

The Brooklyn Paper

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Taking a bite out of dentists

By Dana Rubinstein

The Brooklyn Paper



The 10 dentists and physicians who have somehow managed to ride out the transition of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank building from a beehive of professional activity into a rarified collection of condos for the ultra-elite are making a last-ditch effort to stay put for good.

The collection of dentists, dental specialists, and even an urologist has offered \$10 million to Dermot Company, the development firm that bought the building, Brooklyn's tallest, and divvied up the space into 189 condos, ground-floor retail, and an enormous, 32,000-square-foot commercial space that encompasses the 15 medical suites and is being marketed for \$15.4 million.



"We made the offer on Sept. 21," said Adam Leitman Bailey, the attorney representing the doctors, who are willing to pool resources to pay for the property. "The broker said that we're close."

But Barbara Wagner, a spokeswoman for Dermot, had a distinctly different impression.

"The doctors' offer to purchase the medical office condominium is significantly under market and, as developers and investors, it would be imprudent and irresponsible to further consider any such offer," said Wagner.

That's unfortunate. There's something so romantic and democratic about the notion that the

borough's tallest and grandest building should be home to working professionals, and open to their often working-class clients. The doctors that remain are remnants of a once 150-strong community of professionals. The tower evokes fond (and scary) memories of fluoride and tooth drills, braces and root canals in one-time patients across the borough. Why deny Brooklyn its history?

That these doctors have survived this long is a testament to their tenacity and luck. "It's been a war of attrition, letting leases expire and kicking people out if they don't want to pay the exorbitant rents," said one doctor.

I met one of the vestiges of the storied Tooth Tower, endodontist Mark Coffiner, on Tuesday morning in his offices at the recently renamed One Hanson Place, where's he been giving root canals for 35 years. Coffiner has an obvious passion for the building where he's built his practice. He and others said they were willing to put up with the construction inconveniences if they could just stay in the building.

Here's to hoping Coffiner manages to stay put. Brooklyn may be flush with wealth these days, but it can't afford to continue losing the very things that make it special.

Dana Rubinstein is a Brooklyn Paper staff reporter.

The Kitchen Sink

Speaking of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank, we hear that Borders has backed out of a plan to lease the ground floor space. Maybe that paves the way for the Apple store! ...

Pratt Institute has moved ahead in the unofficial competition for the greenest campus award. The arts school appointed industrial design professor Debera Johnson as its first Director of Sustainability. Congrats!

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