



74 HOME DIARY OF A BUYER

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Step by step

For more on Andy Wang's Brooklyn home search, visit the NYP Home Page at blogs.nypost.com/re, where you'll find a recap of his buying experience

Some highlights:

MARCH 4

The location, on Fourth Avenue in Park Slope, four blocks from the nearest subway (and that's in the direction away from Manhattan), across from a new boutique hotel but also an unattractive taxi hub, is far from ideal. The hallways feel more, to me at least, like a college dorm than a luxury condo.

The bedrooms in the two-bedroom model units are a bit on the small side, and the kitchen-counter space is tiny. So, of course, Novo is Park Slope's hottest new condo building. The building had its first open house today. It started at 1 p.m. By 2:30, four of the six one-bedroom units released for sales were no longer available. Three two-bedroom units were also spoken for. The reason for these quick transactions — and for the dozens of people still waiting outside at 3 p.m., when the open house was supposed to be ending — is quite simple: This building is priced right.

One of the one-bedrooms was just \$309,000 for a 562-square-foot unit, with 24 square feet of outdoor space, low common charges of \$254 and taxes of less than \$12 thanks to the abatement that comes with so many new condos in the city.

A 621-square-foot one-bedroom was listed for \$345,000. ...

Earlier in the day, I had visited two Fort Greene buildings: the Forte building on Ashland Place near BAM and One Hanson Place (the old Williamsburgh Bank Building), which isn't even a half block from all the Atlantic/Pacific express trains and the Target.

Just last week, one prominent broker and a developer stressed "location, location, location" to me, and for that reason alone I'm keeping a close eye on One Hanson. The big one-bedroom units I'm considering there are only slightly more expensive than the similarly sized two-bedrooms at Novo, and I like the fact that One Hanson is right in between all the downtown Brooklyn

redevelopment as well as the planned Atlantic Yards developments. The finishes and views I saw today are another reason I might be back soon.

MARCH 18

My Sunday afternoon started at 145 Park Place, located just off Flatbush in Park Slope (huge bonus points for the Duane Reade around the corner). For a new condo building, it's a bit bare-bones (no gym, for example), but the value here is huge. Unit 1D, lowered from \$645,000 to \$615,000 a couple weeks ago, is 1,060 square feet. I was leery of the one-bedroom D units before I visited, because their only windows face a courtyard, but when I checked out 2D (also 1,060 square feet, priced at \$625,000) there was more than adequate light. And the L-shaped living/dining area is pretty massive (535 square feet) for a one-bedroom apartment.



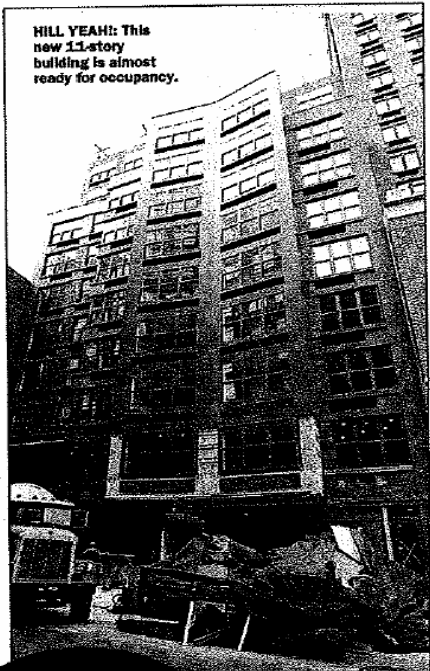
STEEL YOURSELF: Kitchens at Lookout Hill offer Viking appliances.

Horn's Alchemy Properties, and how it likes to price buildings a little below market. And although this means fewer amenities than other luxe properties (there's no gym in this building, but there is a rec room whose future will be determined by the residents — sorry, but this seems like exactly the type of situation you buy into a condo to avoid), the units themselves are pretty spectacular: kitchen cabinets that really maximize your space, fantastic bathrooms, attractive

finishes throughout and great light.

