# Fiscal Brief

#### February 2024

#### For Sale:

# An Examination of Residential Property Sales Priced at or Below \$500,000 and Related Transfer Taxes in New York City

#### Introduction

New York City is well known for having some of the most expensive housing in the country. The average price of City residences was just under \$1.2 million in 2022 and the median price was \$785,000. (Years refer to calendar years in this report.) The rising cost of homeownership has become a major discussion point within debates about the future of New York City's middle class. While much attention is paid to the City's multimillion-dollar real estate transactions, almost one fourth of residential sales in 2022 were priced at \$500,000 or less. (Sales of rental apartment buildings are considered commercial transactions and are not counted as residential transactions.) These residences represent a relatively affordable segment of the City's homeownership market, consisting primarily of cooperative (coop) and condominium (condo) apartments, largely concentrated in Queens and Brooklyn. In this report, IBO examines the distribution of residential property sales at or below \$500,000 by borough, neighborhood, and types of housing.

IBO then discusses the revenue to the City generated by these sales through the Real Property Transfer Taxes (RPTT). While real property taxes paid by a property owner—is the largest City tax revenue source, the buying and selling of real estate also drives City revenues in the form of RPTT. Residential sales in New York City are subject to City and State RPTT, as well as an additional transfer tax providing revenue dedicated to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. For residential transactions valued at or below \$500,000, the

City applies a 1.0% tax rate to the sale price. For transactions selling above \$500,000, the City applies a 1.425% tax rate to the sale price, paid by the seller. Tax rates for the State and MTA-dedicated taxes also vary by sales prices.1 (Hereafter, "RPTT" refers solely to the City tax.)

The City's RPTT rates have remained unchanged since 1989, despite large increases in residential sale prices over the past three decades, over time tipping more sales into the higher tax bracket. The distribution of the value of residential sales skews greatly toward more expensive properties, so house, coop, and condo sales priced at or below \$500,000 generate relatively little of the RPTT revenue for the City—around \$47 million in 2022, 5% of the total RPTT collected from residential sales. This report is intended to illuminate where residential property sales priced at \$500,000 or less were located and to provide context for how the RPTT generated by these properties fits into the City's overall RPTT tax revenue stream.

### **Location of Residential Sales for** \$500,000 or Less by Borough

There were 13,954 residential property sales priced at \$500,000 or less recorded across New York City in the 2022 calendar year. In this report, IBO uses "lower-priced sales" to refer to residential properties selling for \$500,000 or less. The greatest number of these sales were residences located in Queens, with 5,977 transactions—more than twice the number of any other borough, as shown in Figure 1. Lower-priced sales in Queens represent one third

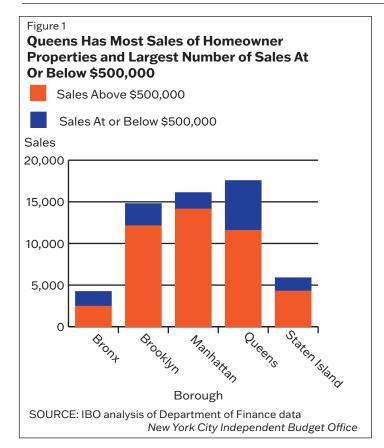












of all Queens residential sales and 43% of lower-priced sales citywide. With 2,658 transactions in 2022, Brooklyn had less than half of the number of lower-priced sales as Queens. The boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island accounted for 1,964, 1,764 and 1,591 sales, respectively. The Bronx had the highest share of lower-priced sales (42%), but because of the borough's relatively small total number of residential sales, this only represents 13% of the City's total lower-priced residential transactions.

Differences in population and housing stock explain the variation in the number of lower-priced sales among the boroughs. Queens has the second-largest population of the five boroughs and many relatively modestly priced coop and condo apartments and houses. Brooklyn has seen many of its neighborhoods change over the past several decades from being among the least expensive to among the most expensive places to live. Nevertheless, the City's largest borough, Brooklyn, still contains extensive areas of housing that are relatively modestly priced by New York City standards. In Manhattan, which has both the highest average and highest median housing prices of the five boroughs, only 12% of total 2022 sales were

priced at or below \$500,000—the smallest borough share. In the lowest-populated borough, Staten Island, 27% of residential sales in the borough were sold for \$500,000 or less.

