

LIFELONG LOCAL
Aaron Kaufman grew up on the East End, which comes in handy when finding clients their dream homes.



CALLING ALL BUYERS...

A COUPLE OF LISTINGS FROM KAUFMAN'S CURRENT PORTFOLIO

You were raised in the East End. What made you stay?

I went to pre-K in Southampton, where my dad was a doctor and my mom was a teacher, but I grew up mostly in Quogue and Westhampton. But when you're out here full-time, everything is just around the corner. I moved to New York City and was selling commercial real estate, and when I got married I decided to move back out here. That's when I thought, Why don't I take what I learned in the city and bring it to my hometown?

How has the Village transformed?

About 30 years ago, the Village of Southampton was full of streets that you wouldn't go down. Now those same streets have houses on a quarter acre that are \$3 to \$5 million. It's nuts. I'm not talking about the Estate Section—that's been there since the 1880s. There's no real answer why this happened, but similar to in the city, people buy out here as an investment because they know it's safe. It's been here for hundreds of years and it isn't going anywhere. The Hamptons have always been the playground of people who do well in the city. People like the mix of small village and upscale town mixed with high-end retail and restaurants, and sprinkled with the classic Southampton places that have been here forever, like Citarella, local stores like Hildreth's, and restaurants like Sant Ambroeus.

What bits of history will we find in the Village?

There's an historic district on South Main Street, and some of those houses were built in the 1700s. There might be one or two from the late 1600s. The people who came out here from the 1880s to the Depression era were building these cottages...and by cottages, I mean eight-bedroom houses. The guy who built the Sagaponack golf course built one; there's one built by the Morton Salt family, one by the Du Ponts, and by the Fords, which was torn down. Most are still standing, and a majority have changed hands.

Who are other notable residents, past and present?

A lot of people don't know that Michael Bloomberg lives out here. He bought one of the properties built in the early 1900s near the Estate Section and made it his own private compound—you can't even get down

VILLAGE PEOPLE

There was a time when you could score an eight-room cottage for less than a mil, not every street was posh, and a trip to the beach was practically free in Southampton Village. That was decades ago, according to East End native Aaron Kaufman. The Town & Country broker dishes on the deals that remain, notable residents, hidden gems, and memorable moments from yesteryear to today.

BY KRISTEN HEINZINGER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAWNI BANNISTER



PICTURE PERFECT

SOUTHAMPTON ESTATE SECTION. FOR PRICING, CALL (631) 283-5800
 Situated in the Estate Section, this manse comes fully furnished with clean, modern décor and is just a block away from the ocean. Amenities include a heated pool, spa, tennis court, and guest house.

TRADITIONAL CHARM

SOUTHAMPTON ESTATE SECTION. FOR PRICING, CALL (631) 283-5800
 This timeless home in the Estate Section offers high ceilings, multiple fireplaces, and a master bedroom suite with sliding French doors that open onto a large, westward-facing deck. The expansive property includes a private dock and heated gunite swimming pool.

the driveway. Other people are David Koch, James Tisch, Ian Schrager, Gerald Ford, and Calvin Klein.

In terms of buying, what's the barrier to entry?

For a new house that's ready for move-in, you'll need \$4 million. For a fixer-upper, probably \$2 million—you'd get a small, original 1920s traditional Southampton home with maybe two or three bedrooms and one shared bathroom upstairs. You'd have to replace the bathroom and the kitchen, but it would be charming.

Are many people investing in the fixer-uppers?

That's what a lot of people have done. A family friend bought a house that borders the Estate section, which is expanding. It was built in the 1970s track house by this guy who built ranches all over. It's walking distance to the village and the ocean, and it has a pool. Most of the half-acre properties are teardowns, and people are offered \$2 to \$2.5 million just for the land. To rip down the house and build a new one, that would go for \$5 million. These old houses are totally fine—there's nothing wrong with them.

Is there a lot of construction planned this summer?

The Village currently has the most construction permits it's ever had. Last summer it had about 400 building applications.

What's happening on the retail front?

Year-round, retail is really down. There are a lot more pop-up shops than normal—some are staying, like Sunbarth—and some restaurants. There's been a lot of turnover and empty storefronts. Probably 40 percent of the shops are pop-ups. But you have your year-round staples, like Hildreth's, which is the oldest department store in the United States, the hardware store, and Golden Pear.

What's the summer crowd like today?

It's a mix of people who have been summering out here their whole life or summered out here as a kid. There's a lot of new money coming in, whether it's younger people who have done well or people who want to be seen.

You mentioned that the borders of the Estate Section are shifting. What does it look like now?

To the east it's Wickapogue Road and Old Town.

Streets like Rosko Drive and Leos Lane are becoming part of the Estate Section. Basically, the Village's west border is being expanded. On the northern non-beach side, people are buying homes for \$5 million where they never did before, like McGee Street or North Bishops. These are the same streets that as a kid I wouldn't walk down...there were gang fights!

Are there any deals left, or has the area been picked over?

The Village has a couple deals left, but it's predominantly now upper tier. I just saw a teardown house on a quarter acre sell for \$600K, but it was basically on Montauk Highway. Other instances are family homes that are inherited. But these are old houses. People are buying them for the land, and they're going for at least \$2 million.

You're a tennis and theater buff. What's that scene like?

There are a bunch of tennis clubs in Southampton, like the prestigious Meadow Club. It's mostly people from the city who are starting to live out here full-time, and they're good tennis players! I take singing

classes and acting classes, and I do shows at the Southampton Cultural Center—last year I was in *South Pacific*. It also hosts galleries and art openings. About 25 years ago, my father was in all the local community theaters from Westhampton to East Hampton, like Guild Hall when Alec Baldwin was there, so I feel like I'm following in his footsteps.

And the beach scene?

It's become important, socioeconomically, to say that you go to a Southampton Village beach as opposed to a Southampton town beach, even though it's the same beach. There are certain parts that are only free if you're a Southampton Village resident, whereas a sticker for a nonresident costs \$350. You wouldn't want to be seen at a Southampton town beach! Even though there's nothing wrong with that... they're beautiful!

Can you reveal a hidden gem?

There's a French restaurant, Silver's, that's been here forever. It hasn't been remodeled and it's old school, but it has delicious food. It's not the kind of place you would go if you're not from the Hamptons...you'd walk by it. They have the best chicken soup. It's been run by a family for generations, so it has all the recipes that go along with that.

Any news on your radar?

Density has become a big issue, and the town is setting limits with building regulations, like how high you can build, the style, and how much you can put on a property. These rules never used to be. Last summer, a pretty big builder out here decided to spray-paint his little house in the Village the colors of the American flag. His feelings are, as someone who believes in property rights, that he can do whatever he wants with his house. Now there are these beautiful white houses and then this American flag. He actually won his lawsuit [against the Southampton Village ARB]. Also, there's a charming house called Laffalot in the Art Village that's in peril, and the Landmarks & Historic Districts Board just received a demolition application. Other than that, a big sale that people are talking about is 28 Gin Lane, which went for \$40 million to an unknown buyer. It's the first time in more than 55 years it's changed hands. ■

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