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YOUR HOME



Rachel McAdams
may go green at
311 E. 11th St. **INSIDE**



Tim Corcoran moved to his waterfront condo in Far Rockaway two months ago to see the surf from his living room.

HOBBY HOMES

These New Yorkers
have found the key
to their heart's desire

BY CARRIE SLOAN

When it came time for the apartment hunt, not even walk-in closets or indoor pools could turn their heads. Instead, Tim Corcoran, 32, a life-long wave-rider, was sold on a surf break.

Michael Prichinello, 34, co-founder of the Manhattan Classic Car Club, swooned at industrial-size elevators wide enough to fit a motorcycle.

Alejandra Ramos, 26, gave up a spacious private dressing room for a Harlem kitchen big enough so that after a dinner party the avid cook wouldn't have to do dishes in the bathtub.

To the average New Yorker, the amenities they couldn't live without might seem obvious, and the apartments they chose — which range from a \$600-a-month studio to a \$6,000-a-month loft — have little in

common. Except for one thing: Each was a space that would allow its new tenant to pursue a personal passion.

"For me, it wasn't about having a giant place to entertain," says Jerome Brooks, 31, of his Times Square studio. "It was about staying true to why I came to New York."

As a life-long drama geek, Brooks wanted to be near the stage — heaven was living a stone's throw from the bright lights of Broadway, no matter what the square footage.

In a lot of ways, that describes them all: New Yorkers with a single-minded fervor for something, be it surfing, hiking or motorcycles.

"I've been surfing as long as I can remember," says Corcoran, who grew up on Long Island. "It's a life-long tradition."

After getting his teaching degree at Hunter College, he sent his résumé on a whim to a school in Far Rockaway, the

only New York coastal neighborhood with a city-designated surfing break.

He quickly landed a job and shortly thereafter got engaged to Fran Ludwig, 31, a first-grade teacher at the same school.

Every day after class, Corcoran hit the waves. Usually Ludwig read in the car, but one day she took a drive and discovered Belle Shores, a 78-unit condo built in 2007, with prices ranging from \$400,000 to \$800,000 for two- and three-bedrooms. Corcoran could see the swells from the living room window.

"All I had to do was throw on my wet suit and run across the street," he says.

The next day the couple bought an oceanfront home, and Corcoran promptly built a board rack in the basement.

"I've got a whole setup downstairs, and I surf right out front," he says. "It's the best possible deal you can imagine."

For Juliette Longuet, 31, a Parisian

transplant, the apartment search revolved around a rack — one housing her line of self-named skirts and dresses.

Her discovery of fashion had been a fluke. She came to America at the age of 23, and started in marketing, where her co-workers were always asking where she got her clothes.

Longuet decamped to FIT, then sold a line to Saks.

Soon, what began as a hobby got too big. She wanted to show her designs the way she'd started — with soiree events at home. She and her husband, Edouard Pesch, 43, looked at 70 spots before finding the perfect apartment-cum-showroom.

Their two-bedrooms, two-bath in the Essex House, at 160 Central Park South, where a condo the same size recently sold for \$4.2 million, also provided an unanticipated perk: "Since moving, I've tripled my business," she says.

YOUR HOME



Cake maker Amy DeGiulio creates sugar flowers in her Manhattan kitchen

That's because she's closer to her uptown clientele. On any given night, Longuet will serve Champagne and French macarons, while a dozen well-heeled girls gather to shop in their lingerie, direct from the rack.

Amy DeGiulio, 33, settled on the upper West Side and also chose her place to grow her trade: sugar flowers, which she sells on wedding cakes and as stand-alone bouquets. A math major who previously worked as an actuary, she discovered her gift after taking a neighborhood class in pastry art.

"Making the flowers, I could sit for hours," she says. "I started photographing them, then made a Web site: sugarflowershop.com."

After separating from her husband, she moved to the city from the Hudson Valley with two requirements for her new home: a good greenmarket and lots of light, necessary when hand-painting veins on orchids.

She found her haven at 10 West End Ave., a doorman building between 59th and 60th St.

"I have a river view and floor-to-ceiling windows," she says. "It's one of the last places on West End that doesn't have a building in front of it."

Then again, sometimes it's fun, not profit, that attracts a die-hard tenant. Alejandra Ramos, 26, works as a Web editor by day. Food, though, is her passion. By night, she writes her blog, AlwaysOrderDessert.com, and throws frequent dinner parties.

After moving from a "postage-stamped" apartment in Washington, D.C.

— where she used to drag the dishes to the bathroom— she knew she wanted a place where she could entertain. She focused on Harlem, and landed in Sugar Hill, in a light-filled 1½-bedroom with a large kitchen — and dishwasher — that she rents for \$1,535. She's lived there for three years with her boyfriend, and loves "being a baker on Sugar Hill, with all the ethnic markets and ingredients."

Farther downtown, Prichinello found that even with a 10,000-square-foot showroom in SoHo, his car collection



Michael Prichinello's SoHo living room can accommodate his love of motorcycles

needed more space. At his old place, two blocks south of the World Trade Center, he had a lot. But when construction in the area hit fever pitch, he was forced to relocate: "They'd take a forklift and move my car three blocks," he says, "even if it was parked legally."

He moved to SoHo, renting the top floor of the sixth-story building at 241 Lafayette for \$6,000 a month — and found the wide-open loft space suited his needs.

"I had six motorcycles at the time," he says. "I could stick them right in the elevator and roll them in."

Back in the center of Manhattan, Brooks the Broadway-phile rents a fraction of the space, for a tenth of the price, but he wouldn't trade his hard-won studio for anything.

"I never thought I'd live in Times Square," says the South Carolina native, who, after moving to New York to pursue a career as an actor and musician, first lived in the Bronx, then Jamaica, Queens. Every audition meant a long train ride, complete with a résumé, head shot, dress clothes and dance shoes.

Fellow actors kept telling him about a housing organization called Common Ground, which provides subsidized living for performers and artists. He got on the waiting list, and, after 10 months, received a call that one of the 654 studios in the organization's Times Square building was open. The rent back then was \$437 a month.

"They had a rehearsal room with mirrors, and a gym," he says. "I thought, 'If I could get in here, it would be dynamite! I could run from audition to audition.'"

Since moving in four years ago, he has. Brooks released a CD of R&B music called "Committed" and toured Japan for three months, playing the piano after a producer called and said, "We need someone at this rehearsal right away." Thanks to his new home, he made it.

Now he's hard at work on a musical he has been composing for two years.

"It's about my life, working with different artists in New York. Kind of like," he says, "a new 'Rent.'"

Fortunately for him, his own is at an all-time low.



Jerome Brooks, at the piano, rehearses with cast members in a practice room at Common Ground Housing in Times Square, where he rents a \$600 studio

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