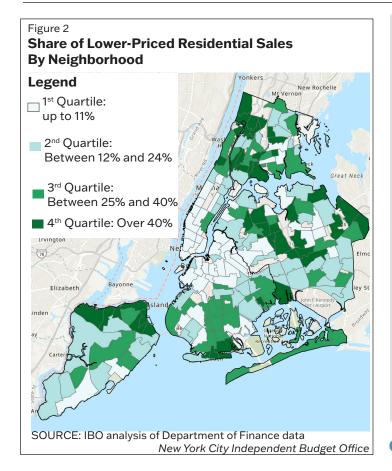
# Distribution of Residential Sales for \$500,000 or Less by Neighborhood

IBO has examined the concentration of lower-priced residential sales by neighborhood from two perspectives: as the share of all residential sales, and in terms of the absolute number of sales. The analysis excludes neighborhoods that had fewer than 10 residential sales valued at or below \$500,000 in 2022. IBO used the Department of City Planning's 195 Neighborhood Tabulation Areas (NTAs) to define the City's neighborhoods.

Distribution by Share of Total Residential Transactions. In 2022, there were 26 neighborhoods in which at least half of all residential sales were valued at \$500,000 or less: 12 in the Bronx, 11 in Queens, 2 on Staten Island, 1 in Brooklyn, and none in Manhattan. (See the Appendix for a complete neighborhood listing.) The Bronx neighborhoods of Parkchester and West Concourse had the highest share of lower-priced residential sales (97% and 84%, respectively) followed by Kew Gardens in Queens at 74%. The largest neighborhood share for Manhattan was seen in Marble Hill-Inwood (64%), while West Brighton had the highest share in Brooklyn (74%) as did Mariner's Harbor-Arlington-Port Ivory-Graniteville on Staten Island (58%). Figure 2 maps out the share of sales in each neighborhood that were priced at or below \$500,000.

The neighborhoods in which lower-cost housing predominates in many cases coincide with geographic areas in which demand has been weakest in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. They also tend to be located relatively far from Manhattan's central business districts. Furthermore, apart from some neighborhoods in Staten Island, these sales are primarily coop and condo apartments.

**Distribution by Total Number of Residential Sales Priced at \$500,000 or Less.** In some neighborhoods, particularly in Queens and the Bronx, over half of all residential sales were in this lower-price range. At the other extreme, Lenox Hill



in Manhattan had 231 sales valued at \$500,000 or less in 2022, but this number represented only 20% of all residential sales in the neighborhood. Sales data for 2023 suggest that fewer neighborhoods are on track to have 200 or more lower-valued sales for the entire year. This appears to be a function of the overall number of residential sales declining rather than prices increasing.

As listed in the Appendix, there were 18 neighborhoods in 2022 with 200 or more residential transactions valued at \$500,000 or less. Three Queens neighborhoods had the most lower-priced sales in 2022: Forest Hills (697 properties), Flushing (377 properties), and Jackson Heights (367 properties). In the other four boroughs, the neighborhoods with the most lower-priced sales were: North Riverdale-Fieldston-Riverdale in the Bronx (283 properties), Turtle Bay-Midtown East in Manhattan (338 properties), Sheepshead Bay-Gerritsen Beach-Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn (275 properties), and Mariner's Harbor-Arlington-Port Ivory-Graniteville on Staten Island (208 properties).

