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Brick Underground



From Long Island City to Brooklyn Heights: A first-time buyer upgrades to a new condo development

By **Kelly Kreth**
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"While my mortgage is higher than my rent, I knew going into this purchase that I would be upgrading. It was very much worth the higher cost for me," says first-time buyer Christina Galbato.

In early 2020, Christina Galbato was ready for an upgrade. She wanted a livelier neighborhood than Long Island City, where she had been living for three years. She also wanted a larger place—and to make the move from renter to owner. She found what she was looking for at Quay Tower, a new development in Brooklyn Heights. Here's her story.

I was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Seattle. I attended Villanova University and moved to New York City after graduating. I originally landed in Murray Hill but eventually moved to Center Boulevard in Long Island City with my dog, Koa, a two-year-old Bernedoodle.

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My apartment was by the water. It was 700 square feet with a balcony and I paid \$3,800 a month in rent. The building has great amenities: A gym, workspace, and an outdoor area with grills. There were laundry facilities on my floor.

I loved the balcony and views. The size of the space was decent and more than you could get at that price in other neighborhoods. However, I disliked the cookie-cutter vibe and its outdated appliances.

Living by the water was great for being outdoors; I love to run. It was also a very fast commute to Manhattan—just 15 minutes to Midtown. But the area left a lot to be desired. There weren't many new restaurants or shops in the three years I lived in the neighborhood. I usually ate at [Jora](#), Sweetleaf, [Casa Enrique](#), and Indie LIC. For food shopping I loved Food Cellar; it's a great grocery store with multiple locations in LIC. However, when ordering in, truthfully, I mostly chose places in Brooklyn!

In fact, because I didn't have many friends around LIC, most of my socializing happened in Manhattan or Brooklyn.

In 2020 I decided I was going to move and instead of renting, I wanted to buy. I was also looking to upgrade from a one bedroom to a two bedroom, and to be in a livelier neighborhood.

I worked with real estate agent Francesca Baglio, an agent at [NestSeekers International](#). We looked in both Manhattan and Brooklyn. I started looking seriously in February and at the beginning, the market was a bit slow, but as the months went on, it became a lot more competitive.

After seeing more than 40 apartments, once I saw the promotional video Ryan Serhant's team created for [Quay Tower](#) in Brooklyn Heights, a condo building, I was intrigued. I set up a viewing and spent a lot of time exploring the neighborhood and totally fell in love. I put in an offer for \$1.995 million and it was accepted.

As a [first-time home buyer](#), the entire process was a bit overwhelming and confusing, but my agent did a great job walking me through all of it. It took about a month and a half from offer to close.

My apartment is a 1,500-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bathroom apartment with an in-unit washer/dryer. It's a corner unit, so I get a ton of light throughout the day and beautiful views of Brooklyn and the Statue of Liberty. It has high-end appliances, finishes, floors, and windows. Of all of the amenities, my favorites are its large fitness center and two rooftop areas with beautiful views.

While my mortgage is higher than my rent, I knew going into this purchase that I would be upgrading. It was very much worth the higher cost for me. [Editor's note: Common charges for two bedrooms currently for sale in the building are about \$500—which is a bargain, especially if you're used to Manhattan monthlies. Also notable: This is a [land-lease condo building](#)—a rare type of ownership structure.]

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I love my new neighborhood. I have access to Brooklyn Bridge Park and Brooklyn Heights is a beautiful neighborhood with picturesque brownstones and waterfront parks. It's also within walking distance to Downtown Brooklyn, Dumbo, and Cobble Hill. I really never feel the need to go into Manhattan for anything other than to see friends.

It's a 15-minute walk to the nearest subway, which is a bit far. Thankfully I work from home. I'm the founder of an online education business, christinagalbato.com, that helps women build businesses as social media influencers. Fortunately I hear our building may be setting up a shuttle service. Other than that, there is nothing I dislike about living here.

Some of my favorite places to eat are: Bluestone Lane, [Colonie](#), Juice Press, Pilot, and [Boutros](#).

My entire family has visited and they absolutely love the area. They love that it's still very much New York City without feeling as hectic as Manhattan. And I've even met a few new friends on walks on the waterfront.

I'm glad to have set down roots in such a beautiful place and look forward to continuing to explore the area.

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