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Rich NY Apartment Buyers Fork Over Big Bucks for Invisibility



Forget sky-high Jacuzzis and deluxe dressing rooms. A new guard of high net worth Manhattan buyers wishes its apartments came with invisibility cloaks.

An increasing number of New York City apartment hunters is going to extreme lengths — and expense — to make sure no one ever finds out where they live and, even if they do, they'll have no hope of ever making it inside.

These purchasers are buying under multiple layers of trusts and limited liability companies in order to protect their identities, seeking out buildings with heightened security, installing safe rooms and even building secret tunnels from which they can enter or exit their homes.

“The real estate industry has become such a sensationalized business in terms of the gossip factor,” said luxury broker Wendy Maitland of Town Residential. “There are so many blogs and websites out there that make it their mission to find out who’s moving where, who’s buying, who’s selling and what they’re paying. It’s so much harder to remain anonymous and ensure safety.”

It might seem like overkill but experts said heightened security measures can be absolutely necessary, especially if the buyer is someone with a lot of money — or star power.

Case in point is supermodel Gigi Hadid, who moved out of her apartment on the Bowery just last week after a crazed stalker bypassed the doorman at her luxury building and made it inside.

The alleged weirdo, Marcell Porter, had a history of offences, had been sending Hadid creepy Facebook love notes for months and milling around outside her building for long stretches of time.

Following his arrest, Hadid put the pad on the market for \$2.45 million.

“So much is google-able these days and it can make you vulnerable,” said luxury real estate expert Leonard Steinberg of Compass, who has worked with a buyer who had a stalker. “There’s a small percentage of people out there whose obsessions with celebrities turn dangerous. They feel like they know them.”

Buyers are now getting proactive about privacy and safety in an effort to avoid a situation such as Hadid’s.

A massive \$48.5 million triplex apartment owned by a Saudi prince on Riverside Dr. has a whopping three bullet-proof panic rooms to which the royal could retreat in the event of an intrusion, for instance.

And he’s not alone in his efforts.

When one of Maitland’s celebrity clients recently bought a townhouse uptown, she tried to outsmart prospective snoopers by digging a secret multi-million dollar tunnel between her property and an underground garage on the next block.

While the mystery purchaser couldn’t stop people finding out where she lived, she could stop from being followed inside and out, Maitland said.

“It took a lot of engineering and ingenuity but it was the perfect plan,” Maitland said.

It’s not just celebrities, either.

“I just did a deal with a completely unknown woman who insisted that all the agents involved sign non-disclosure forms,” said Halstead Property agent Brian Lewis. “She even wanted evidence that the board had shredded the purchase application after they reviewed it. This is the new era we live in.”

Savvy real estate developers are catching on.

When development company Metro Loft Management converted an old Tribeca warehouse at 443 Greenwich St. into high-end apartments, it built a luxurious state-of-the-art underground parking facility so that residents could enter and leave the building by car without detection.

It also designed the building’s elevators so as that they would only make a single stop on each trip, meaning well-heeled buyers or celebs never have to share their ride with another resident.

“You literally never have to see or be seen by anyone else,” said broker [Danny Hedaya](#) of [Platinum Properties](#).

The enhanced privacy features seem to have done the trick in terms of attracting privacy-sensitive buyers.

“Hunger Games” star Jennifer Lawrence checked out the building earlier this month.