. The boat carries passengers from Sunset Park to Wall Street in a roughly 30-minute trip that stops at Red Hook, Atlantic Avenue and Dumbo along the way.

But while Sunset Park has the look of an area on the cusp, it's in some ways still a sleepy Brooklyn hamlet.

Poletto and her son moved from upstate to what Poletto says is "a super-spacious two-bedroom" in a prewar multifamily building on Ninth Avenue and 46th Street.

A writer and home stylist, Poletto lived in Brooklyn for years before taking a four-year sojourn upstate to live with family. Her work and a longing for "the energy of urban life," drew her back to the city, she says. Upon returning to Brooklyn, she looked first in Kensington, Flatbush and Ditmas Park, but ultimately settled on Sunset Park, drawn by the spaciousness and character of her apartment as well as the area's proximity to spots like Sunset and Prospect parks, Industry City and Theodore's school in Red Hook.

The neighborhood isn't without its downsides (Poletto cites the lack of a good grocery store nearby and a 24-hour pharmacy as two main gripes), but it comes with perks like cultural diversity and "a truly real distinct feel and vibe" that Poletto says she feels have disappeared from many other New York neighborhoods.

"In some ways, this area feels a little bit stuck in the past," she says. "But I think that's something to embrace and celebrate."

