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REAL ESTATE

Worth the Wait: A Westchester One-Bedroom

The Hunt

By JOYCE COHEN NOV. 3, 2016



THE BUYERS Santa Maria Pecoraro Di Vittorio and Salvatore Di Vittorio with Giuseppe.
Susan Fisher Plotner for The New York Times

When [Salvatore Di Vittorio](#) and Santa Maria Pecoraro met nearly 20 years ago at [Orvieto Musica](#), a music festival in [Italy](#), he was splitting his time between New York and his hometown, Palermo, Italy, and she was living at home in her native San Diego.

Shortly before they married in 2008, she moved east. The couple rented a one-bedroom, of a little more than 700 square feet, at the Impala, a 2001 condominium on East 76th Street.

The location was great for Mrs. Di Vittorio, now 40, a viola player who also studied chemistry and is the [administrator](#) of the Laboratory of Virology and Infectious Disease at Rockefeller University. Mr. Di Vittorio, 48, is a published orchestral composer and the music director/conductor and composer of the [Chamber Orchestra of New York](#), which performs at Carnegie Hall.

The couple intended to buy a condo in the neighborhood, which they loved, and started hunting a year or so after they moved in. They kept their eyes peeled for vacancies in their building, which they were also very happy with, although their rent climbed over time, approaching \$3,000 a month by last summer. Assorted fees were due each year when they re-signed the lease.



MANHATTAN The couple were renting at the Impala on East 76th Street, and would have bought there. But apartments were too dear.
Susan Fisher Plotner for The New York Times

Their budget for a one-bedroom was around \$600,000. “If you go below that, you are basically looking at a studio,” Mr. Di Vittorio said. Their deal breaker was a washer-dryer.

But a one-bedroom with a washer-dryer almost certainly meant a new condominium building and a price approaching \$800,000. They were interested in two units at the Impala. One, on their floor, was \$749,000, with monthly charges of around \$1,900. “The Impala was more on the dream side,” Mrs. Di Vittorio said.

They also liked Chartwell House on Second Avenue, another 2001 condo building, farther north near 92nd Street. It was like the Impala in many ways, and they particularly admired the window in the kitchen. But, again, prices were a deterrent. “The expectations within [Manhattan](#) are so different for how far a dollar goes compared with everywhere else,” Mrs. Di Vittorio said.

Busy with work and traveling, the couple hunted off and on for several years. Because Mr. Di Vittorio does some work in Italy, they also spend time at a home they own in Palermo. They were planning to have a baby, so they considered hunting for a small house in the New York suburbs. “We felt we did not need to sleep in the city anymore to work in the city,” Mr. Di Vittorio said.



MANHATTAN Chartwell House on Second Avenue was appealing. But apartments there also were too expensive.
Susan Fisher Plotner for The New York Times

One day in 2013, visiting a violin student of Mrs. Di Vittorio's who lived in Larchmont, N.Y., they encountered the sales office of [the Cambium](#). At that point, the building was just floor plans and renderings.

They liked the model unit as well as Larchmont, which they thought was idyllic. Each condo at the Cambium came with a washer-dryer and a parking space. A storage unit was available, and Mr. Di Vittorio, who has a large music archive, liked that.

The price was appealing — just under \$475,000 for a one-bedroom, with monthly charges and taxes working out to less than \$1,000.

The Di Vittorios signed the contract three years ago. They then began waiting for construction to be completed. Mrs. Di Vittorio became pregnant with Giuseppe, now 2.



LARCHMONT, N.Y. Chancing upon a sales office for the Cambium on a visit to the village, the couple were impressed by the floor plans.
Susan Fisher Plotner for The New York Times

“Once you wait for a year, you start having two different feelings,” Mr. Di Vittorio said. “One is ah, the heck with it, let’s just get something else. The other is we’ve been waiting a year, so we had the best chance to have a better value because we got it at the pre-construction price.”

They could have backed out at the two-year mark, but decided to proceed.

At last, this summer, their apartment was ready, and the Di Vittorios were able to move in. The first phase of the Cambium, to ultimately have about 150 units, is more than 50 percent in contract or sold, said Susan Joyce, the director of sales and a saleswoman at Douglas Elliman Real Estate.

The couple’s apartment, a one-bedroom with 827 square feet, is big enough for three, at least for now. The large hallway in their place is like “its own little nest area” for Giuseppe to play in, Mr. Di Vittorio said.

The commute on Metro-North is 40 minutes or less to Grand Central Terminal. “The biggest thing for most people like us is not the time on Metro-North, but the time walking from home to the station,” Mr. Di Vittorio said. “For us, it’s a block and a half.”

On the Manhattan end, Mrs. Di Vittorio, who was used to walking to work, has an additional subway trip. If the weather is bad, “I think about the fact we are not renting anymore, and it all goes away,” she said. “It’s beautiful, it’s new and it’s ours.”

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