

# James Lane

## Nicholas Planamento: Town & Country's Omnipresent Power Broker Of The North Fork

Ty Wenzel | August 27, 2023



Nicholas Planamento. Courtesy of Town & Country Real Estate

Nicholas Planamento is one of a handful of North Fork brokers that come up as true leaders of the region when it comes to luxury real estate with waterfront homes in particular in his wheelhouse. With Town & Country a major player in the territory, he has managed to accrue a steady inventory of stunning homes, commercial properties and every opportunity credited to the boon of NoFo real estate. Planamento has grown his reputation by leveraging his commitment to institutions such as local chambers or stepping up as the president of HANFRA (Hamptons and North Fork Realtors Association).

### **Nick, are you local to the North Fork?**

I've often asked myself, *what does local mean*. While not a “harelegger” born on Shelter Island, or a descendant of one of the original 13 families that colonized Southold back in 1640, I do have strong family ties to the community from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and moved here full time back in the late 1990s. I was born and raised in a New York City suburb up in Westchester and lived in Connecticut before relocating to Southold at my cousin's suggestion when she was opening up her winery on Sound Avenue. I was instrumental in assisting her with her retail operation having always been a salesperson – and a realtor since the late 1980s.

I originally sold properties up in the Hudson Valley; my first transaction was in the fall of 1987 when I sold a beautiful Victorian residence on Balding Avenue in Poughkeepsie and a large farm property on Quaker Hill along the Connecticut border. My enthusiasm for old and historic homes comes through especially when working with second homebuyers.

## **What is it about your methodology on how you work that has built your business to what it is today?**

The Realtors Code of Ethics is my guiding light — I live by the principles that your client is on your shoulder listening to everything that you say and do. As a result, coupled with my enthusiasm for all things North Fork, I believe consumers of real estate — both buyers and sellers or landlords and tenants — understand the integrity and transparency that I bring to the table. I'm not about boasting that a certain property has the most amazing brand range or bathroom fixtures and shower head — while these details are important they don't rule my ability to sell. I instead to focus on the fundamentals of a deal: the importance of compliant Certificate of Occupancy for all improvements at a given property, the actual site and its position in the community, the view. A home and its amenities changes with the fashion of the day, but as Lord Howard Samuel said: "Location, Location, Location."

## **You're known for concierge service. What does that mean to you?**

All jokes aside, as a real estate professional you need to be a *Jack of All Trades* — and I add "a master of one" referring to real estate. I do it all with ease: I assist my clients at every step of the process and introduce them to the right people whether in Town/County/State office, school districts, even the local farmer, to help them make the decision to invest in the North Fork. I am here to assist them with the transition into *North Fork living*.

My job starts at our first meeting where we discuss their real estate needs, then it moves to property viewing, negotiations, closing. It's quite similar in a rental situation, too. Finally, post closing, very much a celebratory time, also means assisting clients and customers with finding the right tradespeople to help them achieve their dreams whether its finding a painter for the house, a pool installation company, even a piano rental company. You name it, I assist with getting things done!

## **Of all the agencies on the East End, why did you choose Town & Country as your brokerage?**

As a New York State Real Estate Associate Broker with Town & Country I am an advocate for my clients relative to one of the biggest investments they maintain, their real estate — whether its about acquiring, preserving or divesting of it. I am here to offer guidance and advice — not just marketing a property or offering a pretty face and "key turner" access. The reason I maintain my license with Judi Desiderio and her partners at Town & Country is many folds but foremost because the firm is an advocate for me. Working alongside T&C is about the individual agent being the "star" — not the agency, the owner/broker with the name on the door, or the corporate entity that has layers of management channels protecting their interest not mine as an independent contractor and small business owner. When I find myself in unfamiliar waters, I turn to Judi, the partners and our Compliance Counselor/legal team to help guide me in my day-to-day business operation or to help guide my clients. The support that T&C offers me helps me to do my job and allows me to focus on what I do best — sell North Fork Real Estate where my name is a recognized top-tier resource.



**The North Fork has seen some dramatic growth spurts with prices of homes rising with it. Do you think this will continue?**

While I fondly recall the days that \$300k would get you a beautiful farm on Oregon Road or a Soundfront home on Kenny's Beach, we all have to be realistic — the North Fork was always undervalued and its only since Covid that values are approaching other resort/second home destinations. While numbers may seem a bit intimidating today, they are nothing like what they will be as more and more people move to the North Fork — seeking refuge from the city or more populated places like Nassau or western Suffolk County.

With remote work the “norm” since Covid and a “graying” population many people want to live a comfortable more carefree life and the North Fork fits the bill. It's an ideal place to work from home or to retire to or to “start out” without the prices of other East End destinations such as East Hampton or Southampton towns and their hamlets. One can easily live and work in Southold and access the same waters and lifestyle for a fraction of the cost.



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## **The pandemic must have been a trying. How did you deal with it, and are you still using any of the methodologies you integrated then?**

Absolutely. Prior to Covid I had no idea how Zoom or DocuSign could be used in real estate — now it's the norm. These platforms and services, among others, make my job all the easier to complete some necessary tasks which in turn allow me to spend more time doing what I do — selling and renting houses.

