

COME SIT WITH ME WHILE I COOK

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Brian Harkin for The New York Times

The Buyers For Nicole and Brent Ferrin, lots to do — and “a ton of character” — in the financial district.

As it turned out, their search for a place in a space- and closet-challenged city landed them smack in the path of Hurricane Sandy. But there was no way they could have known that.

The Ferrins' wish list also included an open kitchen. When Ms. Ferrin cooked in their galley kitchen on Murray Street, “there was no place for Brent to sit and he would get in my way,” she said.

The two rarely eat together during the week, so “cooking on Friday and Sunday nights is our time together, and it wasn't really time together when I was in a walled-off kitchen.” Short on counter space, they stacked bowls on top of the toaster. And since the living room was at the other end of the apartment, there was a lot of shouting when friends came over.

Despite their rental's large size, it didn't have sufficient closet space. Mr. Ferrin's bag of golf clubs always sat in full view, standing upright behind a couch in a corner of the living room.

“It drove me bonkers,” Ms. Ferrin said.

Thinking they might like to live in a new building near the water, they visited Battery Park City, where a doorman referred them to Heather Stein, an agent at Brown Harris Stevens who is active with downtown listings.

But they decided against the area after learning that the buildings are on land leased from the Battery Park City Authority, which meant lower sales prices but higher monthly charges.

They went uptown to Greenwich Village. There they found a beautifully renovated two-bedroom co-op, listed at \$1.1

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million with a maintenance fee of around \$1,450 a month.

But it had the kind of galley kitchen they didn't want, and just one bathroom. And with 900 square feet, it was smaller than they would have liked. (It later sold for \$1.06 million.)

For their budget, the Ferrins found Greenwich Village offered less square footage than they already had. And, with their lease about to expire, they feared the co-op approval process would be prohibitively time-consuming. So a condominium seemed like a better bet, but there aren't a lot of them in Greenwich Village.

What's more, they were reluctant to live too close to Ms. Ferrin's workplace. As the director of admissions for a Greenwich Village nursery school, she had had awkward street encounters with students and their families. Out of context, it was sometimes difficult to remember who was who. (Once, a mother approached her at the hairdresser.)

The Ferrins knew they could get more space for their money in a financial district condo, though they worried that the neighborhood might be inconvenient and desolate during nonbusiness hours. And in the many office conversions they saw, they encountered narrow layouts and windowless home offices.

But two apartments seemed promising at the amenity-loaded 15 Broad Street, the former headquarters of the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company, also known as Downtown by Philippe Starck.

One apartment, for \$1.095 million, with monthly charges of around \$1,100, was gorgeously done, but its one bathroom had only a shower. The seller had small children, who were bathed in a portable tub. That was a deal-breaker.

"We wanted a bathtub," Ms. Ferrin said. "We talked about it. Friends from outside of the city were, 'What do you mean, no bathtub?'"

The other place, for almost \$1.2 million with monthly charges in the mid-\$1,100s, had two bathrooms, one with a tub. But it was more of a studio with two windowless rooms, one of which was a raised platform with partitions instead of walls. The Ferrins wanted a real bedroom.

At another converted office building, 75 Wall Street, the condominium atop Hyatt's Andaz Wall Street Hotel, they came upon a one-bedroom with a refreshingly normal layout. The 1,100-plus square feet allowed for a home office, plenty of closet space, two bathrooms and a kitchen open to the large living room.

"Their faces lit up when they saw the island for the kitchen," Ms. Stein said.

The price was \$1.2 million, with monthly charges in the low \$1,300s. The couple paid \$1.17 million and arrived in mid-September a few weeks before Hurricane Sandy.

"I grew up with hurricanes in Florida," Ms. Ferrin said. "I told Brent, if we stayed in the apartment and the windows blew out, we had a bathroom we could hide in, and he said, 'What are you talking about?'"

He soon found out. Their new home was in an evacuation zone, so they checked into a hotel in Midtown.

Mr. Ferrin, who works for an investment bank, soon went off on a business trip while Ms. Ferrin stayed uptown, first with an old roommate and then with her brother. And a good thing, too, because the building flooded.

"Our doorman showed me a video of water coming in," she said. "It was pretty intense. We had just moved down here and said, 'Was this the dumbest thing we had ever done?' We were definitely questioning our judgment."

But e-mails from their building's management kept them apprised of the situation, and power was restored in a week, though heat and hot water took longer.

Now, they revel in their space. The storage issues are resolved, with the golf clubs stowed in the hallway closet. Their big kitchen allows for conversing while cooking. Mr. Ferrin helps chop while Ms. Ferrin focuses on more complicated procedures, like reducing the sauce.

They appreciate the building's many amenities, including the rooftop lounge, where they recently held Mr. Ferrin's 30th birthday party. They sometimes indulge in room service, ordering breakfast from Wall & Water, the restaurant downstairs.

At Thanksgiving, they successfully played host to Ms. Ferrin's large family, some of whom stayed at the hotel beneath.

The neighborhood is growing on them. They are happily surprised at the enormous Duane Reade drugstores that are open 24 hours.

"What I didn't realize is the financial district has a ton of character, which I like a lot," Mr. Ferrin said. "It is a little more lively and keeps getting better. It isn't as bad as I was worried about."