## How IBO Calculated Homeowner Properties with Multiple Units

In this paper, IBO reports each residential property sale, whether a one-, two-, or threefamily house, coop, or condo, as a singular transaction at the recorded sale price for the property. This is in contrast to prorating the sales price by dividing the sales price by the number of units and using that a per-unit amount as the sales price for analysis.<sup>2</sup> Prorating sales on a per-unit basis would increase the number of sales registered as under \$500,000, particularly in neighborhoods with a concentration of multi-unit houses. Because two- and threefamily houses are sold as a singular property transaction, however, a count of sales with a perunit cost at or below \$500,000 would overstate the number of homeownership purchase opportunities that were actually sold within this price point.3

## **Characteristics of Lower-Priced Properties**

Homeownership in a shared building comprises 82% of New York City's lower-priced residential properties in 2022: 64% coops and 18% condos. One-, two-, and three-family houses accounted for 11%, 6%, and 1% of transactions, respectively. The predominance of coop apartments within the lower-cost residential submarket is tempered by the fact that maintenance fees for coops can vary from quite modest to fairly high, depending on the underlying mortgage and other ongoing costs of the building. Condo apartments commonly have lower monthly fees compared with similar coops. Because of the lower fees, and because condominiums are generally subject to less onerous rules than coops, condominiums—in aggregate—have higher sales prices than coops with similar physical characteristics.

Only on Staten Island did the majority of residential properties selling for \$500,000 or less—59% in 2022—consist of one-, two-, and three-family houses. Coops and condos accounted for virtually all lower-priced sales valued in Manhattan and over three quarters of sales in Queens (87%), Brooklyn (85%), and the Bronx (78%).

# Revenue to the City from RPTT on Lower-Priced Residential Sales

Sales of real property in New York City are subject to City, State, and MTA-dedicated RPTT, each calculated as a percentage of the purchase price and paid by the seller. For sales of residential property, the City tax is equivalent to 1.0% of the purchase price on transactions of \$500,000 or less, and 1.425% on sales over \$500,000. Because the RPTT rate is higher for sales above \$500,000, it is likely that some sellers who otherwise would have sold at prices just over \$500,000 accepted a price at or below this threshold to avoid paying the higher tax rate.

Most of the value of residential properties being bought and sold in 2022 was for transactions priced above \$500,000. As shown in Figure 3, lower-priced properties sold accounted for 7% of the total real estate value of residential properties bought and sold in 2022 and 5% of total RPTT revenue (about \$47 million); preliminary 2023 information suggests a very similar pattern. In contrast, for both 2022 and expected for 2023, sales valued at over \$1 million represented less than one-third of all residential transactions, but well over half of total real estate value being bought and sold, which drives RPTT revenue.

#### Conclusion

In 2022 and continuing the trend in 2023, almost one-quarter of all residential sales in New York

Figure 3
Shares by Price Range: Number of Residential Sales, Sales Value, and City Residential Real Property Transfer Tax Revenue

	2022			
Price Range	Share of Transactions	Share of Sales Value	Share of City Residential RPTT Revenue	
\$500,000 and under	24%	7%	5%	
>\$500,000 through \$1 million	44%	27%	28%	
>\$1 million through \$10 million	32%	57%	58%	
>\$10 million	1%	9%	9%	

SOURCES: IBO analysis of E-tax and tax collections data from the Department of Finance

New York City Independent Budget Office

City were for properties selling for \$500,000 or less. Most of these properties are coop or condo apartments, and the majority were in Queens or Brooklyn. In many different areas around the City, however, there were large numbers of lower-priced sales but in neighborhoods where lower-priced sales accounted for only a small fraction of all residential transactions.

Residential sales of New York City properties for \$500,000 or less are subject to the City's RPTT, in addition to the State and MTA-dedicated RPTTs. Because the distribution of the value of residential sales skews greatly toward more expensive properties, sales of these lower-priced apartments and houses generate a tiny fraction of RPTT revenue for the City, whuch is paid by the seller.

The RPTT rates have remained static with two tax brackets—1% for sales at or below \$500,000 and 1.425% for sales above \$500,000—even though \$500,000 in 1989 (when the rates were set) is presently equivalent to about \$1.2 million if adjusted for inflation. The unchanged structure of the City's RPTT stands in contrast with the State "mansion tax" RPTT surcharge on residential sales over \$1 million. The most recent 2019 changes have ten mansion tax brackets starting at 1% of sales price for transactions over \$1 million scaling up to 3.9% for transactions over \$25 million, paid by the buyer. Even with this progressive tax structure, the mansion tax itself is often criticized for being out of touch with present housing markets, given that a third of residential transactions in New York City are over \$1 million, and hardly buy what most would consider a mansion.

