

CITY LIVING



+FIND IT

TURTLE BAY is bounded by 43rd Street to the south, 51st Street to the north, Lexington Avenue to the west and the East River to the east.

Turtle Bay unshelled

This elegant enclave is changing rapidly

BY LANA BORTOLOTT

Special to amNewYork

As far as star quality goes, Turtle Bay has had a distinguished run. Katharine Hepburn, Kurt Vonnegut, Walter Cronkite, Stephen Sondheim, Irving Berlin and Efrem Zimbalist are among the many celebrity residents who have enjoyed the neighborhood's quiet charms. But in recent years, Turtle Bay has emerged from its shell to become one of the city's more desired enclaves for young professionals and families — an evolution that's infused and challenged an area faced with fast development.

+DID YOU KNOW?

Turtle Bay most likely derives its name not from a proliferation of turtles, but from the Dutch word *deutal* ("bent blade"), describing the curve of the bay.

"The real story these days is how the neighborhood has changed — it's really a generational shift," says Michael Miscione, Manhattan's borough historian and a longtime Turtle Bay resident. "This had been a mature, sleepy place to live, but a younger element has replaced the older demographic and made it a

lot more active than it used to be."

Newcomers will find a neighborhood with pride of place. Residents lay claim to one of the most sophisticated and diverse communities — due to the nearby United Nations and historic tracts have been kept largely intact, thanks to a history of activism.

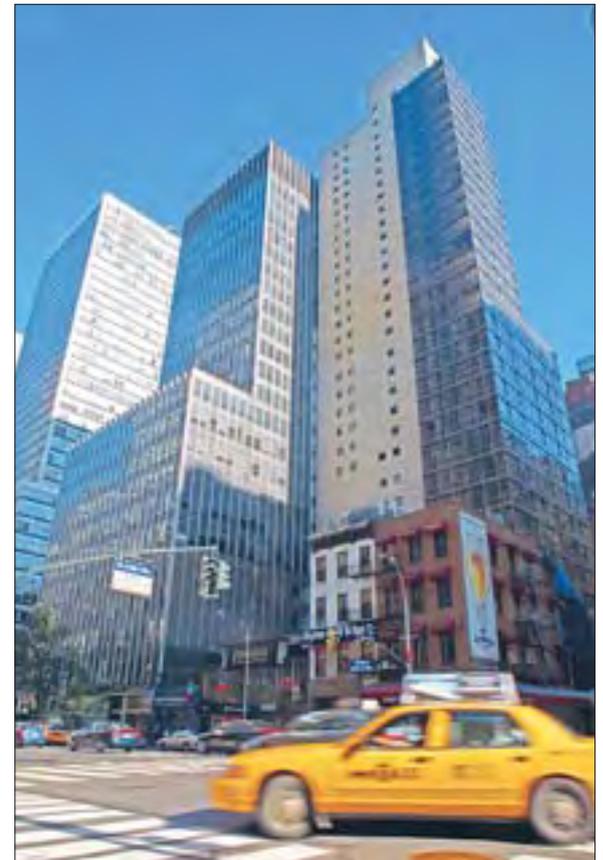
"There's always been some action to keep the balance in Turtle Bay," says Lou Sepersky, a member of Community Board 6, which serves the area. "It's not an anti-development

community, but there is an awareness that there's a line between too much and not enough."

Out-of-scale development is a growing concern, as is the preservation of the local businesses.

"My concern is that more chains are moving in, and there are no new small businesses," says Community Board 6 chairman Lyle Frank.

Turtle Bay native Steve Corvi has owned Turtle Bay Chemist for 27 years and says his business thrives on neighborhood stability. "There are a lot of long-time residents here, people I know on a first-name basis, who depend on our service," he said, adding, "We've been here a long time and there are no plans to change that."



The streets of Turtle Bay can be studies in contrasts: Low-rise buildings quiver under towers. (RJMICKELSON/AMNY)

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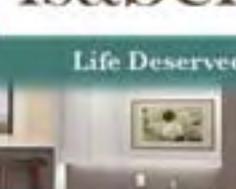
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Q&A

WITH
PAMELA HANLON

Pamela Hanlon is an author and Turtle Bay resident. She is the author of "Manhattan's Turtle Bay: Story of a Midtown Neighborhood."

What attracts people to Turtle Bay?