And the value here is good, too: One apartment I saw, 9C, is a \$645,000 one-bedroom, 1 1/2-bath, 913-square-foot unit with his-and-hers sinks in the master bath. I might be back to take another look soon.

This building was the second viable housing option I had found in two hours. Add One Hanson to the mix and I now had three attractive possibilities in Brooklyn.



HILL YEAH!: This new 11-story building is almost ready for occupancy.

LOOKOUT HILL
Brooklyn Heights
46 units
Available: one-bedroom,
932 square feet, \$635,000
lookouthillcondo.com

on this block for the rest of my life if I find the right situation. So it's no surprise that I've been eyeing the condo building that opened across the street from my apartment in 2004. I've often dreamed about moving from my one-bedroom into a big two-bedroom across the street. I've looked across the street at the happy baby who always peeks out his window when his daddy's walking home from work. And although I don't have a baby and have no immediate plans to create one, I can't help but envy what seems like the most idyllic life on the most idyllic block.

Well, this afternoon, I went to an open house for a two-bedroom apartment in this condo building, and there's no way I can live there.

The hallways have a sanitized corporate feel, and the unit itself suffers from poor kitchen-counter space, an unimpressive bathroom, lame views and finishes that are nowhere near as nice as those in cheaper apartments I've seen. At \$810,000 for around 1,000 square feet, the unit seems significantly overpriced compared to many better units I've seen. So barring a huge markdown, I guess I'm moving to another block soon. ...

APRIL 7

I made backup offers on three apartments in a Brooklyn new-construction building this week, and it looks like I'll see a contract for one of those units in a couple days. ...

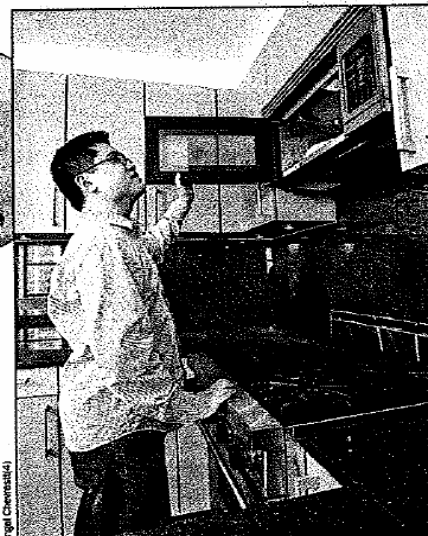
I've just started looking for apartments and I've already found three buildings (with multiple floorplans in each) where I could imagine living very happily. I did not expect to have this many good candidates even after months of searching. ...

APRIL 1

One of my dreams died today. There will probably be other, bigger real-estate dreams in my life that will crumble in the near future, but this one is still a bit hard to take.

Like many New Yorkers, I believe that the block I live on is the best block in the entire world. Sackett Street between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Park Slope has great subway access and it's near good grocery stores and some of the best restaurants and bars in the city. I'm not even a block away from Lobo, a Tex-Mex restaurant that reminds me weekly of the delicious yellow-cheese-drenched food of my Texas childhood. Lobo is where two dudes named Caleb and Will have become my favorite bartenders/waiters in New York and perhaps ever. And the 24-hour deli across the street from Lobo has, day after day, a staff so good-humored that it seems unnatural.

I could see myself living



CHECKING IT OUT: Andy Wang and broker Rodolfo Lucchese take a good, long look at this Lookout Hill apartment.

I didn't really dig the dark cabinets in the kitchen, but overall, I could easily see myself living here. And at this price, I'll have to consider that at least a little.

Next up was Lookout Hill at 199 State Street, next to the well-known Court House rental building in Brooklyn Heights. Many units will be available in May, which is a bit soon for me, but this building is nice enough to make me rethink any timetable.

NYP Home has written a lot about the developer, Ken