

LIVING IN

Spuyten Duyvil, the Bronx: Crosscurrents of Suburb and City

By C. J. Hughes

May 17, 2017

At the confluence of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, Spuyten Duyvil, in the northwestern Bronx, can seem to be channeling two somewhat opposite experiences.

On the one hand, the neighborhood feels urban, particularly amid its lofty high-rises. Full-service buildings offering pools, driving classes and porters to assist with groceries, these properties could easily pass for luxury towers in Manhattan.

But other blocks in the mostly residential enclave are distinctly Westchester, lined with historic homes and yards so tidy that not a branch or blade of grass seems out of place.

“It’s a nice combination of city and suburban,” said Valerie Adelman, who in 2012 moved with her husband, Robert Adelman, to a two-bedroom apartment in Spuyten Duyvil from the Westchester town of Scarsdale, where they owned a five-bedroom house. “It feels right in the middle.”

Intent on selling the family home after their two children graduated from college, the Adelmans were looking for a minimal-upkeep condo or co-op, where they would not have to “pay for a tree guy and a roof guy” as they did before, Ms. Adelman said.

Westchester’s river towns, like Hastings-on-Hudson, had appeal, though they were a bit far from New York City, where Ms. Adelman, 61, a financial planner, continues to work.



2715 ARLINGTON AVENUE A four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath Tudor single-family house with a fireplace in the living room, listed at \$1,850,000. 718-543-7174 David Dee
Delgado for The New York Times

Yet Manhattan was too expensive, especially since the couple wanted to save some of the proceeds of their house sale to buy a second home in Florida.

Spuyten Duyvil was not unknown to the Adelmans, who lived in an apartment in neighboring Riverdale from 1984 to 2000. They found that the neighborhood had not changed much in the ensuing years, a selling point. They paid \$405,000 for their Kappock Street apartment, which is in a red-brick co-op building from the 1950s that offers a gym, yoga room and book club. But its proximity to nature was just as much of a draw. “We hear birds every morning,” Ms. Adelman said. “It’s very pleasant.”

Spuyten Duyvil has a reputation as home to many older people. About 30 percent of residents in the neighborhood, which includes large nursing homes, are 65 or older, according to data from the 2013 American Community Survey compiled by Social Explorer, a website that provides demographic information. In contrast, just 13 percent of all city residents are 65 or older, the data show.

But that may be changing. “In the last five years, we’ve seen a lot of people in their 20s,” said Fred Golden, an associate broker with Douglas Elliman Real Estate who works in the neighborhood and lives just outside it.

Yet some buyers still seem spooked by the location. “As soon as somebody says ‘the Bronx,’ big negatives pop up in people’s heads,” Mr. Golden said. But if they would just cross the river and see the neighborhood for themselves, he added, many “would be happy if they bought here.”

What You’ll Find

Spuyten Duyvil, a Dutch phrase (pronounced SPY-tun DIE-vul) referring to the treacherous waters of a local creek, is bordered mostly by natural features. In addition to the rivers, a steep slope forms the eastern edge along Johnson and Irwin Avenues. Although opinions are mixed about where the northern border lies, residents and brokers often cite West 232nd Street.

Among the high-rises are midcentury co-ops like the 20-story Winston Churchill, at 2500 Johnson Avenue; the 25-story 555 Kappock Street; and the 13-story Blue Building, at 2400

Johnson, perhaps best known for its location near a familiar sight from the Manhattan side, a giant C, for Columbia University, painted on a nearby rock face.

The most prized of the buildings line Palisade Avenue, where views up the Hudson can stretch to the Tappan Zee Bridge. Most of these buildings are red brick, but a whimsical alternative, at No. 2501, is the Italian-style Villa Charlotte Brontë, a co-op that has barrel-tile roofs, vine-draped walls and staircases that zigzag upward, as in an Escher drawing.

Alternatively, detached houses, like those along Edgehill and Netherland Avenues, come in Tudor and colonial styles, with stucco and stone finishes. Tucked between them is one of the neighborhood's grand outdoor staircases. Walking from Netherland to Irwin Avenue, to the east, requires a thigh-burning trip down 272 steps.

