

PROPERTY

IF YOU'RE BROWSING FOR A HOME IN NOMAD...

\$1.47 million

50 W. 29th St., 13W

This is a two-bedroom, 1½-bathroom co-op loft.

◆ **Property Plus:** Maintenance is \$522 a month.

◆ **Property Minus:** The building doesn't have a doorman.

◆ **Listing Agents:** Fred Slavin of Bellmarc Realty, 917-945-0572, and Ken Schiff of A.C. Lawrence/Bellmarc, 917-771-5331

**\$3.9 million**

15 E. 26th St., No. 10E

This is a three-bedroom loft condominium with three bathrooms and 12-foot ceilings.

◆ **Property Plus:** The apartment has 9-foot windows.

◆ **Property Minus:** The unit has one exposure.

◆ **Listing Agent:** Brett Grabel of Corcoran Group, 212-678-7233

**\$10 million**

21 E. 26th St., No. 2

A four-bedroom condo with 6½ bathrooms, an office and a den

◆ **Property Plus:** Comes with a 252-square-foot planting terrace

◆ **Property Minus:** No on-site parking

◆ **Listing Agents:** Melanie Lazenby, 212-727-6131, and Dina Lewis, 212-727-6129, of Douglas Elliman Real Estate



BLOCK PARTY | By Kaya Laterman

Food and Drink Take Root on 26th Street

New bars and restaurants are opening these days at a fever pitch in NoMad, or north of Madison Square Park—and to the delight of many area residents and office workers, West 26th Street is quickly establishing itself as the city's newest restaurant row.

Following the launch of half a dozen new lunch spots, whiskey bars and restaurants in the past six months, the Flatiron Hotel on 26th and Broadway will open its rooftop bar in mid-May. It will include a raw and sushi bar and has started to take reservations for private parties.

The Belgian Beer Café, on 26th and Fifth Avenue, plans a late-May opening and will offer more than 50 brews on tap. Jon Bloostein, owner of Heartland Brewery, said he plans to open Flatiron Hall, a retro beer hall and restaurant, at 38 W. 26th St. by mid-June. In addition, the third outpost opened by cafe-bakery Koffeecake Corner is arriving at the intersection of 26th and Sixth Avenue.

"I've worked in the neighborhood since 2002 when there were only two places to order lunch and a handful of delis," said Karen Hennegan, executive producer at Ataboy Studios, an animation company in NoMad. With the new eateries, she said, "It's great for foodies—it's all here now."

The revitalization of Madison Square Park and the opening of a number of boutique hotels helped revive the neighborhood, which had been a destination for both high- and low-end entertainment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Ace Hotel, the 40/40 Club, the Hog Pit, Hill Country Barbecue Market and the now-closed Gstaad restaurant opened within a few years of each other starting in 2003 and are considered pioneers helping to upgrade the area north of the park.

Then came a wave of creative and technology firms leasing office space, while longtime wholesalers of low-price clothing started to vacate the area.

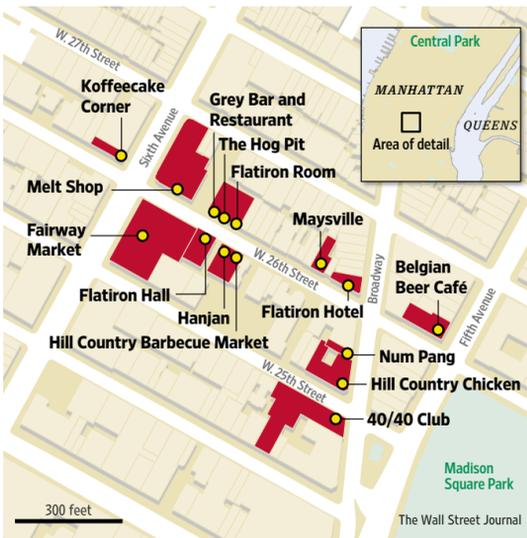
Another bonus is that the site of the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava cuts between 25th and 26th streets, providing additional light and space in the block, noted Heartland's Mr. Bloostein.

The neighborhood mix is estimated to be 40% residential and the remainder commercial occupants, a relatively close balance compared with many neighborhoods that are more predominately made up of one type of tenants or the other, according to Leslie Lopez, president and chief executive of Kew Management Corp., a commercial leasing company.

She said her firm favors renting to smaller entrepre-



Clockwise from left: Toshi's Living Room on the first floor of the Flatiron Hotel; entrance of the Hog Pit; a view of 26th Street looking east toward Madison Square Park; and sandwich shop Num Pang.



neurial occupants over national brands. "We have been very careful about whom to lease space to," Ms. Lopez said. "I'd rather rent to a firm that reflects the eclectic nature of the neighborhood," she said.

Robert "Toshi" Chan, owner of the Flatiron Hotel, said he is hoping to lure in the after-work crowd.

"If my patrons want to be loud and listen to music, they can go to Toshi's Living Room on the ground floor. For more of a Zen, quiet moment, I can now provide my rooftop," he said from the space with stunning views of the Empire State Building.

