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Apartment Living

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Live, work, play

There are many options in New Jersey's thriving and diverse rental market

Nancy Parello - Special to The Star-Ledger

When Erin Sweeney moved back to New Jersey five years ago, she headed straight for Newark, rather than return to her hometown in rural Sussex County. The 32-year-old nonprofit executive said she always dreamed of living in New Jersey's largest city.

"I feel like it's our city," Sweeney said. "It's a transportation, legal, education hub. It's an important place. I want it to be great and I want to be part of that."

Sweeney has plenty of company.

Millennials and other young professionals are increasingly shunning the suburbs in favor of urban centers that are closer to their jobs and sport a host of entertainment and cultural venues where they can build a diverse network of friends and colleagues.

And the rental market is responding, offering living options and amenities that cater to this new breed of renter who craves convenience and wants to live, work and play in the same place.

At Eleven80, where Sweeney lives, residents enjoy the carefully preserved

character of the renovated 307-unit Art Deco building, the spacious apartments, the soaring ceilings and the array of amenities that rival an entertainment complex.

A billiards room, bowling alley, a one-half basketball court, fitness center and common spaces with a large screen television, card tables and nooks and crannies for sitting and chatting with neighbors all contribute to the active, convenient lifestyle sought by young, as well as older individuals.

"There is a really nice mix of people here," Sweeney said. "Influential people and those trying to make their mark."

"Penn Station is just a couple of blocks away and I can walk to any meeting in the downtown area."

That convenience comes at a fraction of what New York renters pay, with rents at Eleven80 starting at \$1,560 for a studio to up to \$3,500 for a two-bedroom apartment with a private terrace.

History also lives at The Beacon.

Listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places, The Beacon's six

ornate buildings have been restored to preserve the architectural grandeur of its Art Decoera origins, with marble walls, terrazzo floors, etched glass, gilded beams and moldings and bronze chandeliers.

The 241-unit Hague, the latest and final addition to this community, developed by Building and Land Technology (BLT), opened in March.

"BLT had a grand vision for these remarkable buildings," said John Masso, The Beacon's regional manager. "To see them now fully reawakened as an inspired 21st-century use teeming with resident activity and, once again, an asset to the city, is both thrilling and rewarding."

The community, perched at the highest spot in Jersey City, offers a range of options, from studios to three-bedroom triplexes, with rents ranging from \$1,600 to \$8,000 a month. An array of features, amenities and outdoor space are designed to lure young professionals, couples and retirees.

The community sports sprawling parks against the backdrop of the Manhattan skyline, with grills, children's playground,

organic garden and large dog runs.

Beacon residents regularly enjoy community events, such as wine tasting and art shows, on the premises. They have access to a complimentary shuttle service to downtown Jersey City and transportation hubs.

“What the millennials want is convenience,” Masso said. “They work hard, they come home and they don’t want to have to think about anything. They say, ‘I want to go to this wine event,’ and it’s right there, they’re stumbling on it when they get home.”

Another Jersey City option that combines more history with all that’s modern is Modera Lofts, a newly renovated, 110-year-old, post-and-beam warehouse that is opening this month. “We’re targeting the millennials, the young professionals, people who are getting married later in life,” said Richard Murphy, managing director of the Northeast Division of Mill Creek Residential Trust LLC, which owns and manages the building.

Exposed beams and 12-foot floor-to-ceiling windows, coupled with an array of modern-day amenities, including club rooms, a fitness center, a rooftop deck and spin and yoga spaces, make this building a special property, Murphy said.

“Even though we’re in this very unique building, it’s a 5-minute walk to the PATH station, a 7-minute train ride to lower Manhattan and it’s in the heart of Jersey City, which has dozens of options for dinner, Sunday morning brunch and other cultural and entertainment venues,” Murphy said.

Modera Lofts, similar to other properties, also caters to the growing number of work-at-home professionals. Conference

rooms of all sizes, as well as multiple small offices, give telecommuters a place to have meetings or spend their work day in an office, rather than in their apartments.

In addition to the 366 apartments, which average roughly 850 square feet and rent for about \$3,200 a month, the building also sports 5,000 square feet of retail and 15,000 square feet of first-floor space dedicated to the arts, including a gallery and 14 artist studios.

Another unique option in Jersey City is Newport, a rare mix of apartments, retail, offices and outdoor amenities, including the only urban beach along the Hudson River. The thriving 300-acre waterfront community, with more than 4,600 units, recently added its 14th building — the 163-unit Embankment House in the Hamilton Park section.

A city inside a city, Newport’s 15,000 residents enjoy an array of features and amenities that appeal to the young professional and others, including open layouts with hardwood floors, oversized windows, 24-hour doorman service, fitness centers and children’s playroom.

Perhaps most special is Newport Green, the community’s park that offers a summertime carousel and wintertime ice rink and is a hub of community activities, with movie nights, running races, beach parties, concerts and other events.

“We also have a number of retail destinations, a nice mix of restaurants, service stores, a grocery store, pizza — a little something for everyone in terms of restaurant offerings,” said Richard Wernick, Newport’s executive leasing director. “We’re also providing new amenities to appeal to

millennials, including an online portal, lounges, roof deck spaces, one with a giant chess board and a shuttle service during rush hour.”

Newport offers a range of living options, from studios to three-bedroom residences, many with views of Manhattan and the Hudson River.

“Because our portfolio is so diversified, we like to think that we have offerings for people of all budgets,” Wernick said.

For some, a smaller town with easy access to transportation to more bustling urban centers is just the ticket.

Estling Village in Denville is a short walk to the quaint downtown, where residents can enjoy shopping, restaurants and other amenities. They can hop a train to New York City or borrow a bike from Estling Village’s community’s bike-share program and spend some time cycling around the area.

When home, Estling Village residents enjoy the clubhouse with a fitness cyber cafe and onsite barbecue, among other amenities.

“The property’s amenities are very conducive to that lifestyle that so many people are looking for — luxury and convenience,” said Rosanne Brooks, vice president of marketing for JMF Properties, which owns and manages the community.

Most of the units are multilevel townhouses, although some single-floor models are available, Brooks said, adding that the community is offering spring incentives. One-bedroom units typically start at \$1,950, while two-bedrooms residences are priced about \$2,325.