



Family embraces 19th Ward after housing search

Justice Marbury

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle | USA TODAY NETWORK

Editor's note: This story suggestion was submitted by Kendall Bell at the 19th Ward Square Fair festival.

Lynn and Mike Mordenga have been married for almost 10 years. Two years into their union, they had much to consider when purchasing a house.

Initially, the Mordengas rented an apartment in east Irondequoit, but they needed to make some changes when thinking about what they wanted for themselves and their growing family. During the house hunt, the Mordengas went on a City Living Expo tour, taking a bus to explore different neighborhoods in the city.

"I think both of us wanted to be more in the city," Lynn Mordenga said. "We wanted to have more of the community residential feeling. For us, the 19th Ward gave that."

Timothy, Lynn, and Mike Mordenga outside their house in the 19th Ward. The Mordenga family purchased their home in 2017.

JUSTICE MARBURY/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Decades before the Mordengas' house search, real estate agents used fear tactics to encourage white flight from the historic neighborhood. They warned 19th Ward homeowners of an impending "Black invasion" as families migrated from the South seeking better opportunities in Rochester. The tactic was called "blockbusting" and led to white families selling their 19th Ward homes out of fear for less than market value. Those same homes were sold at a much higher cost to Black families looking for safe housing during an era of discrimination and redlining.

In 2017, the Mordengas chose the 19th Ward for its diversity.

"All of our neighbors look different from us, which is hard to come by in Rochester," Mike Mordenga said.

"Rochester has a unique history," Lynn continued. "I think there are a lot of places where it's still very segregated, to be honest. Here, you could actually see diversity in the neighborhood. Neighbors really come alongside each other without any preconceived ideas. It felt natural, like authentic. You never feel out of place walking around here."

Some of their favorite places to go with their son, Timothy, 3, are the Arnett Café, Brooks Landing Diner and the Arnett Library.

"There are many generations that have come through the 19th Ward," Lynn Mordenga said. "I think people are proud of being here."



Share your 19th Ward story

Scan this QR code to submit a story idea and the coming weeks, we'll let you know if we report on it!

"Here, you could actually see diversity in the neighborhood. Neighbors really come alongside each other without any preconceived ideas. It felt natural, like authentic. You never feel out of place walking around here."

Lynn Mordenga