The convenience of living close to midtown's business district, yet in a neighborhood that retains a special character, with its blocks of old 19th-century brownstones; its proximity to the United Nations and the international quality that brings with it; and its waterfront location on the East River.

What deters people from moving here?

Some may think the

area is too close to the central hub of the city. Yet, once here, many are surprised to find

that Turtle Bay retains a kind of "small town" feel despite being, literally, in the heart of Manhattan.

If I had a few hours to visit your neighborhood, what should I do?

I would start at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, and while there, visit Katharine Hepburn Garden — named for the actress who lived in Turtle Bay most of her life. Then walk along some of the brownstone-lined streets, including 49th Street, where you can visit Amster Yard's lovely courtyard. Also, walk along Beekman Place, a quiet residential enclave that hugs the East River. And perhaps end up at Greenacre Park on 51st Street.

What do you think is on the horizon for the neighborhood?

Many new high-rise apartment buildings are being built along First and Second avenues, bringing new residents to the area — often young families with children. So Turtle Bay is becoming a younger neighborhood than in the past.



Classic french brasserie Montparnasse, popular with neighborhood residents, offers dishes such as coq au vin and steak frites.

(PHOTOS: RJMICKELSONAMNY)

TO EAT

Though the old-guard steakhouses have been firmly planted in Turtle Bay for years, there's plenty of room — and appetite — for a new crop of international cuisines that reflect the neighborhood's diversity.

Ali Baba's Terrace

862 Second Ave., 212-888-8622

The new outpost of the reliable 34th Street restaurant offers traditional Turkish kebabs, grills and stews. Grilled lamb is the specialty — choose from 10 preparations — but chicken and seafood eaters will be well-served here, too. Ideal for sharing: platters of cold and hot mezze, with olive oil as the star.

Montparnasse

230 E. 51st St., 212-758-6633

This classic French brasserie and neighborhood hangout has the atmosphere of downtown bistros without the terminal hip factor. The coq au vin is the must-have dish here, but the steak frites are perfectly turned-out, too.

Oms/b Rice Ball Café

156 E. 45th St., 212-922-9788

This tiny cafe specializing in omusubi — rice balls stuffed with salmon, tuna, shrimp, crab and the like — is the first and only eatery of its kind. The pieces average \$2.50, so you can stuff yourself with samples, even in a down economy.

Pampano

209 E. 49th St., 212-751-4545

Forget nachos and salsa and head here for modern, fresh coastal-Mexican food. The elegant dishes rely on fresh ingredients and side salads such as baby cactus and prickly pear. Order stand-alone ceviche dishes or create your own samplings from the tastings menu.



A colorful setting awaits diners at Mexican restaurant Zarela.



Salmon rubbed with ground red chile and lime is available at Zarela.

Around the corner, at 805 Third Ave., the same kitchen serves tasty tacos from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Smörgås Chef

924 Second Ave., 212-486-1411

If you've ever wondered what the Swedish eat other than meatballs, step inside this three-year-old café and sample some Scandinavian fare. Expect the typical North Sea cod, gravlaks and other salmon dishes, but be surprised by the hearty platters such as grilled rack of lamb and pan-seared duck.

And the meatballs are better than Ikea's.

Zarela

953 Second Ave., 212-644-6740

If you do crave salsa and chips, settle down beneath the Mexican artifacts and paper garlands fluttering from the ceiling with a platter of authentic Mexican regional cooking at this brightly colored cantina. Critics recommend the poblanos rellenos, snapper hash, or slow-cooked Oaxacan lamb — not to mention the power margaritas.

REAL ESTATE

Known for having some of the most expensive housing in the city, Turtle Bay, in recent years, has become more affordable for young professionals and families. But, if you want to live like a millionaire, there are plenty of opportunities to do so here.

To Buy

\$5,999,000

Brand-new four-bedroom, five-bath postwar condo in The Veneto. 2,882 square feet, plus private outdoor area. 250 E. 53rd St. (Jacky Teplitzky, Prudential Douglas Elliman, 212-891-7743).

\$2,125,000

Two-bedroom, two-bath loft-like condo in renovated brownstone cluster. 1,713 square feet, plus private outdoor area. 345 E. 50th St. (Jacky Teplitzky, Prudential Douglas Elliman, 212-891-7743).