The number of lower-priced transactions among New York City sales indicates that this is an indemand corner of the residential housing market, and segment that likely represents many first-time homebuyers. The \$500,000 tax bracket cutoff means that while about a quarter of sales are priced under \$500,000, the total market value this represents is a much smaller share—lower-priced sales represent only 7% of total residential sales value and 5% of residential RPTT for the City.

This report is dedicated to the memory of Alan Treffeisen (1956-2023).

## **Appendix**

# Residential Sales for \$500,000 or Less, by Borough and Neighborhood

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Finance data

NOTE: Neighborhoods with fewer than 10 sales of \$500,000 or less are not ranked.

Bronx					
Neighborhood	Number of Sales	Citywide Rank by Number of Sales	Percent Share of All Sales	Citywide Rank by Percent Share of All Sales	
Allerton-Pelham Gardens	27	128	14%	119	
Bedford Park-Fordham North	48	87	56%	20	
Belmont	6		20%		
Bronxdale	40	98	54%	22	
Claremont-Bathgate	10	168	33%	62	
Co-Op City	14	158	36%	54	
Crotona Park East	13	160	46%	32	
East Concourse-Concourse Village	45	90	63%	14	
East Tremont	23	138	38%	45	
Eastchester-Edenwald-Baychester	38	105	24%	88	
Fordham South	11	165	61%	15	
Highbridge	8		33%		
Hunts Point	10	169	48%	31	
Kingsbridge Heights	41	97	68%	6	
Longwood	11	166	48%	30	
Melrose South-Mott Haven North	29	124	66%	9	
Morrisania-Melrose	19	147	37%	50	
Mott Haven-Port Morris	8		18%		
Mount Hope	8		20%		
North Riverdale-Fieldston-Riverdale	283	7	68%	7	
Norwood	31	121	63%	12	
Parkchester	234	10	97%	1	
Pelham Bay-Country Club-City Island	56	81	21%	96	
Pelham Parkway	66	68	46%	34	
Schuylerville-Throgs Neck-Edgewater Park	116	37	25%	80	
Soundview-Bruckner	4		8%		
Soundview-Castle Hill-Clason Point-Harding Park	72	60	40%	43	
Spuyten Duyvil-Kingsbridge	225	13	74%	4	
University Heights-Morris Heights	11	167	18%	106	
Van Cortlandt Village	40	99	56%	19	
Van Nest-Morris Park-Westchester Square	17	153	11%	138	
West Concourse	31	122	84%	2	
West Farms-Bronx River	19	148	26%	74	
Westchester-Unionport	8		9%		
Williamsbridge-Olinville	58	76	23%	91	
Woodlawn-Wakefield	84	52	29%	66	

Brooklyn					
Neighborhood	Number of Sales	Citywide Rank by Number of Sales	Percent Share of All Sales	Citywide Rank by Percent Share of All Sales	
Bath Beach	37	107	21%	99	
Bay Ridge	223	14	38%	48	
Bedford	40	100	10%	139	
Bensonhurst East	19	149	6%	160	
Bensonhurst West	40	101	13%	128	
Borough Park	40	102	8%	154	
Brighton Beach	124	33	50%	26	
Brooklyn Heights-Cobble Hill	59	74	13%	126	
Brownsville	24	135	23%	92	
Bushwick North	6		5%		
Bushwick South	38	106	11%	133	
Canarsie	74	57	22%	95	
Carroll Gardens-Columbia Street-Red Hook	14	159	4%	169	
Clinton Hill	36	110	8%	153	
Crown Heights North	28	125	8%	150	
Crown Heights South	33	115	25%	83	
Cypress Hills-City Line	19	150	13%	125	
DUMBO-Vinegar Hill-Downtown Brooklyn- Boerum Hill	27	129	3%	170	
Dyker Heights	28	126	9%	147	
East Flatbush-Farragut	58	77	27%	72	
East New York	84	53	29%	67	
East New York (Pennsylvania Ave)	13	161	21%	97	
East Williamsburg	7		3%		
Erasmus	28	127	26%	76	
Flatbush	146	26	35%	56	
Flatlands	105	40	28%	70	
Fort Greene	18	152	10%	140	
Georgetown-Marine Park- Bergen Beach-Mill Basin	40	103	8%	151	
Gravesend	74	58	37%	49	
Greenpoint	10	170	4%	168	
Homecrest	82	55	34%	59	
Kensington-Ocean Parkway	67	66	35%	55	
Madison	125	32	36%	53	
Midwood	98	44	31%	65	
North Side-South Side	23	139	5%	164	
Ocean Hill	33	116	24%	89	
Ocean Parkway South	52	84	38%	46	
Park Slope-Gowanus	40	104	4%	165	
Prospect Heights	21	143	7%	157	
Prospect Lefferts Gardens-Wingate	44	92	16%	112	

