

# Renting an Experience in Long Island City

By Joyce Cohen | March 17, 2016



**The renters: Kenlyn and Collin Klamper on the balcony of their apartment in Long Island City, Queens.**

Kenlyn and Collin Klamper, both originally from the West Coast, lived in Silver Spring, Md., and worked in the Washington, D.C. area. The couple, married two years ago, were saving for a house.

Meanwhile, for \$2,700 a month they rented a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Silver Spring. Four train lines passed right outside.

“It was so noisy, things rattled on the table,” Mr. Klamper said. The elevator was frustratingly slow. A bright parking-lot light glared through their windows.

The Klampers had visited New York, concluding that “it would be really fun to live here, and it will never happen,” Mr. Klamper said.



**FINANCIAL DISTRICT, At 20 Exchange Place, a two-bedroom apartment did not have the requisite outdoor space.**

Suddenly, last year, Mrs. Klamper, 31, formerly Kenlyn McGrew, heard from a former colleague who offered her a job in cybersecurity in Jersey City, across the Hudson River from Manhattan. She visited the office “to try to find a reason to say no,” she said, but couldn’t.

Mr. Klamper, 44, a business development manager, was able to arrange to work from home. So the couple began the hunt for a rental in New York.

They preferred not to live in Jersey City. “I felt, if we are going to move to New York, let’s pay a little bit more and be in New York,” she said. “I really wanted to live in New York and check that off my bucket list.”

They aimed for a two-bedroom apartment, large enough to include office space for Mr. Klamper and a guest room for visiting friends and his two children from his previous marriage, who live with their mother.

“We wanted what we would call a New York experience,” which meant a high floor in a high-rise, Mr. Klamper said. “D.C. has a lot of height restrictions, so for us it’s a big thrill having the ability to go up high.”



**FINANCIAL DISTRICT, A one-bedroom at 200 Water Street had a terrace, which was good. But loud cooling equipment close by.**

They also coveted their own outdoor space. Without it, “I would go stir crazy,” he said. And without a view, “you could be anywhere.”

On Craigslist, they found that what seemed like plausible options turned out not to really exist. One agent they contacted, [Lena Lerner](#), a saleswoman at [Platinum Properties](#), arranged for a day of hunting in the financial district, filled with high-rises and an easy

commute to Jersey City. The Klampers budgeted \$4,000 a month; Ms. Lerner knew that it might not be enough for the kind of space they sought.

At 20 Exchange Place, once a bank headquarters, a two-bedroom renting for around \$5,200 a month had great views but no outdoor space. A one-bedroom in the same building for around \$4,300 had a terrace. But it also had a strange asymmetrical layout, as do many units in converted office buildings. The space “was not really break-up-able,” Mr. Klamper said.

Nearby, at 200 Water Street, also once an office building, a one-bedroom was \$4,000 a month. The Klampers liked the place until they saw how close air-conditioning equipment was to the apartment’s private terrace.

They didn’t mind hearing sounds of the city, but the roar of traffic down below is one thing, and loud ventilation at your elbow is another. “I knew that as soon as summer hits, which is when we were going to be hanging out there, it was going to be horrible,” Mr. Klamper said. “The chill units were just too close.”



**MIDTOWN WEST** The new Sky on West 42nd Street was impressive. The prospective renters, however, did not need its many amenities.

On their next visit, Ms. Lerner took them to Midtown, where she thought there was a better chance of finding outdoor space. By then the couple had boosted their budget to the low \$5,000s.

Sky, a rental tower on far West 42nd Street, was so new they toured wearing hard hats. A two-bedroom with a balcony was \$6,295 a month and comparatively small. They weren't interested in the building's many resortlike amenities, some included in the rent and some available for a fee, including a Turkish bath, several swimming pools and a basketball court.

"They were, like, 'You don't ever need to leave the building,' " Mr. Klamper said. "That is not why we wanted to move to New York, so it was not for us, but it was spectacularly designed."

Then Ms. Lerner suggested Long Island City, Queens, which neither had heard of. "People think it is Long Island," Ms. Lerner said, referring to far-flung suburban neighborhoods. "I have to explain it is just across the East River from Manhattan."

At the TF Cornerstone rental buildings along Center Boulevard, they fell for the last of several units they saw. On the 12th of 26 floors, it had two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a balcony, a washer-dryer and a great view of Manhattan.



**QUEENS** It pays to take a look, even if you don't know the area. Over the East River in Long Island City was a two-bedroom with a great view.

“It was immediate,” Mr. Klamper said. “We didn’t even need to think about it.”

The rent was \$5,695 a month, which they were able to negotiate down to \$5,095. The building paid the broker fee. The couple, who arrived last fall, are thrilled with their new living quarters.

The view of the East River and the traffic on the F.D.R. Drive is “vibrant and totally alive,” Mr. Klamper said. He plans to grow potted trees and jasmine on the balcony in the spring.

They find, however, that the balcony is unexpectedly windy. “Things get blown about significantly,” Mrs. Klamper said. “Our table got knocked over by the wind.”

All they miss is storage. They rented a storage unit off-site, mostly for Christmas paraphernalia. It is small, just 5 feet by 5 feet, but necessary. “I don’t have a 5-by-5 extra closet,” Mr. Klamper said.

He commutes one day a week to his office near Washington; Mrs. Klamper has a two-leg commute, via E train and PATH train, to Jersey City. On a good day, it’s around 45 minutes, but “compared with driving through the D.C. area every day, it’s a breeze,” she said. She does plenty of reading and listening to podcasts.

“We were looking for some sort of wow factor, something that would be a little bit special,” she said. They found it. “People look at the view and actually do say ‘Wow.’”