Condos, which are rare, include La Rive, a 1980s creation with an indoor pool, and Riverpointe, a 73-unit building converted a decade ago from a rental.

While development is infrequent, Riverdale Parc, a seven-story, 54-unit rental, arrived in 2015, replacing three houses. It has studios to three-bedrooms, all with washers and dryers, behind an unusual charcoal-brick facade.

What You'll Pay

Comparatively speaking, prices are bargain-basement. On May 12, 71 co-ops and condos were for sale in Spuyten Duyvil, according to The New York Times. The cheapest apartment was a co-op studio in a 1940s complex near Ewen Park, at \$110,000. The most expensive was a two-bedroom, three-bath combined co-op with Hudson River views, at \$1.28 million.



555 KAPPOCK STREET, NO. 15R An alcove studio with parquet floors and a Murphy bed in a doorman building with a pool, listed at \$140,000. 917-620-4907 David Dee Delgado for The New York Times

Prices have declined somewhat. In 2016, buyers purchased 115 co-ops — the most common housing type — at an average sale price of \$281,000, according to Trebach Realty, a local firm.

In contrast, in 2015, buyers snapped up 129 co-ops at an average sale price of \$327,000, according to the firm, though brokers point out that the pool of buyers is widening.

“We’re getting an influx of buyers from Brooklyn and Queens, two areas where we never used to get buyers from,” said Brad Trebach, an associate broker with Trebach Realty, who added that many are getting priced out, or cashing out.

Rents for studios average \$1,500 a month, according to StreetEasy, while one-bedrooms average \$1,900.

The Vibe

Commerce is mostly limited to a cluster of stores along Knolls Crescent that looks like a strip mall. Its stores are set back from the street to allow for a parking lot. The Kappock Cafe, a casual Italian-themed restaurant, is popular, though residents say they wish there were more restaurant choices.

Groceries can be purchased at Fresh King Market, known for its fruits and vegetables, and Ben's Market, which delivers. But some residents drive to stores, like the Key Food on West 235th Street.

The nearly nine-acre Henry Hudson Park, split by Kappock Street, has a quiet northern half, which is anchored by a 100-foot column topped by a 16-foot statue of Hudson himself. The south, dotted with ball fields and basketball courts, is busier.

The Schools

Public School 24, the Spuyten Duyvil School, offers kindergarten through fifth grade to about 1,000 students on West 236th Street, just outside the neighborhood. On state exams last year, 57 percent of students met standards in English, versus 39 percent citywide. On the math exams, 62 percent met standards, versus 40 percent citywide.

From there, most students head to Middle School/High School 141, otherwise known as the David A. Stein Riverdale/Kingsbridge Academy, which enrolls about 1,400 students on West 237th Street.

On last year's state exams, in the middle school, 43 percent of students met standards in English, compared with 37 percent citywide, while in math it was 47 percent, compared with 32 percent.

In the high school, the average SAT scores in 2016 were 477 in reading, 485 in math and 468 in writing, versus 446, 466 and 440 citywide.

The Commute

There are no nearby subway lines. But there is a Spuyten Duyvil stop on the Metro-North Railroad's Hudson line, from which seven trains leave on weekdays between 6 and 9 a.m. to Grand Central Terminal. The trip takes around 30 minutes. The Hudson Rail Link, a local bus service, offers four lines to the station. A monthly unlimited-ride UniTicket, which covers bus and train fares, is \$245.25.

Also, three express buses run to Manhattan: the BxM1, which covers Midtown East; the BxM2, which goes to Herald Square; and the BxM18, which serves the financial district.

The History

The treacherous waters that gave Spuyten Duyvil its name existed when the Harlem River had an S shape, which made navigation difficult. In a project that ended in the 1930s, engineers rerouted the river, allowing large ships to pass. A 52-acre chunk of Manhattan, Marble Hill, was left stranded on the Bronx side, where it remains today.

A correction was made on May 17, 2017: A caption for picture No. 8 in an earlier version of the slide show with this article misidentified the building shown. It is 555 Kappock Street, not 2500 Johnson Avenue (also known as the Winston Churchill).

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section RE, Page 10 of the New York edition with the headline: Crosscurrents of Suburb and City