

LIVING IN | COBBLE HILL, BROOKLYN

# A Village-Like Vibe With Towering Prices



By JULIE LASKY

Ann Rathkopf came full circle in 2018, when she and her husband, Giona Maiarelli, moved into their home on Amity Street, in the achingly pretty Brooklyn neighborhood of Cobble Hill. As an infant, she lived with her parents nearby, on Pacific Street.

The empty nesters, who previously lived in Europe and on Long Island, sublet a combined one-bedroom and studio in a four-story co-op building, for \$3,500 a month. They enjoy a village-like existence, commuting on foot to their graphic design and communications studio near the Dumbo neighborhood, and shopping at Sahadi's Middle Eastern grocery and Dellapietras butcher shop on Atlantic Avenue.

But the couple's time in Cobble Hill, a neighborhood filled with 19th-century row-



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Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, clockwise from top: Gothic-style residences at Warren Place Mews; brownstones on Clinton Street; Cobble Hill Park; St. Paul's Church on Congress Street dates to the late 1830s, making it the oldest Roman Catholic church in continuous use in Brooklyn; and Court Street, which has a lively feel despite some empty storefronts.

houses, may be fleeting. Building regulations limit sublets to two years; the couple will soon have to buy the apartment or move somewhere else, and housing prices have kissed the stratosphere. (The median value in Cobble Hill is \$1.4 million.) Ms. Rathkopf said she did not know what their unit would cost. Their surroundings are also changing. Since their arrival, a 16-story building has risen at the corner of Amity and Henry Streets, obliterating their slivered view of Lower Manhattan.

The new tower at 347 Henry Street is one of seven housing sites in the River Park complex on the campus of the former Long Island College Hospital. After years of community resistance and a compromise that yielded lower building heights but killed hopes for affordable housing, the mixed-use development by the Fortis Property Group is partly completed and sold. Ultimately, a 103-unit condominium tower planned for 91 Pacific Street will top out at 475 feet.

"How we will bring these large buildings and people into the neighborhood is something we have to think about," said Amy Breedlove, the president of the Cobble Hill Association, a community group. "Regardless of the fight we have had over land use, these new residents will be community members."

The newcomers will include Ajay Ayyappan, a lawyer, and his wife, Sonya Ayyappan, an architect. The couple, who have a 2 1/2-year-old daughter, bought a three-bedroom condo on the 10th floor of 347 Henry Street, also known as 5 River Park. They'll move from Boerum Hill when the 25-unit building is finished this summer.

The Ayyappans were drawn to Cobble Hill for its charm and proximity to the Brooklyn Cultural District, but wanted a modern interior and amenities. They would have considered buying and updating a duplex in an old house, but such properties do not show up often.

### What You'll Find

Cobble Hill is bordered on the north by Brooklyn Heights, on the east by Boerum Hill, on the south by Carroll Gardens and on the west by the Columbia Street Waterfront District. Cobble Hill Park, a groomed, green half-block in the middle, is the community's heart.

Court Street, which forms the eastern boundary, has businesses with different ages and characters. The Court Pastry Shop (No. 298) has peddled Italian sweets since 1948 and often serves patrons who abandoned South Brooklyn for the suburbs but can't stay away from the cannoli. Diane Russo opened the Diane T fashion boutique (No. 174) in 2001, when the people she met at trade shows were mystified by the words "Cobble Hill" on her business card. Trader Joe's (No. 130) arrived in 2008, taking over a limestone bank building near the spot where George Washington surveyed the Battle of Long Island. Woods Grove (No. 302) is a two-year-old gift shop that distills the essence of crafty Brooklyn in succulents, candles and knit caps.

Cobble Hill's seven-block stretch of Court Street is rife with real estate offices and children's stores typical of gentrifying neighborhoods. But a number of vacant storefronts also tell a story of decline that is seen throughout New York.

### What You'll Pay

Michael DiMartino, the marketing director of Brownstone Real Estate, said that for several years, until recently, the real estate

market had been favorable to renters in Cobble Hill, while sales had been "aggressive." Now the reverse is true: Rents are heating up, while the cost of buying property, although still high, is tapering off.

According to Property Shark, the median sale price of Cobble Hill homes in the third quarter of 2019 was \$1.5 million, based on 17 transactions.

The Brooklyn real estate company MNS reported that in January the average monthly rent was \$3,231 for a one-bedroom apartment, and \$4,098 for a two-bedroom. The year-over-year increase in rents over all was 14.25 percent.

### The Vibe

As towers join church spires in piercing the sky, there is a sense that the rest of Brooklyn is encroaching on Cobble Hill. But the neighborhood remains lively as well as lyrical, with its handsome townhouse rows and insistent greenery.

### The Schools

Public School 29 enrolls 886 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. On 2018-19 state tests, 78 percent of students met standards in English, compared with 57 percent districtwide; 80 percent met standards in math, compared with 62 percent districtwide.

Success Academy Charter Schools in Cobble Hill enrolls 442 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. On 2018-19 state tests, with results reported from only the third and fourth grades, 100 percent of

students met standards in English, compared with 61 percent districtwide; 100 percent met standards in math, compared with 63 percent statewide.

The Boerum Hill School for International Studies, just east of Court Street, enrolls 632 students in sixth through eighth grades. On 2018-19 state tests, 63 percent met standards in English, compared with 59 percent districtwide; 43 percent met standards in math, compared with 42 percent districtwide.

Cobble Hill School of American Studies, a block east of Court Street, enrolls 588 students in ninth through 12th grades. The average 2018-19 SAT scores were 427 in math and 454 in reading and writing, compared with 506 and 502 citywide.

### The Commute

Subway service is available on the F and G trains at the Bergen Street station. Buses run along Atlantic Avenue and Court Street.

There is also ferry service to Wall Street at Brooklyn Bridge Park Pier 6.

### The History

A 1969 Landmarks Preservation Commission report detailed Cobble Hill's march of architectural styles: Greek Revival in the 1830s and '40s; Gothic Revival, Italianate and early Romanesque Revival in the 1850s and '60s; French neo-Grec in the 1870s and early '80s; and late Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne influenced by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

### ON THE MARKET



#### 90 Amity Street

A four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bathroom townhouse built in 2017, listed for \$6.4 million. 917-704-3102



#### 401 Hicks Street, No. B4E

A two-bedroom, two-bathroom condo in a converted church, listed for \$1.275 million. 917-720-6724