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Back Home in Williamsburg

By Joyce Cohen



THE RENTERS Adam and Alison Sadel in their new one-bedroom in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. They lived in Williamsburg before moving to Toronto nearly four years ago.

Alison and Adam Sadel met in 2011 at the Equinox health club in Grand Central Terminal, where she worked and he was a member. They later moved in together, living with two roommates in a rental building in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Nearly four years ago, Equinox transferred Ms. Sadel, then Alison Hornstein, to Toronto, as the company was expanding in Canada. She rented a one-bedroom in a new condominium tower downtown, with a den, balcony, washer-dryer and two bathrooms. Mr. Sadel soon followed, finding a job in property management there.



The Sadels signed a two-year lease on an apartment with an open kitchen in a new 40-story tower.

Last winter, however, they decided it was time to return to New York. Mr. Sadel, now 32, took a job in Manhattan as a broker for Park River Properties, which specializes in condo conversions. The couple knew that Ms. Sadel, an account executive at Equinox, would be able to transfer back to New York, though it was unclear exactly where she would be based. So Mr. Sadel lived with his parents in northern New Jersey while he looked for a one-bedroom and she wrapped up things in Canada.

“It had been my job in Toronto to pick an apartment,” said Ms. Sadel, 29. “Adam moved in sight unseen. Now it was my turn to trust him.” Besides, she had other things to think about: At the time, they were engaged and she was busy planning their wedding at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.



The building has views of the waterfront.

The Sadel's wanted to live in a relatively new building close to their jobs in Manhattan, and hoped to spend about \$3,500 a month for a one-bedroom. Mr. Sadel's priority was a large closet; Ms. Sadel's was an open kitchen. Two bathrooms, they thought, would be nice, too.

"Once you have two bathrooms, it's hard to go back to one," Mr. Sadel said, though he assumed it was inevitable. "We were looking for something similar to what we had in Toronto without sacrificing too much."

Mr. Sadel began looking in Brooklyn Heights, where they had friends. But apartments seemed small for the price, and many of the buildings were old. He knew they would find more space in Williamsburg, as well as plenty of buildings built in the last decade or so, as the neighborhood had changed substantially in the few years they had been gone.

Mr. Sadel liked Leonard Pointe, built around 2014, where he was drawn to the surround-sound speaker system. But the apartment he saw there overlooked the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, he said, "and you could hear the cars zooming by."

Another building, 101 Bedford, which opened in 2012 near McCarren Park, also had an available apartment with surround-sound speakers. It had a balcony as well, which was something they felt they could easily do without, and it was on a low floor overlooking a busy courtyard, with a fishbowl feel, he said, "where everyone could just watch you."

Then one day last spring, as Mr. Sadel was walking along Kent Avenue, he saw a 40-story tower rising in what looked like a great spot on the waterfront. The building, Level, was not offering showings yet, but he visited the rental office and saw floor plans that showed the desired open kitchen and ample closet space, as well as a washer-dryer.



WILLIAMSBURG The building was brand new, the apartment had an open kitchen, and "I felt instantly home," Ms. Sadel said

When he later visited a one-bedroom there being offered for \$3,520 a month, he sent a video to Ms. Sadel in Toronto.

She happily gave him the go-ahead. “I wanted it taken care of,” she said. “I trusted him because he has better taste than I do.”

They signed a two-year lease that included two free months, and Mr. Sadel arrived in the middle of July, with Ms. Sadel joining him in August. (About a quarter of the building’s 554 units have been rented so far.)

“I felt instantly home,” Ms. Sadel said. “I was so happy to be back in the city.”

The first few weeks they were there, the hallways were covered with plastic floor-protection film, Mr. Sadel said, and “you could hear people walking on it near your door” — a crunch that sometimes awakened him.

It has since been replaced by carpeting, but the construction continues. Because they are at work during the day, though, they are able to escape the brunt of it, and it is scheduled to be finished in the spring.

To his delight, Mr. Sadel realized he could ride the ferry to work, with a quick trip between the North Williamsburg landing and Murray Hill, though it runs less often than the subway.

Ms. Sadel heads to two gyms in the East 50s in Manhattan. She reluctantly gave up her 12-minute walk to work in Toronto, and now uses the crowded Bedford Avenue station, where she takes the L train and transfers uptown.

The only other real sacrifice, they said, was the second bathroom — but then, they expected that. “Our bathroom is a big bathroom,” Ms. Sadel said. “So it’s not a problem.”