

# The New York Times

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REAL ESTATE

## Glen Ridge, N.J.: Neighborly and Close to Midtown

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**Living In**

By DAVE CALDWELL Oct. 8, 2014

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Aaron Zebrook for The New York Times

When Becky and David Middleton, both 41, needed more space for their family of four children, ages 6 to 11, they moved just 10 blocks, paying \$840,000 last April for an 1887 Victorian farmhouse with five bedrooms in Glen Ridge, N.J. A kitchen and bathroom renovation is underway.

They have lived for 16 years in the 1.5-square-mile Essex County borough of around 7,500 with vintage homes and gaslit streets, wedged between the busier suburbs of Montclair and Bloomfield, and bordering the city of East Orange to the south.

“The benefit is having that same neighborhood freedom to play as I had as a kid growing up in suburbs during the ‘70s and ‘80s,” said Ms. Middleton, who moved around with her family as an Army brat. “Neighbors and friends just drop by and knock, kids ride bikes and run around through each others’ yards. We all know each other — usually an awesome thing.”

The Middletons — she is a landscape architect and a yoga teacher; he is a digital adviser — both work at home. When a resident’s power goes out or basement takes on water, Ms. Middleton said, neighbors are quick to help.

Brian and Sharon Sargent, both 47, moved to Glen Ridge for professional reasons from Austin, Tex., paying \$335,000 in 2007 for a 1920 three-bedroom colonial. He is a freelance writer, she an editor. They have stayed put to raise three daughters, now ages 11 to 16.

“I had dreams of living closer to the city,” said Mr. Sargent, who works at home, “but with three kids, that dream died rather quickly.” In Glen Ridge, they found “the perfect house at the perfect price,” he added.



**294 RIDGEWOOD AVENUE** A renovated four-bedroom three-and-a-half-bath 1896 Victorian with a new kitchen, listed at \$795,000. (917) 536-8257 Aaron Zebrook for The New York Times

More than 90 percent of Glen Ridge is in a historic district, with a preservation commission established in 1987 to conserve and protect housing stock.

Gregory Farnham, 56, a senior manager for American Express Travel, and his husband, Christopher Varga, 54, a teacher, moved to Glen Ridge from Brooklyn in 1998, then bought a house there in 2007. They paid \$495,000 for an early 1900s four-bedroom house, renovating the kitchen, the pantry and a bedroom.

The couple first looked at homes near Mr. Varga's hometown of Metuchen, N.J., but ended up looking in Glen Ridge and Montclair because they felt both towns welcomed gay couples. They have adopted two daughters, now 9 and 11.

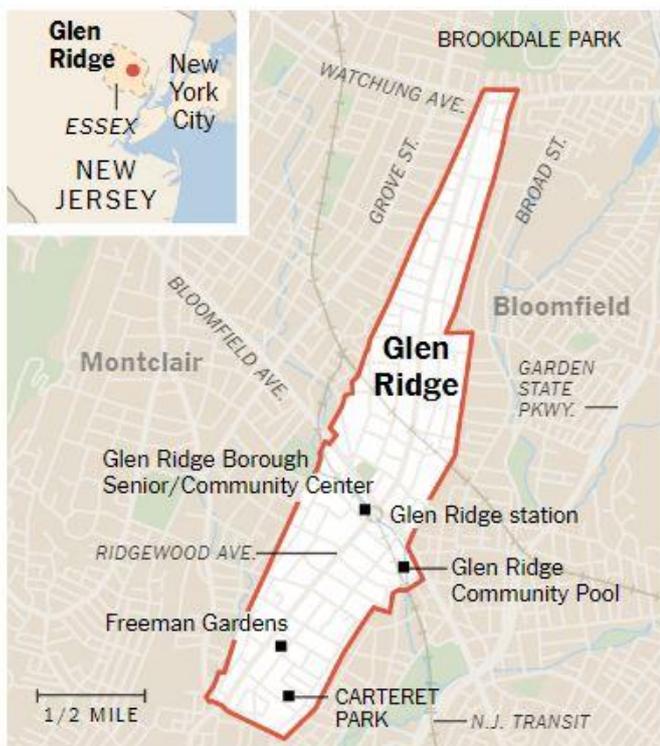
The couple “learned to accept” the high taxes, Mr. Farnham said, “because of the quality of schools and the town services.”

