



Live



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\$949,000

26-26 Jackson Ave., PH1201

One-bedroom, 1½-bathroom penthouse condo with terraces.

- ◆ **Property Plus:** Skyline views.
- ◆ **Property Minus:** In a rezoned industrial corridor; about a mile to Vernon Boulevard's restaurant row.
- ◆ **Listing Agents:** Adrian Lupu and Paul Shayn of Nest Seekers International, 718-664-7440



\$1.675 million

4630 Center Blvd., No. 104

Two-bedroom, two-bathroom condo with a ground-level patio, an open kitchen and high ceilings

- ◆ **Property Plus:** Skyline views, five closets and washer-dryer
- ◆ **Property Minus:** The parking garage isn't onsite.
- ◆ **Listing Agent:** Sofia Estevez of TF Cornerstone, 212-984-1780



\$3.250 million

531 51st Ave.

Renovated three-story townhouse with four bedrooms, three bathrooms and finished basement

- ◆ **Property Plus:** The top floor can be converted to a penthouse apartment with a roof deck.
- ◆ **Property Minus:** Parking space is added purchase next door.
- ◆ **Listing Agent:** Doron Zwickel of CORE, 917-400-4404



BLOCK PARTY | By Lana Bortolot

Flea Is Set to Take Flight in Long Island City

Queens will take one more step out of the long shadow of its trendier neighbors when the LIC Flea & Food opens on the Long Island City waterfront June 15, bringing a vivacity to an area that is defined by its warehouses and sleek residential towers.

Market organizers and local business owners hope the new venture will bolster Long Island City's appeal with offerings to compare with Brooklyn and Manhattan's trendy neighborhoods, as well as help keep residents in their own backyards for dining and shopping.

"If we can get the people who live in the neighborhood to stay [here], that can be a driving force for all kinds of businesses and people who want to make other investments in the neighborhood," said Joshua Schneps, founder of the LIC Flea & Food. His family's company, Schneps Communications, publishes 17 newspapers and magazines in Queens and Brooklyn, and is a media partner for the market.

Other business owners, many of them along Vernon Boulevard, agree that too many people who hang their hats in Long Island City don't hang out in the area because of the lack of services and retail.

Long Island City "is a teenager with growing pains and a push for quality-of-life experiences for people where they live," said Sheila Lewandowski, founder of the Chocolate Factory, a performing-arts space, and a member of the local community board. "I think it's changing. But we're not there yet."

The new market will run each weekend through Nov. 10 on a 24,000-square-foot lot on 46th Avenue at Fifth Street, where warehouses and luxury condominiums intersect. Mr. Schneps looked two years before finding the spot—one of the few undeveloped lots in a corridor that has filled quickly with gleaming towers, most of which are owned by TF Cornerstone. He declined to give details on his lease with the lot owner, Plaxall, a plastics manufacturer-turned-developer, but he did say it was for "several years."

Though it may look like the popular Brooklyn Flea market, Mr. Schneps said the Long Island City version will differ in its vendor selection. Most of the 60 vetted sellers hail from Queens and about half will be devoted to food, including M.



Clockwise from above, Donna Drimer, owner of Matted, a gallery and art store in Long Island City; Gantry Plaza State Park on the newly renovated waterfront; and the commercial strip on Vernon Boulevard.



Wells Dinette, Alobar, Manducatis Rustica, Blend and Testaccio. The market has also solicited food start-ups from Entrepreneur Space, an incubator kitchen sponsored by the Queens Economic Development Corp.

The Long Island City market will offer a chance for retailers to bloom in a neighborhood rich in dining, but poor in shopping. Vernon Boulevard's tiny commercial corridor is down one store with the departure of Ethereal, a boutique that opened in 2007 and closed in 2011.

"I'm the only retailer here

and I don't think that will change any time soon," said Donna Drimer, the owner of Matted, a gift shop.

That doesn't dissuade Ms. Drimer, who put down a stake in Long Island City four years ago. In fact, she drove that stake only deeper.

Ms. Drimer had operated her original store in Jamaica Estates for 36 years when she opened her Long Island City outpost. Two years ago, foot traffic in the neighborhood was dismal, she recalled. But she has seen an uptick in traffic by as much as 50% since nearly 1,900 new apartments opened

on Center Boulevard. She has since closed her original store and doubled her effort in Long Island City, including taking space at the new flea market.

"It's a winner for the store by letting people know we're here," Ms. Drimer said.

Restaurants tucked in along the Center Boulevard waterfront are likely to gain from the new flea market, too.

Local coffee shop Sweetleaf opened a shop—its second in Long Island City—at 4615 Center Blvd. in February, despite owner Richard Nieto's concerns about the area. "We're on the wrong side of where we

wanted to be, in terms of transportation, but we made up for that by being in a location with a ready-made population," Mr. Nieto said. He partnered with mixologist Richard Boccato to create a nighttime cocktail bar in the same spot, further leveraging its space.

And, Mr. Nieto doesn't need to be sold on the benefits of the new market: His Williamsburg shop, on Kent Avenue, is a block away from the Sunday Brooklyn Flea.

"I don't have to look at the calendar to know when the [Brooklyn] Flea is open—I see it in my business," he said.

Though the comparisons with Brooklyn are inevitable, Long Island City residents such as Jeff Blath, resist the notion that ventures like the new flea market will turn Queens into the new Brooklyn. Mr. Blath opened Alobar, a charcuterie restaurant, in November 2011, and insists that Queens deserves its own recognition.

"In a way, we want the coolness factor for Queens, but you can't want Queens to be Brooklyn or anything else. It has to be its own entity. And if we're going to get there, it has to play on [its] strengths," he said.

