

The long run

Perk-packed rentals & convenience bring new residents to LIC

By MAX GROSS

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What do you do when, like Patrick and Eve Carr, you want a shorter drive to work and a nice amenity-packed building, and you don't want to give up the beach life that you had near your old house?

That's easy — you move to Long Island City. The high-rises have sand on the roof.

"Coming from Long Beach, we were always at the beach," says Eve, who just moved with her husband into 4545 Center Blvd., a 41-story rental that includes on its long list of amenities 50,000 square feet of outdoor space with a reflecting pool, plus a dog run, that will be open later this summer. (The building is not fully finished, but move-ins started last month.)



Eve and Patrick Carr just moved into the 820-unit TF Cornerstone building at 4545 Center Blvd., one of the many new rentals in Long Island City, Queens.

"We'll be able to play tennis, beach volleyball, or something like that — to have these amenities, that was something we were really excited about." (Yes, tennis and volleyball courts are also promised.)

"We started looking at the area a few years ago, before we bought our house," Patrick says. "We just saw it getting built up on our daily commute."

The buildup has been impressive. "This was really designed as an amenity building [for] all the holdings," says Scott Walsh, director of sales and market research for TF Cornerstone, of 4545 Center Blvd. The building is the latest, and — at 820 units — largest, in the developer's massive portfolio of LIC waterfront buildings, which has been going strong since 2006. (Studios at 4545 Center Blvd. start at \$2,150, and units go up to \$5,580 for a 1,261 -square-foot three-bedroom.)

Essentially, 4545 Center Blvd. is also doing what every other developer in the neighborhood is doing: plugging the gaps to make LIC truly livable. And, yes, LIC is getting there.



TAKE A LIC: Amenities are arriving at Gantry Park Landing (above).

Walk along Vernon Boulevard (the main drag of the Hunters Point

section of LIC) and one sees ads for LIC Flea, Queens' answer to the Brooklyn vintage shopping and food fair that started in 2008 (although the two are unrelated). LIC Flea, which starts on June 15, will take place in the parking lot at 5-22 46th Ave. and have vendors like pizza purveyor Manducatis Rustica and Malu Ice Cream, not to mention retailers like Matted (an art and gift shop).

Popular cafe Sweetleaf has teamed up with one of the other neighborhood favorites, the speakeasy-like Dutch Kills, for a coffeehouse by day/bar by night in 4615 Center Blvd.'s retail space. A brand-new K-8 public school, PS/IS 312, is opening at 4615 Center Blvd. this September for the budding number of families. The art scene got a boost from venues like Diego Salazar Antique Frames and the adjoining Diego Salazar Art Gallery.

"It's a natural progression," says Robert Dankner of Prime Manhattan Residential, who has been selling condos in the area to investors as well as Manhattan transplants. "There's a different level of attention by merchants to the area. It wasn't sensible to have a Trader Joe's a few years ago — soon it's going to be inevitable."

Farther north, towards Queensboro Plaza, hotels have been sprouting up over the last few years — like Z NYC Hotel, next to the Queensboro Bridge, which is offering things like sunrise workouts and yoga on its rooftop. It's a couple of blocks from the Ravel Hotel on Queens Plaza South and the Wyndham Garden on Ninth Street.



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But it's the rental buildings with their amenity and retail spaces that are most aggressively filling in the gaps.

"They're building so many rentals," says Richard Shiu, a broker with Keller Williams who is himself a developer in the neighborhood. "It's just rentals, rentals, rentals."

Packard Square, on the north side of Queensboro Plaza, should be opening up the third building in its complex later this year — an 88-unit rental consisting of 33 studios (starting at \$1,780 per month), 46 one-bedrooms (starting at \$3,125) and nine two-bedrooms (starting at \$3,300). "We've been focused on lifestyle," says Jodi Stasse of Citi Habitats, which is going to be marketing the building. "There's going to be a rooftop terrace with lounge chairs, an outdoor eating area with a built-in barbecue grill."

Juan Carlos Diaz moved into one of the Packard Square towers last year, and three months ago he opened up a flower shop in one of the building's retail spaces.

"Business has been really good," says Diaz, who moved from the Upper East Side. "The neighbors all say, 'I'm happy you're here — we didn't have flowers.'"



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Developer Rockrose will be adding

plenty of commercial space — one 14,300-square-foot space and another 1,600-square-foot space — in its new 709-unit Linc LIC rental building, at 4310 Crescent St., which should open later this month. (A grocery store is taking the larger space.) Prices at Linc LIC start at \$1,875 per month for studios (which average 500 square feet), \$2,425 for one-bedrooms (which average 655 square feet) and \$3,470 for two-bedrooms (which average just under 1,000 square feet). Three-bedrooms (which average 1,400 square feet) go from \$4,600 to \$5,600.

And Linc LIC is definitely keeping up with the demand for high-quality amenities. "We have a basketball court, squash court. We have a children's playroom, a great lawn with a barbecue grill and a misting spray," says Kathleen Scott, vice president of marketing and leasing for Rockrose. (The latter, she mentions, is the cooling water mist sprayed on hot sunbathers.) There's also a "garage, valet, tenant lounge and a garden on the third floor roof of the commercial space."

Even something less than a third the size of Linc LIC or 4545 Center Blvd. promises the big roof deck and fire pit. The 199-unit Gantry Park Landing should be open for tenants in July.

"The real highlight is the boutique [condo-like] status," says David Maundrell, president of aptsandlofts.com. That means, in addition to the roof deck and barbecue, the rental building will have a slew of amenities like a fitness center, yoga room, gaming lounge and club room. Studios start in the \$1,900-per-month range, and units go up to roughly \$5,500 for a three-bedroom.

So, yes, you will never run out of amenities at these new buildings — provided you want to stay in the building in the first place. While proximity to Manhattan has always been a selling point for LIC, there's plenty of places to go out in the neighborhood.

"We really wanted to move here to make our commute a bit easier," says Eve Carr. "I work in Long Island City; Patrick works in Jersey City. We wanted to be closer to the city on the weekend, and we found we were always going out around the area."