

Westchester | Fairfield Properties



A scenic landscape and a pristine interior lure city-dwellers who long for a home of their own in a tranquil but vibrant community. Here's the view from 91 Tappan Landing in Tarrytown, New York.

RETAIL AND AMENITIES
Lure Homebuyers From the City

by Joseph Dobrian

When people move from New York City, they may wonder if they'll find enough retail, restaurants and cultural activities to keep them entertained. The good news is that Westchester and Fairfield Counties have it all.

Deborah Doern, regional vice president of Rye Brook, New York-based Houlihan Lawrence, covers both counties, and she notices that many buyers are looking for homes in communities that offer value propositions as well as a thriving downtown. They are less concerned with size and driven more by amenities, convenience and overall experiences.

"Sellers are scaling down," she says, "to lighten their maintenance and tax burdens. So they're looking at smaller properties in pristine condition that will be easy to move into. There's high demand for new condos and rental buildings."

Many condo shoppers in these markets are buying conservatively, below their means, Doern notes, but they insist on certain key amenities, such as an on-premises fitness center, indoor pool, rooftop terrace and doorman. They want to live within walking distance to both the train station and downtown. But the most desired amenity of all? "It's the price," she says.

EYE-CATCHING DESIGNS

"Super-luxe properties have to be well-positioned to get buyers' attention, in both counties," she says. "People don't want fixer-uppers, but they do like to personalize their homes."

"We will see less of the monochromatic decorating schemes, the cool greys," Doern predicts. "We're seeing more colors popping up, warmer colors, and more desire for individuality, expressed in fun and funky wallpaper, for example."

Rita Steinkamp, a Houlihan Lawrence agent based in Bronxville, New York, says this trend shows up even in classic homes. A family will sometimes buy a turn-of-the-century shingle-style house for its exterior character, but give the indoors an edgy makeover.

"I mean no curtains, no tchotchkes, no plants: maybe just a few signature antiques," she says. "Function and design are all-important. People want fresh and modern."

Westchester County buyers, as a rule, want a neighborhood, Steinkamp adds. "If you want acreage, you'll

probably look in Fairfield County."

"Being close to restaurants and having outdoor space is gaining favor," says Loretta Rapisardi, an agent with Sotheby's International Realty in Rye, New York. "European buyers especially want an outdoor fireplace and a big table for entertaining outside."

A DESTINATION DOWNTOWN

Karla Murtaugh of Ridgefield, Connecticut-based Karla Murtaugh Homes says the town of Ridgefield has a "destination downtown," with a classic New England atmosphere and upscale restaurants and shops.

"We have a wonderful 18-hole municipal golf course and an indoor ice rink," she says. "We also host an annual half-marathon and sprint triathlon. The arts have become a big attraction as well, with the Prospector Movie Theater, Ridgefield Playhouse and ACT Theater."

"The Ridgefield/Redding area is also convenient to beaches in Westport and Fairfield," adds Laura Freed Ancona, agent for William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty. "You're also 30 miles from Yale University, 158 miles from Boston and just 60 miles from New York City."

"The SoNo Collection, a mall that's opening in Norwalk in October, will add the region's first major boutique national stores and other new players," says Joseph A. Aquino, Manhattan-based president of JAACRES, which specializes in commercial leasing. "Greenwich is probably the town best-known in Fairfield County for shopping and fine dining."

"The Greenwich Country Day School is building a new co-ed high school," says Shelly Tretter Lynch, Greenwich-based salesperson for Compass. "The Douro restaurant has expanded, restoring all of its historic building."

With fashion-forward malls, charming village shopping streets and one-of-a-kind restaurants, Fairfield and Westchester Counties offer a full menu of options for homebuyers looking beyond New York City.

Joseph Dobrian is a freelance writer specializing in real estate matters.



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