\$695,000

Corner one-bedroom co-op in a prewar doorman building. 900-plus-square feet, wood-burning fireplace. 414 E. 52nd St. (New York Private Realty Group, David J. Larijani, 646-502-8975).

For Rent

\$4,700

Two-bedroom, two-bath condo in full-service luxury building. Marble baths, rooftop deck. 236 E. 47th St. (Halstead Property, Antonio Hamimi, 646-526-8228).

\$2,500

600-square-foot, newly renovated junior one-bedroom apartment with designer features in luxury doorman building. 321 E. 48th St. (JH Living, Daniel Kempler, 917-363-8192).



Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza has a garden named for Katharine Hepburn, who lived nearby.



Holy Family Church, on East 47th Street



The Chrysler Building is perhaps the most famous building in the Turtle Bay area.

TO SHOP

National retail brands make up most of the shopping along Second and Third avenues. The most inspired points of purchase are in unlikely places. Seek them out.

United Nations Gift Shops

U.N. Plaza, 41st Street and First Avenue

The basement level of the U.N. houses a number of shops, several of which support good causes across the globe, such as UNICEF. There's a serious bookstore for policy wonks, but also stores with U.N.-branded merchandise, socially conscious gifts and toys, and indigenous crafts from specialty co-ops. You can also create personalized postage stamps (but only for mailing from the U.N.).

Catalyst Books

815 Second Ave., 212-716-6117

Operated by the Episcopal Diocese, the books here focus on spirituality, theology, peace and justice, and women's studies. Gifts

include sacred music, stationery, painted ornaments from Eastern Europe, free-trade crafts and ecumenical items. A cafe will open soon in the adjoining space.

Dailchi Arts

249 E. 48th St., 212-230-1680

Tucked under the trees is this jewel box of a gallery featuring museum-quality Japanese ceramics and sculptures. Open Tuesday-Saturday.

The Health Nuts

837 Second Ave., 212-490-2979

A well-stocked grocery and natural foods store features unusual homeopathic and health-care brands. Freshly prepared hot and cold foods for takeout include soups, sandwiches, wraps and curry-infused stews.

Japan Society Gift Shop

333 E. 47th St., 212-715-1282

This tranquil boutique is an homage to traditional and contemporary design. You can find more than just sake sets here: The



Residential towers rise on Third Avenue.

(PHOTOS BY R.J. MICKELSON/AMNY)

+DID YOU KNOW?

A masterwork in the International Modernist style, The Kaufman Conference Center at the United Nations is the only work in New York City designed by Finnish architect Aalto Alvar.

shop features furniture from the Nakashima workshop, vintage lacquer ware, Oribe pottery, prints and books on Japanese design, cooking and travel.

TO PARTY

You can't go a block in this neighborhood without finding an Irish-themed watering hole, but even in this pub-packed enclave, you'll find friendly places to sidle up to the bar and take in the local color.

Top of the Tower

Three Mitchell Place, 212-224-0920

Sip a cocktail and enjoy the 360-degree view from the top of the landmarked Art Deco Beekman Tower. American favorites

such as duckling and roasted chicken breast rule the rather traditional menu, but if you're really only here for the view and a cocktail, try a thin-crust pizza. Service is available on the outside terrace while the weather holds.

Turtle Bay Bar and Grill

987 Second Ave., 212-223-4224

You can come to this neighborhood mainstay for the contemporary American comfort food – but it's the bar scene that makes you

feel at home. Young professionals, frat boys and "it girls" with a few old-timers nestled in between make up the crowd – without a tourist in sight.

O'Neill's

727 Third Ave., 212-661-3530

Recipient of the James Joyce Pub Award for its authenticity, O'Neill's features better-than-average

THE BUZZ

The Turtle Bay community was devastated earlier this year by a deadly crane collapse on 51st Street and Second Avenue, which renewed concerns about the safety of high-rise construction in the neighborhood. There has been a stop-work order on the site while the developer revises plans. The developer has been meeting with officials and community leaders to address concerns.

The developer "wants to try to get a resolution that gives respect to what the community desires," said Assemb. Jonathan Bing (Democrat), who represents Turtle Bay. "No plans have been filed, nothing is pending approval. He's just talking at the community level."



O'Neill's Pub is known for its authenticity.

bar munchies, a traditional menu and live Irish music on Saturday and Sunday nights. It is ranked high for its neighborhood appeal and friendly staff.

