



# The New Realty Reality Hits Home

Eric Feil | May 20, 2020

"Here we are in the driveway, doing FaceTime while the buyer is walking through a house where the owner has put all the lights on and opened up all the doors so nobody touches a switch or a knob, and you have to leave your shoes outside and wear gloves and a mask or a hazmat suit to make sure you're safe. Is it doable? Yes. Short term, it's doable. Is it optimal? No way." Town & Country Real Estate CEO Judi Desiderio isn't describing some otherworldly scenario, we well know, but rather the surreal state of real estate in the new normal. It happens to be a scene playing out here in the Hamptons, but really, it could be anywhere. And the issues it raises, even as it hits the market here in unique ways, bring up universal questions.



"Long-term, I don't see humanoids being able to keep such distance and have such a lack of tactile stimuli," Desiderio continues. "And real estate is probably one of the most personal things. You're not buying a shirt, or a bottle of vodka or even a plant. You're buying a house."

Or renting one. Or trying to rent one, perhaps. Our East End rental market made national news as New York state began to shut down back in March, and the mass exodus from New York City drove thousands of people who once only visited in the summertime to start searching for a longer-term Hamptons or North Fork haven for themselves and their families.

For those who already owned second homes, those seasonal escapes immediately evolved into full-time residences. The supply of rentals that might otherwise have been on the market changed, the way people looked at the value of long-term renting and ownership changed...and, as we arrive at Memorial Day weekend, East End real estate leaders come together to discuss just how much that change will influence this summer and beyond.

"From a commercial perspective, retailers and restaurants are in a holding pattern. Retailers are closed and restaurants can only do take-out. I have been in discussions with both the tenants and landlords regarding rent payments. For the most part, rents have not been paid for April and May for retailers, and restaurants have paid reduced levels. Landlords have been very understanding, but for the most part they have mortgages and real estate taxes to pay, so this puts them at a disadvantage." --Hal Zwick, Town & Country Real Estate

"Inventory is sorely low, especially for full season or long season, because that's what people want. Before the pandemic, AirBNB, Home Away, VRBO, they kind of changed the landscape, everybody was out here for two weeks in Amagansett, two weeks in Southampton, a week somewhere else. Now, no one is doing AirBNB and VRBO. No one wants somebody in their house for two weeks, and then have a different set of people coming in two weeks. And no one wants to be in a house that somebody else was in for two weeks. It completely brought to a halt short-term rentals and put back in the saddle Memorial Day through Labor Day or May through September. Good luck trying to find a really beautiful one." --Judi Desiderio