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LIVING IN | BYRAM, CONN.

## A Corner of Greenwich, but Without the Prices

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Douglas Healey for The New York Times

REVITALIZED

Byram's commercial district, which includes Mill and Mead Streets, has begun to attract some architects, boutiques and salons.

By LISA PREVOST  
Published: May 21, 2006

TALK of Greenwich inevitably leads to the price of real estate. The average price of a single-family home here has surpassed \$2.5 million. Downtown, now the province of hedge fund managers, commercial space rents at rates comparable to Midtown [Manhattan](#). Upscale condominiums for "downsizers" are fetching \$3 million or more.

### Multimedia

Frequently left out of this discussion are the comparably nominal prices for property in the neighborhood of Byram,

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Graphic: On the Market



Map: Byram, Conn.

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The Byram riverfront is also poised for a transformation, as town planners and the neighborhood association complete a master plan for improvements that include a boardwalk and parks along the length of the river. A 20-unit town house community and marina has been approved for construction on two riverfront acres previously reserved for industrial uses on South Water Street. Called Greenwich Landing, the high-end development replaces a heating oil company.

"This is pretty much setting the tone for up and down the Byram River," said John Wahba, a Byram native who is developing the project with his brother James.

## What You'll Find

Interstate 95 bisects Byram, effectively creating two very different areas, one containing some of the town's most expensive homes, and the other some of its most affordable.

a densely populated, beak-shaped square mile bounded by Long Island Sound on one side and the Byram River on the other.

Originally developed in the 19th century for Italian, Slovak, Polish and German immigrants who worked the foundries and factories along the river, the community is often more closely linked with Port Chester, N.Y., its similarly postindustrial neighbor on the opposite shore.

"Years ago, there was kind of a conflict where people from Greenwich never wanted to be associated with Byram, and the people of Byram always said they lived in Byram," said Michael Bocchino, 34, a lifelong resident of Byram and chairman of its active neighborhood association. "People here felt slighted because the town put less money into Byram."

The Greenwich cachet may soon envelope this southwestern corner, however, as local developers move into one of the few areas of town yet to be gentrified. Most recently, the area received a nod from Antares Investment Partners,

owner of the opulent Delamar Greenwich Harbor Hotel and other major properties, with the purchase of a large apartment complex in Byram for conversion into million-dollar condominiums.

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**INSIDE**

Above the highway and away from the shoreline, the hilly terrain is covered with modest single- and multifamily homes set on small lots. The narrow, winding streets and closely set houses give this end of Byram a distinctive village feel, and residents regularly walk to the Byram Shubert Library, which serves as the community hub, and the small shopping district along Mill and Water Streets.

Below the highway, Byram Shore Road follows the shoreline. This avenue dates to the era of the great industrialists, and their grand "summer cottages," some hidden behind gates, are still interspersed among newer palatial properties.

"I find that people new to Greenwich, and those with new money, have trouble saying they live on Byram Shore Road; they say they live in Greenwich," said Kaye Lewis of Kaye Lewis & Associates, a real estate brokerage firm. "But there was an \$18 million sale on that road last year. I mean, this is not for the faint of heart."

In the village area, residents tend to be fiercely loyal to their Byram roots, and old-timers abound. The large number of rental properties have attracted Hispanic immigrants, some of whom are buying multifamily homes to live in, and renting the other units themselves.

Young couples discouraged by the out-of-reach prices elsewhere in Greenwich are also giving Byram a second look. "This is the only area of town that we could afford," said Amy Repik, who bought a three-bedroom home in Byram with her husband, Josh, in December. The couple had previously rented in Greenwich, and spent two years shopping for houses as far up the shoreline as Norwalk. But Mr. Repik, a municipal employee and Greenwich native, was reluctant to leave his hometown.

They bought their 1929 colonial for "close to \$600,000," said Mrs. Repik, who commutes to work at Gartner Inc., a market research company in Stamford. The tradeoff was a small yard, she noted, but not so small that they can't have a few friends over for a cookout. The planned revitalization of the riverfront also figured into their purchase. The town has allocated about \$1.5 million for design and development of the parks and boardwalk. A second phase calls for the addition of trees, landscaping and benches in the commercial district.

"This side of town has been neglected until now, and this is going to bring the value up," Mrs. Repik said.

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