



REAL ESTATE CHALLENGE: CAN THE PROS CONVINCE ONE FAMILY TO MOVE TO A DIFFERENT APARTMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD?

By Jennifer Laing | December 23, 2015



Have you ever wondered if your life could be easier, better, even happier if you lived in a different apartment, a different neighborhood? We did, so we asked three real estate pros to find one family (mine!) a more suitable home and neighborhood than our present three-bedroom, two-bath set-up in our beloved East Village.

The mission: a family-sized, pet-friendly apartment within a 30-minute commute to one child's Upper West Side School and both kids' extracurricular activity hub (Lincoln Center) while sticking to a budget of \$5,000 to 6,000 per month.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS





Our first agent, Kristen Merlino of Citi Habitats, recommended two apartments uptown. The first, **360 East 65th Street, #3A** (\$5,349) was a three-bedroom, two-bath rental in a doorman building with laundry, a garage, and even private storage. The pictures depicted an apartment with freshly painted walls and gleaming hardwood floors and an open (if small) kitchen. It was wired for FIOS, had a live-in super and on-site management, and was pet-friendly. Plus, the owner was offering to pay the fee on a 16- to 18-month lease.

Kristen chose the apartment for its relatively quick commute to Lincoln Center: 27-minutes via cross town bus, 30 minute subway ride by N/Q/R and 1 trains or 26 minute trip on the F and B/D trains. What she liked: "The best part is it is only a 33-minute walk door-to-door to Broadway and 67thStreet/Lincoln Center, through the park, which would be absolutely lovely with the boys on a nice day. Plus, Google Maps assumes all people walk as slow as tortoises so I am sure you can make it under 30!"

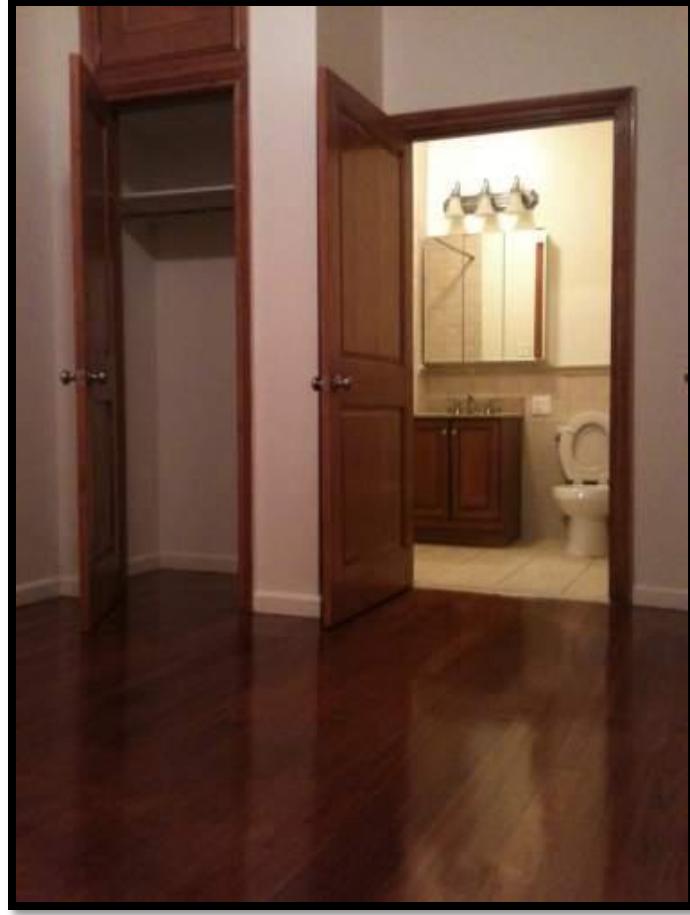




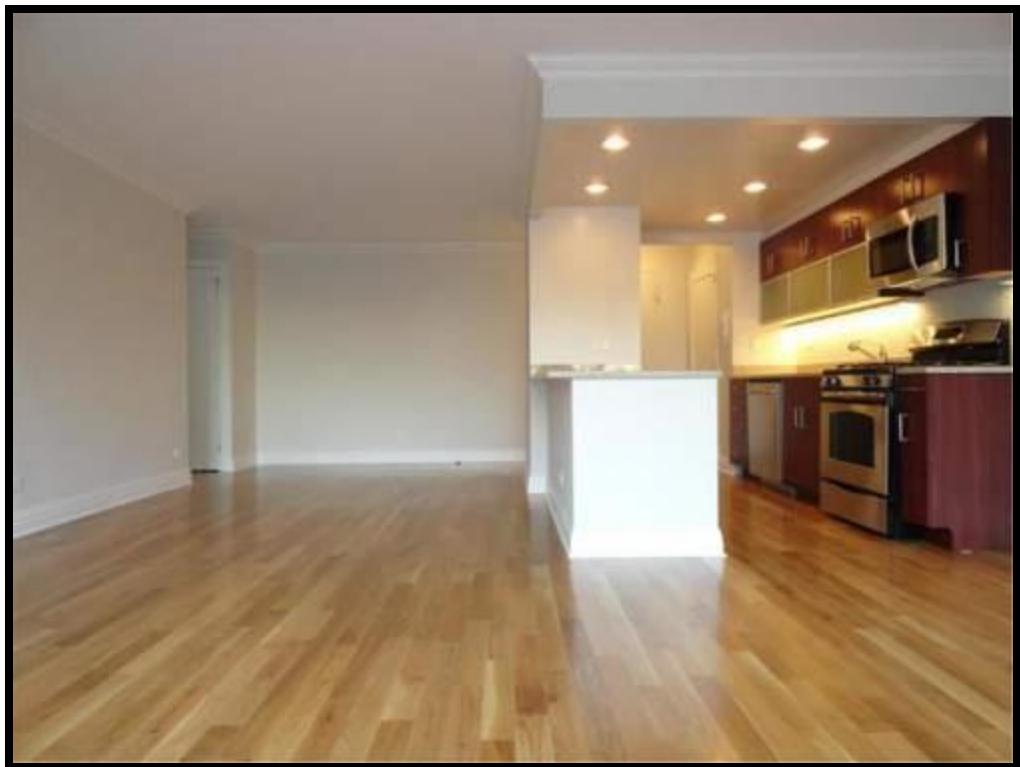
Her “fee” option was **65 West 70th Street, #5N** (\$6,195), a large three-bedroom, and three-bath home in a boutique elevator building on the Upper West Side. The price was slightly over our budget, but the apartment had been on the market for several weeks and Kristen was confident it could be negotiated down to \$6,000.

