

# The New York Times

## The North Fork Has a New Name: NoFo

Warren Strugatch | July 14, 2017



*Mitchell Cashwell stands on the front porch of his brand-new bungalow in Southold. Credit Daniel Gonzalez for The New York Times*

With entry-level homes priced at about \$500,000, the North Fork continues to be a more affordable alternative for buyers looking for a second home on the East End of Long Island.

While the 30-mile peninsula doesn't offer the oceanfront access that the Hamptons do, its array of waterfront possibilities includes creeks, canals, rivers and bays, not to mention Long Island Sound. Many buyers here are looking for a less expensive and more low-key alternative to the South Fork. While the area once attracted mainly older homeowners from "up the island," the term locals use in reference to Nassau and western Suffolk Counties, it now draws younger buyers, many from Manhattan and Brooklyn.

The North Fork's casual, recreation-friendly lifestyle is often a selling point for these buyers, said Nicholas Planamento, a broker with Town & Country Real Estate who uses the acronym NoFo to convey the region's urban-chic-meets-country-casual vibe. Newcomers often seek both New York convenience and rural comfort. Case in point: Richard Kasnia and Leah Zara, an Upper West Side couple who closed on a 3,000-square-foot contemporary house in Southold for about \$1.2 million last month.

Ms. Zara is currently overseeing a clutch of contractors working on electrical upgrades, plumbing and bathroom improvements, along with the installation of new flooring, wireless security and smart appliances. Mr. Kasnia meanwhile has been out shopping for a boat he plans to dock in the canal that laps at their backyard and flows into Peconic Bay.

“Leah spent a lot of time on the [Jersey Shore](#) growing up, and feels right at home here,” Mr. Kasnia said. “She still has many friends from there. I’m sure quite a few of them will be visiting. They’ll probably want to live on the boat.”

Other lifestyle attractions are the local food sourcing, the dock-to-table dining choices, the proximity of vineyards and the pervasive sense of living history. “The descendants of the original settlers of the North Fork are still living here and farming here,” said Mr. Planamento, a local history buff. “At the farmstand down the road, you buy tomatoes from someone whose family has farmed that land since the 1600s. When you can touch and taste your heritage, that’s the essence of NoFo.”

“People are coming to the North Fork at earlier stages in their lives,” said Sheri Winter Clarry, a broker with the Corcoran Group. “Prices are generally lower here, so the lifestyle you want for yourself and your family is likely within reach.” “The North Fork is not the Hamptons,” she added. “It’s not about glitz.”

The median home price on the North Fork is \$487,500, with some waterfront properties going for under \$1 million, said Judi Desiderio, the chief executive of Town & Country Real Estate. Over all, she said, median prices on the North Fork are about half what they are on the South Fork.

Surging demand reflects regional promotional efforts. “People come from across the tristate area to visit the vineyards and go pumpkin picking with their families,” she said. “People spend these bucolic days here in the summer and fall, then return to look at real estate.”

Sherry Thomas, a landscape designer, and her partner, Lynn Witt, a New York City employee, came to Orient — at the peninsula’s eastern tip — some 10 years ago, after selling their Victorian house in San Francisco to finance a move to Manhattan and eventually a second home here. Having once raised sheep on the Mendocino coastline, Ms. Thomas found echoes of [Northern California](#) in Orient.

She and Ms. Witt have established close friendships in the community. She recalled that at a July 4 celebration last year, Sonia Sotomayor, the Supreme Court justice, was renting a house nearby and was invited to read the Declaration of Independence aloud. Another neighbor put on a private fireworks display.

Despite the region’s expanding appeal, brokers describe a lack of available inventory as a brake on growth. “Demand is way up; inventory is way down. When the right property hits the market, there’s a feeding frenzy,” said Tom Scalia, who owns Century 21 Albertson Realty in Southold. Closings were up 19 percent in the first quarter of this year over last year, according to Corcoran.



*Ellen Coster and Morris Isaac expect to close on the sale of their two-acre property in Cutchogue in the fall. Credit Daniel Gonzalez for The New York Times*

Market report numbers range widely between brokerages, but Corcoran shows sales in Mattituck and nearby Laurel currently leading the pace, with housing prices up 26 percent since January. Mattituck traditionally attracts buyers seeking relative proximity to the city, as well as easier access to the South Fork and its shopping and entertainment options.



*Harvest Pointe, a residence for people 55 years and older, will start selling two- and three-bedroom residences in August. Credit Harvest Pointe*

New housing starts, as measured by permits, are up, especially in the town of Southold, which issued 38 permits for single-family dwellings from January through May, up from 24 for the same period last year. The town of Riverhead issued about 50 permits in the first six months of this year, similar to last year's pace.

Mitchell Cashwell and his brothers have been coming out to Southold since the early 1990s, when their parents bought a home in the hamlet. Last year, he and a younger brother bought a property adjacent to their older brother's and commissioned Anne Surchin, a local architect, to design a contemporary beach house.

Ms. Surchin first had to demolish the century-old house on the property, which she described as moldy and structurally deficient. "Both Mitchell and I wanted the new bungalow to maintain

the scale, massing and charm of the neighborhood," Ms. Surchin said. She added a bedroom and bath without expanding the footprint.

Mr. Cashwell, a Manhattanite, said he was delighted with the results. "I'm going to have friends visiting soon from L.A.," he said.

Many of the North Fork's new housing starts will be in [Harvest Pointe](#), the first major subdivision in many years set to open next August. After a 15-year delay awaiting town approval, the condominium project, a community for people 55 and older with 124 residences on 46 acres, is under construction just north of Main Road, in Cutchogue. Residences will have two or three bedrooms, full basements and two-car garages. Prices start at \$685,000.

When sales open this August, Ellen Coster and her husband, Morris Isaac, of Cutchogue, expect to be among the first to place deposits on a two-bedroom unit. They plan to close in October or November on the sale of their two-acre property nearby, which includes a farmhouse, barn, cabana and cottage, and scale down to a two-bedroom condo. They'll spend late fall and winter in [Florida](#), and hope to move into their new Harvest Pointe home next summer.

"We needed to scale down because we couldn't continue maintaining it all," she said. "But we're thrilled about Harvest Pointe. The area really needs living opportunities like this. People do not want to move to Riverhead."

And why would that be? "There's too much congestion," she said.

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