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Brooklyn, continued					
Neighborhood	Number of Sales	Citywide Rank by Number of Sales	Percent Share of All Sales	Citywide Rank by Percent Share of All Sales	
Rugby-Remsen Village	21	144	16%	110	
Seagate-Coney Island	9		13%		
Sheepshead Bay-Gerritsen Beach- Manhattan Beach	275	8	44%	38	
Starrett City	2		50%		
Stuyvesant Heights	34	113	10%	143	
Sunset Park East	62	73	26%	77	
Sunset Park West	23	140	12%	129	
West Brighton	126	30	74%	5	
Williamsburg	5		13%		
Windsor Terrace	24	136	11%	137	

Manhattan						
Neighborhood	Number Of Sales	Citywide Rank by Number of Sales	Percent Share Of All Sales	Citywide Rank By Percent Share of All Sales		
Battery Park City-Lower Manhattan	30	123	4%	166		
Central Harlem North-Polo Grounds	42	96	25%	79		
Central Harlem South	19	146	5%	163		
Chinatown	7		6%			
Clinton	58	75	11%	131		
East Harlem North	12	162	24%	90		
East Harlem South	22	142	14%	122		
East Village	26	131	10%	141		
Gramercy	56	80	9%	146		
Hamilton Heights	36	109	42%	40		
Hudson Yards-Chelsea-Flat Iron-Union Square	69	63	6%	162		
Lenox Hill-Roosevelt Island	231	11	20%	101		
Lincoln Square	123	34	10%	144		
Lower East Side	31	119	7%	158		
Manhattanville	2		33%			
Marble Hill-Inwood	64	71	64%	11		
Midtown-Midtown South	31	120	4%	167		
Morningside Heights	35	112	14%	123		
Murray Hill-Kips Bay	159	23	25%	84		
SoHo-TriBeCa-Civic Center-Little Italy	12	163	1%	171		
Turtle Bay-East Midtown	338	4	25%	82		
Upper East Side-Carnegie Hill	86	50	6%	159		
Upper West Side	132	28	9%	145		
Washington Heights North	64	72	37%	52		
Washington Heights South	44	91	39%	44		
West Village	84	51	7%	155		
Yorkville	151	25	18%	105		