## **You were President of HANFRA for two terms. What did that entail?**

Ty, thank you for recognizing that honor. I am truly grateful to my colleagues and other Board members for entrusting this position with me. As you know, HANFRA is an acronym for the Hamptons and North Fork Realtors Association — it's a trade Board, under NYSAR (New York State Association of Realtors) which governs the day to day (regional) operation of being a Realtor®. While so many people think real estate is just about “turning keys” and opening houses or collection a brokerage fee — its all so much more and there is a standard that we as realtors are sworn to uphold.

While president I “managed” over 600 local, East End real estate practitioners, participated and represented them at the State and National level and was also a graduate of the class of 2012 Leadership Academy — a program designed to aid and train real estate professionals for possible roles in the State or National Boards.

## **Nick, you're incredibly embedded in North Fork chambers and committees. Can you tell us about them?**

I love to volunteer and I greatly enjoy local history. Our community is so incredibly rich and full of history having been founded in 1640. I find it amazingly interesting that you can still see vistas that Native Americans or first settlers saw, while also being able to live in homes built by the first generation. The community is full of talented people who want to give back and I consider myself one, too! It's a wonderful feeling.

Previously, I was a Board member of CAST (Community Action Southold Town), Past President of the Mattituck Laurel Historical Society and Museums, and have served on various Town of Southold committees.

## **Let's talk markets. How have the interest rates affected NoFo real estate?**

Unfortunately, with the rise of interest rates a year ago, in mid-August 2022, the world has changed yet again. There is a malaise that is apparent in all sectors of the local real estate market — whether it's selling or renting — the consumer confidence just isn't the same. I find it exceedingly puzzling that consumers still pay *premium* dollars for properties that I just don't see the value in — and properties that have value seem to languish without the buyer/tenant appreciation they deserve. It's a strange, transitional time.

The one thing that I do see is that consumers want *move in ready* with nothing to think about to just start enjoying the North Fork lifestyle. They tend to be more “transient” in mindset and not as committed to the community as buyers in the past. Sadly, it's common now for people to rent their homes outside of the Town rental permit, minimum period negatively impacting the community and altering its friendly character. The Real Deal calls these new entrants to the North Fork, *burn and churn*, I believe. It's disruptive to a community that has always been so proud of its heritage and natural resources. It appears to me that the proverbial cat is out of



the bag and as such people are now looking at our small community more like other resort communities and the trend will continue. This is a *new normal*, I just hope that these people will take the time to stop, say “hello” to neighbors, not to honk at traffic lights as is the style westward and to learn to appreciate this special slice of paradise!

### **Which neighborhoods on the North Fork are buyers gravitating towards?**

We are such a small community, and all of our hamlets are well known, but it appears to me that people really love the small town vibe of Southold, especially in Orient or New Suffolk. I’m aware and working with property owners for two truly special sub-divisions which are large by community standards, with both on the Sound that will be a game changer for homeowners in the future. It will fill the need for larger, estate-like homes of the Hamptons but with North Fork charm and character. These are long-term projects – nothing happens fast in Southold – which is a good thing sometimes.



2040 Town Harbor Road, Southold. Courtesy of Town & Country Real Estate.

I have a special client whose family has also given so much back to Southold at the local hospital and at Peconic Landing. I am representing the family in the sale of their parent's estate, "Mayfield" located at 2080 Town Harbor Lane, in Southold. It's a 2-acre bayfront estate built in 1905 and one of the most authentic properties I've ever represented. It features seven bedrooms, each with a more spectacular view, multiple fireplaces, common rooms and a private beach house on the shore of Peconic Bay. It also has a large-scale replica Lighthouse rumored to have been a beacon for rumrunners back in the day. Definitely a once in a lifetime opportunity for the next stewards who truly want the best of the best on the North Fork.

There is simply nothing like this home currently available – and in my recollection – only a few homes since the 1990s that could possibly challenge its provenance (Quaks Nest, Douglas Moore house, or maybe Bumble Bee Manor).

As I mentioned before, I deliver concierge service to my clients whether they're a buyer or seller. Whoever I represent — amazing people who have entrusted me with the sale or rental of their properties have my undivided attention.

### **What are some of your favorite things to do on the North Fork?**

I didn't grow up fishing or sailing but I have to say, that over the past two plus decades I've learned to sail or boat. We actually have a beautiful sailboat, Jaunty, that we keep at Safe Harbor in Greenport and enjoy the solitude and quiet of the Peconic Bay or a small skiff, to take my dogs — two golden retrievers who are a mother and son — to the beach for an afternoon. It's another great way for me to relax is clamming – while I don't really consider it fishing — it truly is! Our local bounty is amazing. It's my zen place allowing me to clear my mind of the day's issues and reflect upon the good fortune that I get to live and work where I do. And, of course, about all the wonderful people I meet and assist in a variety of ways.