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In the Mix in Harlem

When Eva and Trimble were presented with the choice of moving to Forest Hills, Queens, or East Harlem, they chose East Harlem because they wanted to stay in Manhattan.

Since Sept. 1 they've lived in a new seven-story apartment building at 1955 First Ave. (at 100th Street) in a one-bedroom with doorman, gym and free shuttle service to the subway – all for just \$1,800.

The new place, says Eva, a 27-year old budget analyst with the city's Economic Development Corporation, beats their old one-bedroom, an East Village walkup that cost \$2,400.

“We had some reservations about walking the dog at night or coming home late on the weekends,” she says. “But it wasn't enough to deter us from savings \$600 a month. We feel safe.”

The Aspen is the city's first development to mix middle-income apartment units with the traditional low-income/market-rate split. It has 123 market-rate units, 64 middle-income units, 38 low-income and eight very low-income apartments for rent. Very-Low-income one bedrooms are renting for \$425, low-income for \$543, and middle-income one-bedroom apartments go for \$1,395. Market-rate unit price vary.

A little-known selling point of the neighborhood is that there's a footbridge at 103rd Street that takes pedestrians to Randall's Island, where there's a golf driving range and park.

“It's a hidden perk and only few minutes away. We play golf and bike-ride there.” Says Trimble, whose husband, Joe, 37 is the director of labor relations with the city's Parks Department.

The disadvantage of the neighborhood is its lack of retail stores. “We go down to 9th Street and 86th Street for food shopping, dry cleaning, restaurants and stores,” says Trimble.

She recalls one time when a Chinese restaurant refused to deliver takeout to her. “They thought we lived in a project until I introduced myself to the manager.”

The area remains attractive to developers because it offers opportunities to reasonable cost, according to Assemblyman Adam Clayton Powell, who spoke with NYP Home at the Aspen's ribbon-cutting. "The mixed income building brings an extra consumer base and more dollars to the community." Powell said.

Congressman Charlie Rangel said it would be an injustice to develop a building in east Harlem that current residents can't afford to live in.

"East Harlem residents should be applying to live here." Noted Rangel, who was also in attendance at the Aspen's grand opening.

Like the Trimble's, Annette Rodriguez appreciates the Aspen. The receptionist moved from a two-bedroom moved from a two-bedroom walk-up on East 119th Street to a two-bedroom low-income unit, where she pays \$543 a month.

"My previous apartment was falling apart. The ceiling paint was chipping, the bathroom was smaller and now I have a doorman." Says Rodriguez. "I feel I hit the lotto by getting into the apartment."