

If You're Thinking of Living In /Yorktown Heights; Diversity of Housing In a Scenic Setting

By CHERYL PLATZMAN WEINSTOCK OCT. 17, 1999

PATRICIA STAM, who had been a lifelong resident of the Bronx, said she had long dreamed of living in the country with rolling hills and "deer grazing in my backyard."

"But we were limited in what we could pay for what we needed," she said.

She wanted space for her three sons and aging parents, a community that provided activities for children and the elderly, and a "fair commute" for her husband, Joseph, a driver for the United Parcel Service in Manhattan.

In the summer of 1998, she said, "we found just what we wanted and fought like mad to get it."

Three months later the Stams moved into a three-bedroom ranch on half an acre in the northern Westchester hamlet of Yorktown Heights, which accounts for close to half the size and nearly two-thirds of the population of the Town of Yorktown.

"I think paying \$190,000 for our home made it a good value," she said. "We also feel safe and comfortable in this family neighborhood. I hate to gush, but I'm real happy."

Linda G. Cooper, the Town Supervisor, called Yorktown "a folksy area where people can come, kick off their shoes, wander around, sit in a cafe, listen to a concert in the park or go to the theater."

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community -- unlike anything we've seen in the past."

Next month a Super Kmart is scheduled to open in the new 160,000-square-foot Yorktown Green Shopping Center in Yorktown Heights, and Turco's, the specialty grocery, and Starbucks are expected to join the discount outlet soon, Ms. D'Amico said.

The diverse housing stock and the proximity of the hamlet to shopping -- with the 648,000-square-foot Jefferson Valley Mall nearby -- have helped make Yorktown Heights attractive to first-time home buyers, said Pat Held, who is vice president of the Westchester Putnam Multiple Listing Service and an associate broker and sales manager with Houlihan/Lawrence in Yorktown.

"This is one of the few places in the county where you can still find a home in the \$100,000 range in a nice, family community," said Ms. Held. But buyers can sometimes make full-price offers and lose a house anyway, she said.

"We're experiencing a shortage of properties, so sometimes we'll have double and triple offers," she said. "One property recently had 16 offers and sold for \$8,000 over list."

The most affordable homes are the small, 1,200- to 1,600-square-foot 1950's ranches and Cape Cods on a quarter of an acre. These two- to three-bedroom homes sell for \$150,000 to \$189,000, Ms. Held said.

FOR larger ranches, as well as split-levels and raised ranches, with three to four bedrooms, prices range from \$200,000 to \$300,000. Four-bedroom colonials on a half acre in the hamlet range from \$300,000 to \$390,000, she said.

Edward Ferguson, manager of Coldwell Banker in Yorktown Heights, said the hamlet's newer homes -- farmhouse colonials with 3,000 square feet or more built on one- to five-acre lots in Bari Estates, Deer Hollow Estates, Underhill Estates and Hanover Woods -- range from \$400,000 to \$600,000, or even higher in Lakeview Estates. They have four to five bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths and two- or three-car garages. Many of them have intricate rooflines and stonework.

Besides single-family housing, there are 1,288 condominiums in eight complexes in Yorktown Heights, including Jefferson Village, for residents over 50, said William Gregory, Yorktown building inspector.

They range from a two-bedroom, two-bath unit in Scenic View for \$137,000 to a

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There are also 424 rental apartments in four complexes in Yorktown Heights, including the federally subsidized Beaveridge for senior citizens, said Mr. Gregory.

Apartments are at a premium in the hamlet, Ms. Held said. Prices range from \$800 a month for a one-bedroom to \$1,500 for a two-bedroom unit. Condominium units and single-family houses may also be rented, she said, for \$1,500 for a large, two-bedroom apartment to \$2,500 for a four-bedroom home.

Linda Levin has lived in Yorktown Heights for 13 years with her husband, Barry, a salesman, and two sons. They have a four-bedroom Cape Cod with a backyard that is part of an old apple orchard. What pleases her most about the community, she said, is the school district.

"This school district has paid a lot of attention to my boys, especially my younger one, who is learning-disabled," said Ms. Levin, a preschool teaching assistant at the Rosenthal Y.M.-Y.W.H.A. in Pleasantville. "Their staff is caring, friendly and understanding and is always available to parents during the day and even in the evening. This child has really blossomed and grown under their guidance."

ABOUT 75 percent of the children in Yorktown Heights are educated in the Yorktown Central School District. The district, which has six schools and a student population of 3,955, serves Yorktown Heights and Mohegan Lake, as well as segments of Ossining, Mount Kisco, Cortlandt Manor and Peekskill..

There are two schools for kindergarten through second grade, two for the third through fifth grade, the Mildred Strang Middle School for the sixth through the eighth grade, and the Yorktown High School.

Robert Van Zanten, superintendent of the district, said that what makes the district appealing to many is that parents are encouraged to come to the schools and work with the teachers, especially in the elementary school, "to help bridge the gap between school and home."

"There's also something for everyone in the district," said Dr. Van Zanten. "In the elementary schools we provide differentiated instruction. We have collaborative classes where special education teachers share a class with regular teachers." Gifted and talented programs are also available throughout the district.

In the high school students can take courses from computer graphics to

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Last year S.A.T. averages were 530 in verbal and 548 in math, compared with the state averages of 485 in verbal and 502 in math. Of the district's 270 high school graduates last year, 89 percent went on to higher education.

Children who live in the northern tip of the hamlet attend the 6,200-student Lakeland Central School District, which also serves Putnam Valley, and sections of Cortlandt, Somers and Carmel.

The pre-k-8 Roman Catholic St. Patrick's School in Yorktown Heights has an annual tuition ranging from \$1,720 to \$2,210 for parishioners and \$2,070 to \$2,610 for others.

Among the better restaurants in Yorktown Heights is Peter Pratt's Inn, a converted Colonial home in which some parts date back to 1780.

AT the Yorktown Community and Cultural Center, residents and visitors can attend productions in the 550-seat Yorktown Performing Arts Theater or walk through the five major exhibition rooms at the Yorktown Museum. One room is devoted to artifacts of the Putnam Division of the New York Central Railroad, which once ran through the hamlet, said Ms. D'Amico, who is also the office and building manager of the Community Center.

The center also houses the Nutritional Center for Seniors, which offers hot meals, as well as public lectures and physical screenings for the elderly.

The hamlet has more than 1,275 acres of parkland. Residents can hike in the 124-acre Turkey Mountain Nature preserve and swim at the 33-acre Sparkle Lake Park, the 960-acre Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park, or the town's three pools, said Brian Slavin, the Yorktown Superintendent of Parks and Recreation.

There are two golf courses -- the county-owned Mohansic Golf Course, where greens fees are \$17, and the course at the private Sanctuary Country Club. The hamlet also has an in-line roller hockey rink at Sparkle Lake.

The hub of Railroad Station Park, which has a basketball court and playground, is the restored Yorktown Railroad Station, a national landmark.

The first settlers arrived after Stephanus Van Cortlandt purchased 80,000 acres, including what is now the Town of Yorktown, from the Mohegans in 1683, according to Robert Giordano, trustee of the Yorktown Historical Society and chairman of the town's Landmarks Preservation Committee.

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"He came through the town with the French troops that helped win the war," Mr. Giordano said.

In April 1788, the town was incorporated as Yorktown. In 1881, the railroad station was completed, enabling farmers to ship their produce and milk to New York City and forming the hub of the hamlet of Yorktown Heights.

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