Queens				
Neighborhood	Number of Sales	Citywide Rank by Number of Sales	Percent Share of All Sales	Citywide Rank by Percent Share of All Sales
Astoria	99	43	31%	64
Auburndale	9		4%	
Baisley Park	83	54	26%	75
Bayside-Bayside Hills	92	47	19%	103
Bellerose	67	67	28%	71
Breezy Point-Belle Harbor-Rockaway Park- Broad Channel	88	49	27%	73
Briarwood-Jamaica Hills	152	24	59%	16
Cambria Heights	33	117	21%	98
College Point	23	141	10%	142
Corona	89	48	49%	28
Douglas Manor-Douglaston-Little Neck	192	19	45%	36
East Elmhurst	15	156	11%	135
East Flushing	49	86	24%	86
Elmhurst	165	21	46%	33
Elmhurst-Maspeth	70	62	38%	47
Far Rockaway-Bayswater	58	78	33%	61
Flushing	377	2	44%	37
Forest Hills	697	1	63%	13
Fresh Meadows-Utopia	12	164	11%	132
Ft. Totten-Bay Terrace-Clearview	247	9	54%	23
Glen Oaks-Floral Park-New Hyde Park	226	12	53%	24
Glendale	34	114	14%	120
Hammels-Arverne-Edgemere	68	64	33%	63
Hollis	10	171	8%	152
Hunters Point-Sunnyside-West Maspeth	126	31	17%	109
Jackson Heights	367	3	55%	21
Jamaica	65	69	43%	39
Jamaica Estates-Holliswood	74	59	37%	51
Kew Gardens	207	17	74%	3
Kew Gardens Hills	318	5	64%	10
Laurelton	54	82	25%	81
Lindenwood-Howard Beach	217	15	53%	25
Maspeth	36	111	16%	111
Middle Village	44	93	11%	134
Murray Hill	201	18	34%	58
North Corona	37	108	28%	69
Oakland Gardens	301	6	66%	8
Old Astoria	16	154	11%	136
Ozone Park	26	132	13%	127
Pomonok-Flushing Heights-Hillcrest	15	157	7%	156
Queens Village	53	83	14%	121
Queensboro Hill	6		4%	

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Queens, continued					
Neighborhood	Number of Sales	Citywide Rank by Number of Sales	Percent Share of All Sales	Citywide Rank by Percent Share of All Sales	
Queensbridge-Ravenswood-Long Island City	4		6%		
Rego Park	189	20	59%	17	
Richmond Hill	32	118	12%	130	
Ridgewood	16	155	9%	148	
Rosedale	27	130	15%	113	
South Jamaica	58	79	23%	93	
South Ozone Park	65	70	15%	115	
Springfield Gardens North	19	151	14%	118	
Springfield Gardens South-Brookville	26	133	18%	104	
St. Albans	111	39	23%	94	
Steinway	43	95	15%	114	
Whitestone	105	41	24%	85	
Woodhaven	52	85	14%	116	
Woodside	112	38	50%	27	

Staten Island					
Neighborhood	Number of Sales	Citywide Rank by Number of Sales	Percent Share of All Sales	Citywide Rank by Percent Share of All Sales	
Annadale-Huguenot-Prince's Bay-Eltingville	21	145	6%	161	
Arden Heights	133	27	34%	60	
Charleston-Richmond Valley-Tottenville	48	88	13%	124	
Grasmere-Arrochar-Ft. Wadsworth	25	134	14%	117	
Great Kills	118	36	20%	102	
Grymes Hill-Clifton-Fox Hills	101	42	48%	29	
Mariner's Harbor-Arlington-Port Ivory-Graniteville	208	16	58%	18	
New Brighton-Silver Lake	44	94	26%	78	
New Dorp-Midland Beach	96	45	29%	68	
New Springville-Bloomfield-Travis	80	56	18%	107	
Oakwood-Oakwood Beach	24	137	9%	149	
Old Town-Dongan Hills-South Beach	71	61	24%	87	
Port Richmond	93	46	41%	41	
Rossville-Woodrow	48	89	17%	108	
Stapleton-Rosebank	119	35	41%	42	
Todt Hill-Emerson Hill-Heartland Village- Lighthouse Hill	163	22	34%	57	
West New Brighton-New Brighton-St. George	131	29	45%	35	
Westerleigh	68	65	20%	100	

#### **Endnotes**

The State RPTT rate on residential transactions equals to 0.4% of the sales price plus a graduated surcharge commonly referred to as a "mansion tax" on properties selling for \$1 million or more. The mansion tax starts at 1.0% on properties sold for \$1 million and reaches a maximum of 3.9% on transactions valued at more than \$25 million. The MTA-dedicated tax is 0.25% on all sales of \$3 million or more.

2For example, the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy reports sales prices on a per-unit basis in their annual State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2022 report.

<sup>3</sup>Two- and three-family houses make up 7% of lower-priced sales in 2022. It is important to note that two- and three-family houses generally have higher sale prices than a single-family house of the similar size and characteristics, due to the potential for rental income. If sale prices are prorated on a per-unit basis, however, two-and three-family houses generally have a lower median per-unit cost than a single-family house.