As for the small-town vibe, he said, “the good is that everybody knows you — and the bad is everybody knows you!”

### What You’ll Find

The borough of Glen Ridge, which took its name from the glen next to the ridge formed by Toney’s Brook, is around three miles long and no more than six blocks wide. It is about 20 miles from [Manhattan](#).

In northeastern Essex County, Glen Ridge is near the Garden State Parkway, about 13 miles north of Newark Liberty International Airport. Except for busy Bloomfield Avenue, which bisects the town and serves as a link to shops and restaurants in Montclair and Bloomfield, Glen Ridge is almost entirely residential.



By The New York Times

Ridgewood Avenue runs from Glen Ridge’s northern to southern boundary. The hub of town is the intersection of Ridgewood and Bloomfield Avenues, near the town’s train station, built in 1912.

“We’re really in a sweet spot in terms of roads and business services,” said Stuart K. Patrick, 77, who owns a brokerage firm and who began a four-year term as Glen Ridge’s part-time mayor in January.

### What You’ll Pay

The [Garden State Multiple Listing Servicesite](#) listed 21 homes in Glen

Ridge on Nov. 7, ranging from a one-bedroom 1965 condominium on

Bloomfield Avenue for \$185,000 to a six-bedroom 1905 home on Ridgewood Avenue on 0.72 acre for \$1.9 million.

According to M.L.S. figures supplied by Sam Joseph of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices [New Jersey Properties](#), 132 homes sold through October, averaging \$667,744, and 36 days on the market, compared with 124 homes in the same period of 2015, at an average of \$669,851 and 41 days.

“It’s been a highly competitive market for buyers due to a sheer lack of supply,” said Deborah Lebow, a Glen Ridge resident who is an agent for Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in Montclair.

### The Vibe

In this family-focused town, leisure time often revolves around school activities and sports. Dining choices also skew to the casual and the family-friendly. [Fitzgerald’s 1928](#) in Glen Ridge is a lively place where neighbors run into one another.

In Montclair, the Middletons like [Ruthie’s Bar-B-Q & Pizza](#), [Raymond’s Restaurant](#) and the [Red Eye Cafe](#). Mr. Sargent favors [El Matador Mexican Restaurant](#) on Broad Street and [Anthony’s Cheesecake](#) on Washington Street, both in Bloomfield.



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A senior/community center in the train station has a variety of programs. The outdoor community pool, built in 2003, cost \$775 for a family membership in 2016, with a \$1,250 initiation fee. Green spaces include Carteret Park, Freeman Gardens and several athletic fields. The county's Brookdale Park is just north of Glen Ridge.

The Wellmont Theater in Montclair "has had some pretty remarkable shows in past years," Ms. Middleton said. The Brian Setzer Orchestra is scheduled on Nov. 30.

## The Schools

The [Glen Ridge Public Schools](#) district, with around 1,900 students, has the Forest Avenue and Linden Avenue schools for prekindergarten through Grade 2; the Ridgewood Avenue school for Grades 3 through 6 and Glen Ridge High School for Grades 7 through 12.

Average SAT scores at the high school for 2014-15, the most recent available, were 576 in reading, 579 in math and 562 in writing, compared with state averages of 496, 518 and 494.

## The Commute

The Glen Ridge train station is on New Jersey Transit's Montclair-Boonton Line. The 8:24 a.m. train is scheduled to arrive at New York Penn Station at 8:59. Weekend service requires a change of trains in Newark. A monthly pass is \$184 to New York and the same to Hoboken. Parking is limited, but the borough offers jitney service at \$25 a month.

DeCamp Bus Lines' Route 33 has service to the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York. The one-way trip typically runs between 30 and 40 minutes, and a 40-trip pass is \$247.

## The History

By a margin of 23 votes, residents of Glen Ridge voted to secede from Bloomfield on Feb. 12, 1895 to form their own borough, according to the [Glen Ridge Historical Society's](#) website. Residents on "the hill" said they received little attention from Bloomfield, citing a lack of paved roads, water and sewer systems and nearby schools.

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