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Tough ones have 'staying' power

Although some of their neighbors are running for the suburbs, diehard New Yorkers near ground zero are staying put.

Much to the surprise of local brokers, residents are determined to keep their neighborhoods afloat in the ash, although the rebuilding of the Financial District will certainly test their patience.

"The people I spoke to all seem to say they want to stay," said Bill Graizel of Regatta New York Realty, a Battery Park City firm.

Jamie LeFrak, managing director of the LeFrak Organization, which has 2,000 apartments in Battery Park City, said, "I think the owners down there are doing their best to keep everyone where they are and make improvements to the buildings to make everyone happy." LeFrak said the company will repair its buildings "whenever the city lets us — that's the caveat."

Matthew Hall, spokesman for Millennium Partners, said the terrorist attacks have not scared off buyers at the planned luxury condos atop a Ritz-Carlton hotel in Battery Park City, but the building's completion has been delayed.

Hall called his clients' confidence "a bright spot in an otherwise gloomy world."

Although TriBeCa residents are more likely to spot cops than celebrities on the streets these days, brokers have faith that neighborhood loyalty will prevail.

"Most people who live in TriBeCa are very supportive of TriBeCa and want to stay — and are very anxious to get back home," said Stephen Kliegerman of the Halstead Property Co.

"Nobody called and said, 'I want to list my loft; I need to get out of this area.' People from TriBeCa are very proud of their neighborhood."

Kliegerman also said some people are hunting for "good deals" now available in Battery Park City, eager to cash in on the wobbly market.

"I'm finding that a lot of people who have been displaced are looking to find something else in the same neighborhood," said Shaun Osher of Douglas Elliman's TriBeCa office. "Everyone loves New York City!"

Peter Schwalbe of Hilson Management said the 32 buyers of luxury condos at 28 Laight St., near Vestry Street, haven't balked at living so close to ground zero. "Everyone is going ahead," he said.

Deborah Schoeneman

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