Kristen liked many of the building’s features: with just three apartments per floor, it had an intimate feel and also provided laundry in basement, a video intercom, a flexible pet policy and a quintessential UWS brownstone entry/stoop. She also pointed out the large living/dining area and the lovely fireplace. Its location was a quick seven-minute walk to Lincoln Center, which would allow me to “run home, finish errands, start dinner, put a wash in, and write a story while the boys are at their activities. This also saves on any cab fare or other transportation costs,” she adds. Bonus: it was also minutes away from the B, C and 1 trains for other transportation needs.





Eric Mendelsohn of Warburg Realty recommended the same apartment at **65 West 70th Street, #5N** (\$6,195) pointing out that the third bathroom along with the apartment's close proximity to Lincoln Center and the express subway at 72nd Street made it worthwhile to go very slightly over budget. Plus, "the fireplace and high ceilings add charm and spaciousness," he says.





His no-fee option was **120 West 97th Street, # 9I** (\$5,895), a renovated three-bedroom, two-bath apartment with corner south-facing views in a three-building complex with a landscaped courtyard, a fitness center, and a children's playground. Eric liked the building for its courtyard and playground (great for young kids) and easy access to Central Park and the new Columbus Square retail complex featuring a Whole Foods Market.





[Daniel Itingen](#), rental manager at [Platinum Properties](#), took an entirely different approach: "There's isn't one neighborhood that would solve all of [your] logistical issues but the Financial District will help fix most of them and make [your] life a lot less hectic," he says, pointing to the area's access to major subway lines (including the 2/3 lines that would get us to Lincoln Center in roughly 25 minutes).

He also liked the nabe because it was close to my husband's office, which would allow him to maximize family time with the kids even if he had to work late. "Combine that with the fact that FIDI is very family friendly and you have a good mix of space and location," he explains.

Daniel's first recommendation was **47 Ann Street, #7R** (\$5,350), a massive loft-style unit with high ceilings and tall windows currently set up as a two-bedroom but easily converted to three, with tons of living space left over. What's more, it was fully renovated with a washer and dryer, exposed white brick, and dark hardwood floors.





His second listing (also no-fee) was **15 Park Row, #7K** (\$5,830). Once an office building, the landmarked luxury high-rise offered a spacious, fully renovated three-bedroom, two-bath unit with tall ceilings, washer and dryer facilities on every floor, and a 24-hour doorman. And its location, steps to the uptown 2/3 train and walking distance to my husband's office made it very convenient.

THE DECISION

East 65th Street had some valuable amenities, especially the doorman, garage, and private storage, but we'd never been drawn to the Upper East Side and I was intimidated by the potentially traffic-heavy crosstown commute.

West 70th Street was a dream, location-wise and I was already imagining myself curled up in front of the fire with a book and a glass of wines (such wishful thinking!), but the apartment seemed at bit dark and pokey. (Maybe the pics don't do it justice.) It also felt a little too cookie-cutter for our tastes, plus, there was a terrace that—with two kids and two cats—seemed like a liability.

I've long been attracted to FiDi with its abundance of prewar office-turned-residential buildings with so-called condo-like finishes and amenities galore. And the transportation options are fantastic. The Ann Street apartment was tempting because the idea of an open loft with its charming pressed tin ceilings, exposed brick walls, and implication of solid construction appeals to me—I have two, um, energetic children who would really benefit from the open space and foot of concrete between the floors)—but the Google Maps street view of the block (narrow and lined with dumpsters) was a bit of a downer. The Park Row

apartment, with its 11-foot ceilings and spa-like bathroom seemed promising, but the pictures were confusing: Was that a kitchen in the living room?

I know I'm being exceedingly picky. All of these apartments would shorten my commute (often twice or three times a day!) to the Upper West Side, and none had me sacrificing space in any appreciable way. West 70th would even end up saving me money since having two kids in the same school district and likely in schools blocks apart from one another would preclude my need for daily babysitting. So what was holding me back?

For starters, I'm a notoriously indecisive person, always worrying about making the wrong decision: What if we hate the new apartment? What if we don't like the neighborhood? What if the kids change schools or quit their extra-curricular activities?

And the kids adamantly refuse to consider leaving the only home they've ever known, a building filled with best friends and a neighborhood they call their own. My husband suggests we table the decision until our lease is up this summer and revisit the situation. Maybe we'll be ready then?