

# Ask An Agent: How To Host Open Houses Safely As COVID-19 Spikes

Lee Meyer | December 29, 2021

As the busy holiday season raises the risk of COVID-19 spreading and the omicron variant causes breakthrough cases, both buyers and sellers could be concerned that their search for a home will be made even more difficult. While the North Fork real estate market remains hot, sellers may think twice before letting potential buyers into their houses.

Open houses are particularly risky, and real estate agents are taking extra precautions to make sure they're as safe as possible.

“What I’ve been doing is letting one party in at a time,” said Rita Rooney, Douglas Elliman Real Estate. “Everyone signs in, I get their phone number. They have to wear masks. I’m wiping things down in between. I’m treating it as if it was Covid in the beginning again.”

Other agents are taking similar precautions.

“At our open house we set up a table with masks, hand sanitizer, booties and Lysol wipes,” said partners Katie Schimpf and Bill McIntosh of Daniel Gale Sotheby’s International Realty. “We highly recommend our potential buyers sign our COVID-19 Screening questionnaire upon arriving. Everyone at our open houses must wear a mask regardless of their vaccine status.”

Schimpf and McIntosh have families stand six feet apart while waiting in line for an open house and open doors, closets and cabinets ahead of time. They also wipe everything down afterward.

It’s important to agents that both buyers and sellers are kept as safe as possible.

“We have to protect both the homeowner and all the other customers that are coming in,” said Lori Feilen, Town & Country Real Estate.

The New York State Association of Realtors (NYSAR) has also issued guidance to agents when it comes to showing homes and open houses. According to NYSAR, a home counts as an “indoor public place” during a showing or open house, so it’s subject to the indoor mask mandate as outlined by Gov. Hochul, which states that masks be worn unless a business or venue has implemented a vaccine requirement.

So far, potential buyers have been very cooperative.

“Everyone’s showing up with masks on already,” Rooney said.

“Overall, things have been safe,” added Alexis Meadows of NoFo Real Estate. “I have not heard of a single issue that’s arisen from a showing or open house due to Covid so far.”

