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Inside the Clipper Equity rental that went viral

Upper West Side listing mysteriously removed from StreetEasy





Clipper Equity's David Bistricher with the Brewster (Clipper Equity, Google Maps, Getty)

By Nicole Rosenthal

JUL 20, 2023, 7:00 AM

Courtney Eubank jumped at the opportunity when she saw a **StreetEasy listing** for an Upper West Side apartment for \$2,800 last month.

Located just steps away from Central Park in the purportedly **newly renovated** Brewster building on West 86th Street, unit 12F promised “luxurious” finishes and appliances, a doorman, an elevator and a roof deck at a steep discount from the building’s usual rents of \$4,000 or more.

The one-bedroom seemed too good to be true. And it was.

The unit Eubank toured June 28 was completely unrecognizable from digital renderings shown online, she said in a **TikTok video** that has amassed nearly 60,000 views.

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Unlike renovated units in the building, 12F did not have granite countertops, shiny new floors and a fresh coat of paint. Instead there were worn cabinets and appliances, cracked walls, dead roaches on the floor and a toilet covered in brown grime.

“The flies were buzzing in a circle,” Eubank said in the viral video.

“I don’t think it’s right that they’re even allowed to post that [listing] having zero resemblance at all,” Eubank told *The Real Deal*.

Though it’s unclear whether the unit was slated to be rented as-is, the StreetEasy listing was taken down days after the video was posted. The record of the listing was also erased. The site now shows that the apartment was last rented in January.

Multiple requests for comment from the building's developer, **David Bistricher's Clipper Equity**, were not returned. An agent for Arwell Realty, who was showing other units in the building but not 12F, told *The Real Deal* he didn't know why the StreetEasy rental history was erased.

"I don't know much, but all I could tell you is that it was being priced at a highly unusual discount," the agent said. "Any normal person would assume there's a catch ... The rent was a certain price for a reason."



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A likely factor is that the apartment was rent-regulated, as some units in the building are. The state's Division of Homes and Community Renewal would not divulge the status of 12F, citing privacy laws, but the 2019 rent reform limited rent hikes to pay for renovations to \$83 or \$89 a month, depending on the size of the building.

The increase is far too little to pay for a gut renovation, but that still would not explain why Clipper would not have at least applied a fresh coat of paint and removed the brown slime from the toilet. One possibility is that 12F is among the thousands of rent-stabilized apartments not being rented at all because it would be too costly to bring them up to code after long-term tenancies ended. But those units are typically about \$1,000 a month or less.

Corcoran rented another \$2,800 one-bedroom unit in The Brewster, according to its **website**, but it was unclear when or if it was in shape similar to 12F. Another one-bedroom listed by the same company in the same building was asking \$5,395, a price indicating it was deregulated before the 2019 rent law passed.

Other available units, such as 2F and 7B (listed for \$6,775 and \$10,199, respectively) appeared renovated and cleaned, save for the occasional cockroach carcass, when visited by *The Real Deal*. It was not immediately clear why 12F was so dilapidated, given its January 2023 leasing and Clipper Equity's Facebook post in 2016 touting a recent **renovation of the building**.

That same year, Bistricher's firm had **purchased the Brewster** — a 16-story, 107-unit building **developed in 1927** — for \$172.5 million.

Eubank said she is concerned that out-of-state applicants who don't view listings in-person and instead rely on digital renderings may wind up with an apartment like 12F.

"If it had been rented, it would have to be someone that didn't see it," Eubank said.

Clipper Equity owns 60 buildings in New York and New Jersey, including the Sony Building at 550 Madison Avenue and Flatbush Gardens, where tens of thousands of violations landed Clipper on the “**worst landlords**” list. Bistricher told *TRD* in 2016 that an “enormous” amount of capital — some \$20 million — was put into Flatbush Gardens to remedy those issues.

The Brewster has accrued a modest **30 building violations** over seven years, including for not filing boiler inspection reports from 2018 to 2020. In 2021, an inspector noted horizontal cracks on concrete beams in unit 15D.

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