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# City lures families back from 'burbs

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The Gurwitz family in their living room. Pictured L to R: Dori; Ethan, 2; Karen; Sophie, 5; Nika, 6. (Dennis W. Ho / October 3, 2007)

By Lana Bortolot | Special to amNewYork  
October 4, 2007

One headline reads "City Drain Continues." Another proclaims "Cities Are Hot Again."

Like other fashions falling under the urban microscope -- hemlines, celebrity chefs and Jack Russell terriers -- the popularity of cities rises and falls. Though television shows such as "Friends" and "Sex and the City" have promoted New York's siren charms, families, too, have rediscovered the city as a playground.

"Have you ever seen so many strollers in your life? That tells the story," says Brey Brownlie, publishing director of New York Living, a luxury real estate magazine.

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or returning from the urban exodus that took place before the revival of America's cities.

"It is certainly something we hear about anecdotally," said Lockhart Steele, publisher and president of real estate blog curbed.com. "There's definitely the sense, at least among some people, that leaving the city was the wrong move."

For Dori and Karen Gurwitz, the decision to leave Manhattan came after a frustrating round of apartment hunting. In 2002, they moved to a four-story house in Bergen County, rich in parks and community life.

"The moment we got the keys, we asked 'What did we do?' " said Karen Gurwitz. "We never grew up in a suburb and we realized we never had a clue about how it was to live there.

"What seemed so lovely in the beginning quickly became very familiar, and we realized we really thrived on the city."

While expecting their third child, she and her husband made the decision to leave, and after three years in the suburbs, they moved to a two-bedroom on the Upper West Side, where, Gurwitz says, "Our lives got richer because we were more awake and alive."

Two years after their marriage, Judy and Bill Meade also traded in their Manhattan apartment for greener pastures. They purchased a house in Montrose -- an ideal place for raising a family. When her twins were

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"The city has a buzz like never before -- it's a great life for a family on the go -- even the public schools have buzz."

While many couples moved from courtship to kids without leaving the city, others are here after a temporary flight to the suburbs

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three months old, Judy Meade's idyllic world crashed.

"We had great neighbors and a beautiful home, but we were so isolated," she said, adding that life there was "all about the car."

"The whole idea was to have space and fresh air," she said. "But I'd drive around looking for kids and all the playgrounds were empty. It was depressing."

After eight years, the Meades moved back to Manhattan to a two-bedroom apartment that she says was like coming home again.

"Would I love to have a bona-fide dining room? Yes, but I'd rather have take-out," Meade said. "And now we wake up on Saturday mornings and say 'Hey, we don't have to run to Home Depot.'"

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