Pig 'n' Whistle on 2nd

951 Second Ave., 212-832-2021

This East Side outpost of the Times Square original has the usual pub dish, Shepherd's Pie (recommended), but also a surprisingly diverse tapas menu, Irish-style. If burger and pig sliders appeal, come eat.

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Dag Hammarskjold Plaza is a popular place to kick back and relax. (PHOTOS: R.J. MICKELSON/AMNY)

TO DO

The United Nations may draw top billing, but Turtle Bay is blessed with cultural organizations that give this neighborhood a rich diversity on a smaller scale.

Kabbalah Centre

155 E. 48th St., 212-644-0025

Sure, it has a celebrity following — Madonna and her now-estranged husband are among the drop-ins — but long before Hollywood made the red string a fashion statement, New Yorkers came here for spiritual guidance, classes and transformative fellowship.

The Japan Society

333 E. 47th St., 212-832-1155

The 101-year-old society presents the culture and arts of Japan through world-class exhibitions, symposia, film screenings, and traditional and cutting-edge performing arts. Indoor gardens transport visitors to the Far East.

Dag Hammarskjold Plaza

Second Avenue and 47th Street
This quiet plaza, an alley



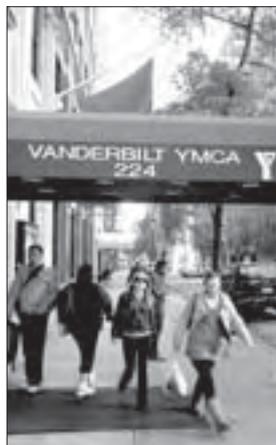
Turtle Bay offers a range of architecture, including towering office and residential buildings along Third Avenue.

of leafy trees on one side, has all the civility of an intimate Parisian park. The Katharine Hepburn Garden winds down one side, occasionally interrupted by gazebos and fountains. On Wednesdays, a farmers market offers a peaceful solution to Union Square. The New York Milkshake Company operates a concession here with seasonal patio seating.

Greenacre Park

East 51st Street between Second and Third avenues

Leafy plantings among the terraced rocks make this vest-pocket park a local treasure. Fans of the much-loved and oft-crowded Paley Park can come here for the same mesmerizing waterfalls and Bertioia chairs, and escape the distractions of urban life for a while. Closed in winter.



The Vanderbilt YMCA offers a wealth of family-oriented activities.

Instituto Cervantes, The Spanish Cultural Center of New York

211 E. 49th St., 212-308-7720

Tucked away in the historic Amster Yard, the institute offers a robust cultural program, including language classes at all levels, films, art exhibitions, gastronomy and wine-tasting seminars.



The Japan Society on East 47th Street attracts visitors with its world-class exhibitions.

ESSENTIAL VISIT

Take a tour of the United Nations. Ignore the throngs of tourists: Standing in the swooping lobby of the U.N., a time capsule of 1950s architecture, still thrills. (Being among polyglots and speaking one language humbles.) Go for the guided weekday tours, conducted every 45 minutes from 9:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., which include artwork and historic rooms such as the General Assembly (limited access on weekends).

41st Street and First Avenue
Tour info: 212-963-8687



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+DID YOU KNOW?

Amster Yard, an oasis on 49th Street between Second and Third avenues, was said to be the terminal stop for the Boston Stage Coach on the Eastern Post Road.

THE FACT SHEET

■ **Subway:** Nos. 4 and 5 to Grand Central; No. 6 at 51st Street; and the E or V at 53rd Street.
■ **Bus:** M101, M102 and M103 on Lexington and Third avenues; M15 on First and Second avenues; M42 on 42nd Street; M27 and M50 on 49th and

50th streets.
■ **Libraries:** Turtle Bay does not have a branch of the New York Public Library, but residents are not far from mid-Manhattan Library, 455 Fifth Ave., 212-340-0863, and the main library at Fifth Avenue and

42nd Street, 917-275-6975.
■ **Community Board:** CB6, 212-319-3750; www.cb6nyc.org
■ **Police:** 17th Precinct, 167 E. 51st St., 212-826-3211
■ **Fire Dept.:** Firehouse Engine 21, 238 E. 40th St.

■ **Crime stats:** For the year to date, the precinct reports one murder, seven rapes, 65 larcenies, 61 felony assaults, 124 burglaries and 659 grand larcenies. Crime is down an overall 2.15 change from the same period in 2007.