



# TMO NEWS

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## Forest Hills Is 1st Place, Say Queens Home Seekers

by Austin Considine, Assistant Editor

Amid worries around the borough over home foreclosures and the flagging economy, a prominent real estate group has cited Forest Hills as the borough's most popular neighborhood among home seekers.

The Real Estate Board of New York, a citywide trade association that is over a century old, announced last week that data culled from more than seven million hits on its Web site, [www.ResidentialNYC.com](http://www.ResidentialNYC.com), placed Forest Hills in first place in Queens followed by Astoria and Jackson Heights.

Michael Slattery, senior vice president of REBNY, said it was no surprise that the leafy neighborhood came in first.

"I think Forest Hills continues to be a strong, solid neighborhood," he said. "I think in some ways, Forest Hills is much like the Upper East Side and the Upper West Side of Manhattan — they're just strong, solid neighborhoods that have thrived for an extended period of time."

Neighborhoods like Forest Hills tend to stay strong and fluxuate less than other neighborhoods that have seen a bevy of new construction or gentrification, he noted.

Frank Molmar, a local realtor with offices on Metropolitan Avenue, said that despite recent changes that may have increased the neighborhood's popularity — like the arrival of a Trader Joe's and a Staples last fall — Forest Hills was essentially the same as it had always been.

"It's always been a solid, middle-class neighborhood," he said. "It was always expensive for Queens."



Other big attractions for the neighborhood include the coming of a new high school, accessible transportation, a solid Little League program and an active precinct council, said Barbara Stuchinski, president of the Forest Hills Community and Civic Association.

“This is still a community as opposed to other areas where there’s strictly a bedroom mentality,” she said. Other neighborhoods, she explained, often just provide places to eat and sleep between work shifts.

“We have schools you can walk to, shopping you can walk to, Austin Street you can walk to,” she said. “Everyone works together to keep this neighborhood A-1.”

Although parts of Queens, particularly in the southeast, have been hit hard recently by foreclosures, REBNY data also showed that apartment sales prices boroughwide increased by 18 percent in January 2008, compared to January 2007.

Sales of new luxury properties that were not available were cited as reasons for dramatic increases in some areas. In Long Island City, average apartment sales prices increased 44 percent compared to the same period last year; Woodside saw a 32 percent rise and Elmhurst prices went up 15 percent.

“There’s been so much concern about the direction of the market, we thought it was advisable to look month-to-month and see what was happening,” Slattery said.

“It’s not double digits as we’ve seen before, but I think the direction is generally positive,” he added. “It appears that the market still continues to be growing.”

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