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## **Moving This Summer? Consider a Hard Hat**

*Almost 40 percent of listings in New York City are about a block from active construction, and those odds jump in some parts of Brooklyn and Queens.*



*Stefano Ukmar for The New York Times*

Looking to move in New York City? Meet your new neighbors: the demolition crew.

Almost 40 percent of listings for sale or rent in New York are less than 525 feet — or roughly one or two city blocks — away from new residential construction, according to an analysis of June listings by Localize.city, a listing platform and neighborhood data website.

For those considering an apartment in a new building, the odds are even greater: Nearly 70 percent of listings for homes built after 2016 are within that distance.

“The data puts in stark relief that if you’re moving in the coming months, your odds are fairly high that a construction site will be within about a block,” said Nir Gonen, a data scientist with Localize.city.

Pile drivers seem about as common as pigeons in New York these days, but the new wave of construction is shifting away from Manhattan, into once-overlooked neighborhoods in

Brooklyn and Queens, where developers have been lured by lower land costs and potentially higher profit margins.

The construction could mean teeth-chattering noise, dust, the loss of light and views, less street parking and other nuisances, few of which neighbors have the right to challenge. In areas once passed over for speculative development, the rush of building could hasten the departure of longtime residents, who may find it difficult to afford the rising cost of living and higher taxes. The problem, critics say, is not new development, but the lack of affordable housing in the mix.

And for newcomers, another realization is dawning: Nothing stays new for long.

Localize.city looked at more than 31,000 listings for sale or rent in the city in June, in all of the boroughs except Staten Island, for which there was not sufficient data. Using permit records, the company calculated the distance of buildings from ground-up residential construction; permits for renovations and conversions were not included.

The analysis took into account construction within a radius of 525 feet, about one-tenth of a mile — a conservative distance at which building activity is noticeable. (New York City blocks vary in length, from less than 300 feet on short streets to more than 900 feet on avenues.) Neighborhoods where there were relatively few listings were not included.

Seven of the top 10 neighborhoods with the highest share of listings near new construction were in Brooklyn; two were in Queens, and only one was in Manhattan.

At the closest distance measured, about 160 feet, East Williamsburg in Brooklyn had the highest share of listings, at 34 percent. It was followed by Bedford-Stuyvesant (27 percent) and Hudson Yards in Manhattan (26 percent). The Bronx, which is also undergoing a building boom, did not make the list, perhaps because a sizable share of apartments there are not on major listing portals.

### Proximity of New Construction To Home Listings

BOROUGH	NEIGHBORHOOD	WITHIN 160 FT.	WITHIN 525 FT.
Brooklyn	East Williamsburg	34%	76
Brooklyn	Bedford- Stuyvesant	27	79
Manhattan	Hudson Yards	26	98
Brooklyn	Greenpoint	23	78
Brooklyn	Prospect- Lefferts Gardens	21	61
Brooklyn	Bushwick	20	85
Queens	Long Island City	19	70
Queens	Astoria	17	62
Brooklyn	East Flatbush	17	51
Brooklyn	Williamsburg	16	80
<b>CITYWIDE</b> (excluding Staten Island)		<b>7</b>	<b>39</b>

Source: Localize.city - By The New York Times

In an already soft sales market, the sight of so much new construction could be another obstacle for New Yorkers trying to sell their homes. In Greenpoint, Brooklyn, where 78 percent of all listings are within 525 feet of new construction, house hunters will take notice, said Win Brown, an agent with CORE Real Estate.

“Whenever anybody comes to the open house, they look straight out the window and see a brand-new six-story building,” he said of a two-bedroom apartment he is selling there for \$1.2 million for his client, Alyce Chan. “And next to that is a 150-foot open lot that’s clearly being built.” Beyond that, a 40-story mixed-use residential project is being developed.

“It’s a huge concern,” he added, because buyers can envision all that the construction might entail: the noise, the changing view, the congestion in the streets. In this case, parking can be bought with the unit, but often new residents have to rely on dwindling street parking, he said.

New construction is even more prevalent in areas with other recent development, which can make resales in those earlier buildings more difficult, said Ben Jacobs, another agent with CORE.

The depth of choices for buyers means resales in buildings that might be just a few years old often sit on the market longer, he said: “Down the block, there are three or four new buildings that will probably be more expensive and have better amenities than you have.”



*Alyce Chan, on the rooftop of her Greenpoint, Brooklyn, apartment building, where she bought a two-bedroom unit four years ago, said her growing family couldn't afford to stay in the area because all the new development has driven prices up. Stefano Ukmar for The New York Times*

Ms. Chan, who bought her two-bedroom apartment in Greenpoint four years ago with her husband, said she was sad to sell, because the construction boom brought needed resources to the area: new retail, restaurants and child-care options for their two young children. The building, part of a former pencil factory that was converted to apartments, was completed in 2010. But now they need more space for their children, and finding a three-bedroom in the area, either for sale or for rent, is out of the question.

“We just can’t afford it anymore,” said Ms. Chan, who produces a comedy show called “Bring Your Own Baby” in a neighborhood bookstore. “It’s probably the ‘burbs for us,” she added, noting that they are looking at homes in Westchester County.

Some of the most frenetic building in the city is near transit hubs in western Queens and northern Brooklyn, where rezoning in the early- to mid-2000s allowed developers to build taller, denser residential projects. That was the case in Long Island City, Queens, which is expected to have the most new residential units in the city completed in the near future. But for some who already live in the neighborhood, a largely industrial area with pockets of low-slung homes, the new construction has been jarring and sometimes costly.