Hoomi Kim, chef and owner of Hanjan, one of 26th Street's most-talked-about restaurants at the moment, said he liked the space because it was affordable and the foot traffic from the surrounding Flatiron, Chelsea and Midtown neighborhoods could possibly help



him fill seats during the traditionally slow dining days of Monday through Wednesday.

"Spaces I saw Downtown were asking about 75% more in rent," Mr. Kim said. "I think 26th Street was still considered the 'next frontier' even



'I had never hung out in NoMad before I leased my space, but it's so obvious things are happening here.'

leases, including Num Pang, a Cambodian-influenced sandwich, rice bowl and noodle joint, and the Melt Shop, which offers artisanal grilled-cheese sandwiches. Both places boast long lines for lunch nearly every day.

"I've taken my managers out for beers across the street at Hill Country [Barbecue] and have tried most of the new places on the block," said Spencer Rubin, owner of the Melt Shop. "I had never hung out in NoMad before I leased my space, but it's so obvious that things are happening

here." Hill Country Chicken followed Hill Country Barbecue to the neighborhood several years ago. More recent openings including Grey Bar and Restaurant, a popular sports bar and Maysville, a whiskey bar and restaurant.

And for those NoMad residents looking for a night in, many are eagerly awaiting the late June or early July opening of the Fairway Market on the corner of 25th and Sixth Avenue.

"It's incredible to see how things have developed," said Lionel Ohayon, who is an area resident and the owner of ICRAVE, a design and branding firm on Broadway and 26th Street. "It's rare that the city finds an area that can be reworked like this. It might take some time, but forward-thinking visions need to be cultivated now in order to create a new part of New York City."

The Mennonites of Manhattan, at Home in Their Townhouse

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the churches split in 1693. Like most religions, there is a wide spectrum within the Mennonite faith, which counts around 300,000 members in the U.S. and about 500 in New York City. Most live in rural Pennsylvania, with large populations in Ohio, Indiana and Kansas.

The majority began wearing modern clothing in the 1950s, so a Mennonite in Manhattan is typically indistinguishable from almost any other New Yorker.

Menno House has been owned by members of the faith since 1958, when it housed conscientious objectors engaged in public-service projects.

The Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship purchased the house in 1997.

With the mortgage paid off, Menno House officials said the low room fees cover upkeep of the 162-year-old home with 13 bedrooms and three bathrooms.

Three of the rooms are reserved for overnight guests, who are often lured by reports of

\$75-per-night rooms on travel websites. Most of these travelers have no affiliation with the Mennonite church.

The rest are used for short- or long-term residency, which can last anywhere from one month to one year. Residents go through an application process to obtain rooms, and most are

The low room fees cover upkeep of the 162-year-old building.

members of the faith.

Residents of Menno House compare the close-knit network of big-city Mennonites to the parlor game "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon," in which any Hollywood personality can be connected by steps to a film in which the actor appears.

Ms. Versluis termed it the Mennonite game: "Most people who end up living here know

someone who has lived here or an aunt says to them, 'Hey, check out Menno House.'"

Once a week, everyone gathers for an event dubbed Soup Tuesday. "Cooking is an important tradition for the Mennonites," Mr. Showalter said. "And soup is totally a Mennonite thing."

A recent meal proved the name is somewhat misleading, with a taco salad prepared by Allison Schrag, a bubbly 23-year-old Kansas native serving a year with the Mennonite Voluntary Service, a religious analog to AmeriCorps.

Most residents of Menno House are engaged in a year of service or attending graduate school after getting a degree from a Mennonite college. Both types are on tight budgets. Ms. Schrag's volunteer program, for instance, provides her with a monthly stipend of \$50 for food and \$10 for fun.

"What can you really do with that?" Ms. Schrag shrugged. "We do a lot of free activities to-



The Menno House offers communal living for a select group.

gether."

Despite the very affordable rent, Menno House's communal living comes with clear drawbacks. No one is comfortable walking around in their underwear and mornings inside the

big home can be tough.

"I have a zombie morning style and not everyone else does. That can be annoying," Ms. Schrag said.

But the house offers a feeling of safety for young people, many

of whom are living in New York for the first time. It acts as a sort of halfway house, helping Mennonites acclimate to an urban environment.

"I got into NYU for grad school, and the housing was \$16,000 alone," said Leah Yoder, a 24-year-old Mennonite from Salem, Ore., pursuing a graduate degree in social work. Her year at Menno House costs roughly a third of that.

"I also knew that I would find a safe haven for people with similar beliefs," Ms. Yoder said. "I come out of my shell with these people. I'm comfortable being myself."

Occasionally, friendships blossom into something more. Some Menno House residents can walk through the halls and point out the place where they had their first kisses.

"Two former residents got engaged recently and they want to have their wedding here," Ms. Versluis said, eyeing the space anxiously. "They've reassured us it will be a small wedding."