

Condo sales strong, inventory limited in region

[Akiko Matsuda](#) 2:30 p.m. ET Feb. 14, 2017



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Video: Why condos attract downsizers, new buyers

The Cambium, a 147-unit luxury condominium complex in Larchmont, is offering potential homeowners a different option for a new home or for those looking to downsize. Ricky Flores/lohud



[VIDEOS: LARCHMONT, BRONXVILLE CONDO PROJECTS](#)

Video: Life at The Cambium in Larchmont

Sheila Chervin and Peter Schwartz talk about their new home at The Cambium in Larchmont. Ricky Flores/lohud

Westchester's 2016 end-of-year inventory was down almost 30 percent compared to the 2015 figure.



It's a good time to be selling a condominium, but not so good a time to be buying one.

Sales are brisk, and the number of available condos is limited. As a result, inventory is shrinking, and prices have started to creep up.

Condominium sales in the Lower Hudson Valley continued to be strong in 2016, following a surge in sales the year before. Realtors say the number of condos on the market is not meeting the demand.

Westchester's 2016 end-of-year inventory was 302, down almost 30 percent from 2015, according to the annual report compiled by the Hudson Gateway Multiple Listing Services, a subsidiary of the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors. The end-of-year inventory in Rockland was 223 in 2016, down 6.3 percent from 2015.

Condominiums, along with co-ops, remain a popular choice for both first home buyers and downsizers. In Westchester alone, 1,398 condo units were sold in 2016, or 6.3 percent more than 2015, when sales rose by 20 percent from the year before. In Rockland, 477 condo units were sold last year, up 19 percent from 2015.

In addition to first time homeowners and downsizers, condos are attractive to real estate investors because they are easy to maintain and can be rented out, said Barry Kramer, principal broker of Westchester Choice Realty.

"Condos are very desirable because they are still at a good price point compared to most single-family homes," said Kramer, a regional vice president of HGAR. "You can buy luxury condos, of course. ... But generally speaking, when you compare the price of a single-family home to a condo, a condo will typically be at a lower price point."

Condos selling

During January, four units were sold at [The Cambium](#), a new 147-unit luxury condominium complex in Larchmont, according to Byron Place Associates, the project sponsor. (Under an agreement with the town of Mamaroneck, 10 units in the complex are set aside for workforce rental housing.)

Of the 84 units completed in the first phase, about 50 have been sold, said John Myers, manager of Byron Place Associates. Interior construction for the remaining 53 units is still

ongoing. Prices range from \$450,000 for a one-bedroom to \$1.38 million for a two-bedroom with two and a half baths.



Peter Schwartz and Sheila Chervin in their new home at The Cambium in Larchmont on Feb. 1, 2017.
(Photo: Ricky Flores/The Journal News)

"We have interest from a lot of young couples from New York City, either Brooklyn or Queens. In addition to that, we have downsizers from Westchester," Myers said. "Their kids are gone and they don't want the hassle of cutting the grass and looking after the homes. Most of them would have a second home in Florida or the Carolinas."

Sheila Chervin and Peter Schwartz last year moved into a two-bedroom condominium at The Cambium, after selling their three-story Tudor in Mamaroneck.

"The only thing we knew was that we wanted to stay in this community. We looked, and we looked. We came back here twice. And we decided this was what we wanted," Chervin said. "We love it. We do really love it. Everything is new and sparkling."

The couple had expected the complex — located within a five-minute walk from the Larchmont train station — to be mostly occupied by retired people like themselves, but it's much more diverse, Chervin said.

"There are very young families. ... There are lots of babies," Chervin said. "It's nice, comfortable and convenient. Everything is compact, but we have enough storage and everything we need."

In White Plains, [the Residences at the Ritz-Carlton Westchester II](#) sold 22 units last year, leaving 16 sponsor units at the 333-unit, two-tower luxury condominium complex. The

recent transactions included nine penthouse units, and the total sale value exceeded \$33 million. The median sale price was \$2.23 million.

"We are seeing quite a few buyers from Scarsdale as well as White Plains, Armonk and Mamaroneck," said Nancy Kennedy, a Houlihan Lawrence broker who is managing sales for the complex. "These buyers like the fact that they can stay connected to their previous neighborhoods while enjoying the many benefits of a Ritz lifestyle in the heart of downtown White Plains."



The Cambium in Larchmont on Jan. 30, 2017. (Photo: Ricky Flores/The Journal News)

Fewer condos built

Despite strong demand, few condominium projects are currently in the pipeline. Proposed multifamily residential buildings in the Lower Hudson Valley are mostly luxury rental apartments.

Experts said the trend is partly because lenders have set tougher terms for condominium construction loans.

"It was much easier to get financing for rental developments," said Myers, with Byron Place Associates.

"We are very financially secure," he added. "We paid off our construction loan. We are in a good position with that regard."

Story continues below gallery



The trend is nationwide, said Sam Chandan, associate dean of the New York University School of Professional Studies Schack Institute of Real Estate.

"More than 90 percent of multifamily construction at this point are rental complexes, which is unusually high," he said.

Chandan said in the aftermath of financial crisis, demand for rental apartments soared while fewer people were willing — or able — to own homes. The strong rental market, along with tighter government regulations on condominium-construction financing, motivated developers to build rentals, he said, and added: "In some cases where developers had a choice whether rentals or condos, it's been more profitable for them to build rentals."



Seeking new construction

Jeffrey Barath, 57, wanted a new condominium, not a resale, limiting his options. So when he heard about [Villa BXV](#), a 53-unit luxury condominium complex development near the Bronxville train station, he jumped at it, he said.

"I was one of the first five to buy in there, right off the blueprints. There wasn't even a sales office yet," said Barath, a United Airlines pilot who purchased a spacious two-bedroom unit in Villa BXV, which is currently under construction.

"I always wanted to live in Bronxville because I grew up across the street in Yonkers. Bronxville, Scarsdale, those villages are really fantastic," he said.

Barath, who is single, was still living in a large house in Dunbury, Connecticut, when he signed a purchase contract for his Villa BXV unit months ago. He has temporarily moved into an apartment in Tuckahoe while awaiting completion of the four-story Bronxville complex.

Barath said he chose condominium living because his unit will be secured by a 24-hour doorman while he's away for work, and because he will be freed from yard maintenance. Villa BXV's downtown location is also a plus because he can enjoy some urban atmosphere, he said.

"And it's a condo, not co-ops," Barath added. "I don't want co-ops because you'd have a board who tells you who you can or cannot sell it to."

The complex is expected to be ready for occupancy sometime this summer. As of early February, 33 units — which start at \$1.1 million — have been sold.

"A lot of buyers are from Bronxville," said Elise Platt with Villa BXV. "But interestingly enough, we are suddenly getting much more people from the city. And I think it's because the closing is in sight. It's really hard to get the younger generation to say, OK, I'll wait 18 months."

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