“When we purchased our home and laid roots here, we never expected to be within a perpetual construction zone,” said Kenny Greenberg, who bought a two-story prewar townhouse with his wife, Diane Hendry, in Long Island City in 1992.

Mr. Greenberg, who owns a neon lighting shop in the neighborhood, said the adjacent construction has caused serious foundational issues and cracks in their home's facade. After a protracted legal dispute, the developer was ordered to make repairs and pay for some damage, but Mr. Greenberg said that although the condo building under construction was completed around 2009, his repairs have yet to be finished. One reason: Construction has remained so brisk that it has been hard to find a reliable contractor to finish the job.

Moreover, a homeowner cannot prevent a developer next door from accessing the homeowner's property if necessary for construction, said Jeffrey S. Reich, a partner at Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas LLP, a law firm that represents real estate clients.

What owners can do is draft a licensing agreement with the builder requiring payment for any damage done to the property, or charge for the loss of use of some parts of the property. "A tremendous amount of these licensing agreements are being requested," he said, especially in neighborhoods like Williamsburg and Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, where construction is widespread.

More distant neighbors can also be affected by construction activity. "For me, the noise is not so bad, because it's mostly during the daytime," said Frank Wu, the president of the Court Square Civic Association, who owns a two-bedroom condo unit in a 2008 building. "The big quality-of-life issue is the litter."

Mr. Wu said fencing around several of the high-rise towers under construction cuts into pedestrian spaces, reduces parking and attracts garbage. The civic group has a summer block party scheduled for June 23, but he is concerned that barriers around an 18-story luxury rental building under construction nearby will reduce the already limited space for attendees. After being contacted by The New York Times, Patricia Dunphy, a senior vice president with Rockrose, the developer, wrote in an email that the construction fence would be moved for the event.

"We have too many out-of-scale luxury towers," said Ernie Brooks, a member of the Long Island City Coalition, a community advocacy group, and a part-time staff member for Representative Carolyn B. Maloney. Mr. Brooks, who was a member of the rock group the Modern Lovers, has rented in the area for more than 40 years and fears that developers are not building enough truly affordable housing, are overburdening the local infrastructure and are worsening flooding in the area.

The development boom is not confined to major thoroughfares. In parts of north and central Brooklyn, quiet side streets once filled with one- and two-family homes are being transformed by much taller apartment buildings, sometimes in the middle of the block.

"We jokingly refer to those as middle-finger buildings," said Alex Fennell, the network director at Churches United for Fair Housing, an affordable housing advocacy group in Brooklyn.



Unlike Williamsburg, parts of which adopted more permissive zoning in 2005, Bushwick and other neighborhoods in Brooklyn have not been rezoned in decades. While the inaction may have prevented the very tall construction seen along the Brooklyn waterfront, it has also allowed builders to maximize the existing development rights along several residential blocks by razing old homes and building several stories higher. The city proposed new zoning for Bushwick in April, after years of contentious debate, but some critics argue that it doesn't go far enough to protect longtime residents from speculative development.

While Williamsburg had almost 1,800 more units in the works than Bushwick this month, Bushwick tied in terms of total new buildings, with 187 residential projects under construction — the most in the borough — according to Nancy Packes Data Services, a real estate consultancy.

“Our block has really been devastated,” said Judy Spence, a retired occupational therapist, who bought a two-family Victorian-style home in 1973, along a stretch of Lenox Road in East Flatbush where there was once a long row of similar houses. Now she and a neighbor are sandwiched between a six-story condo on one side and a seven-story condo on the other, her grassy front yard and veranda cast partially into shadow.



*This part of Lenox Road in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, once had a continuous row of one- and two-family houses. Now several are sitting empty, in preparation for demolition. Stefano Ukmar for The New York Times*

The neighborhood, where a large group of Caribbean homeowners settled a generation ago, is turning over quickly to developers seeking to buy out retirement-age residents.

“It’s caused a lot of disruption in our community, especially for seniors who are being harassed and told to sell their homes,” said Allyson Martinez, a chair of the land use

committee for Community Board 17 in Brooklyn, which includes East Flatbush. Often one sale will create a domino effect of neighboring property sales, she said.

At one point, there were four active construction sites on Ms. Spence's side of the block, which kicked up dust and debris, triggering her husband's respiratory issues. On a recent visit, four more homes in a row were fenced off and likely awaiting demolition.

To be clear, Ms. Spence isn't against all development: A 13-story senior-housing facility has opened down the block, and she would like to see more affordable options for locals. But the majority of new buildings are too expensive for longtime residents, she said, and developers often identify the apartments as being in Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, the more affluent neighborhood next to East Flatbush.



*Pearl Steele's house in East Flatbush is hemmed in by new construction, and an adjacent home is likely slated for demolition.  
Stefano Ukmar for The New York Times*

As for what's left of the quaint shingle and brick homes that once lined the block, there are still holdouts. Pearl Steele, who lives with her parents, Maximus and Violet Thom, has made it a rule not to take calls from unfamiliar phone numbers, as she might end up on the line with another developer.

Her neighbor on one side has already sold, and a construction fence now blocks part of Ms. Steele's driveway. In spite of that fencing, her family has one of the prettiest gardens in the neighborhood, only partially obstructed from view by signs that warn solicitors not to ring the doorbell.

And if a developer happens to slip by the closed gate or evades Ms. Steele's caller I.D., she has a curt message, she said: "Not for sale — goodbye."



*Ms. Chan's apartment, a two-bedroom in a converted pencil factory, is listed for \$1.2 million. The living room overlooks some of the new construction in the area. May Pearl for CORE*