

Special Advertising Feature
WESTCHESTER AND FAIRFIELD COUNTIES

Open, Flexible Interiors Appeal to Buyers

DESIGN DEMANDS ARE CHANGING AS BUYERS FROM A WIDER CATCHMENT AREA MOVE IN

By Joseph Dobrian

Home-buyer tastes for exterior architectural styling may vary, but your home will sell faster if it has an open, urban-style interior, or at least the potential for that type of renovation. That's the verdict of real-estate agents in Fairfield County, Conn., and Westchester County, N.Y., say industry experts. Flexibility and all the modern conveniences are musts, as is proximity to transportation and retail.

Today's buyers are demanding value and require floor-plan flexibility and versatility, along with an increasing desire for the integration of "smart home" features, says Judy Szabla, realtor and associate broker at Coldwell Banker in Westport. "They expect craftsmanship, with specialty moldings and trims in upper-tier properties.

"More and more new construction in the more affluent areas of Fairfield County has showcased the 'transitional' Colonial, a traditional style with an understated contemporary flair. That means crisp lines, cool greys, chestnut and espresso tones."

NEW CONSTRUCTIONS

Inventory in Fairfield County is currently pretty thin, with 206 homes on the market that were built in 2016 or later. Most of the new constructions are in Greenwich, Westport, Fairfield and Danbury. There are around 433 waterfront homes (which include lakefront properties) available, according to the SmartMLS multiple listing service, with most of them located in Greenwich, Norwalk, Westport and Fairfield.

Individual vacant lots are becoming increasingly hard to come by in Fairfield County. "It's sometimes more effective to look for existing homes on marketable parcels, where the home can be torn down and then rebuilt to today's standards," Ms. Szabla adds.

In terms of which communities are the most desirable, she sees a trend toward commuter-friendly locations, with as many conveniences close to the home as possible, plus privacy: "But the higher home-pricing in towns closer to Manhattan has led some buyers to loosen their requirements on location."



This Dutch Colonial home's style made it sought-after, but proximity to rail transport sold it.

Jessica Murphy, licensed real-estate salesperson for Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty, Irvington, N.Y., says she just sold a home in downtown Irvington that went from listing to contract in seven days, largely because of its walking-distance proximity to the Metro North train station. "Everyone wanted this Dutch Colonial with the mansard roof and sun porch, but the location really sold it.



Jessica Murphy

We're seeing the highest demand for homes in the \$800,000 to \$1,200,000 range, and the more cash you can offer, the more likely you are to get the deal."

As for trends in architectural styles, Ms. Murphy notes that for many years, the contemporary home—of the Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired style so popular in the 1960s and '70s—was almost unsellable, but she's now seeing an enormous resurgence of interest in that style, especially if the home has been modernized.

"It's a new thing in our market: buyers seeking out contemporaries," she says. "We'd barely heard of that even five years ago.

"More buyers are coming into this market from the five boroughs, so the urban aesthetic is carrying over. People

love an open floor plan, an open kitchen, family room, and dining room: real loft-style living. It's considered a downer when a floor is all chopped up [into smaller rooms], as used to be the fashion. When people buy older homes, they want one that's been opened up, or they're budgeting to do that themselves.

"Buyers might want the quaintness of an old stone cottage," she notes, "but when they go inside they want it to look like a loft in TriBeCa."

LOCAL RETAIL

Jeremy Ezra, executive vice president at RKF (a New York-based real-estate services firm that specializes in retail), notes that Westchester and Fairfield are two of the wealthiest counties in the U.S., and their residents demand local retail options. Most notable of these,

he says, is the Westchester Mall, which offers a traditional mall experience with recently expanded dining.

"In Fairfield County, Grant Avenue in Greenwich remains an extremely important retail street, and many retailers have locations both there and in the Westchester Mall," he adds. "Then there's Main Street in Westport, which attracts more of a local customer. It's not so much of a regional shopping experience, but it has that New England charm, super-easy access to parking, and a great mix of retailers."

"TODAY'S BUYERS ARE DEMANDING VALUE, FLOOR-PLAN FLEXIBILITY AND VERSATILITY, ALONG WITH AN INCREASING DESIRE FOR 'SMART HOME' FEATURES."

General Growth Properties is currently developing a mall in South Norwalk, scheduled to open in late 2019 or early 2020; Mr. Ezra says retailers are uncertain as to how it might impact the overall market.

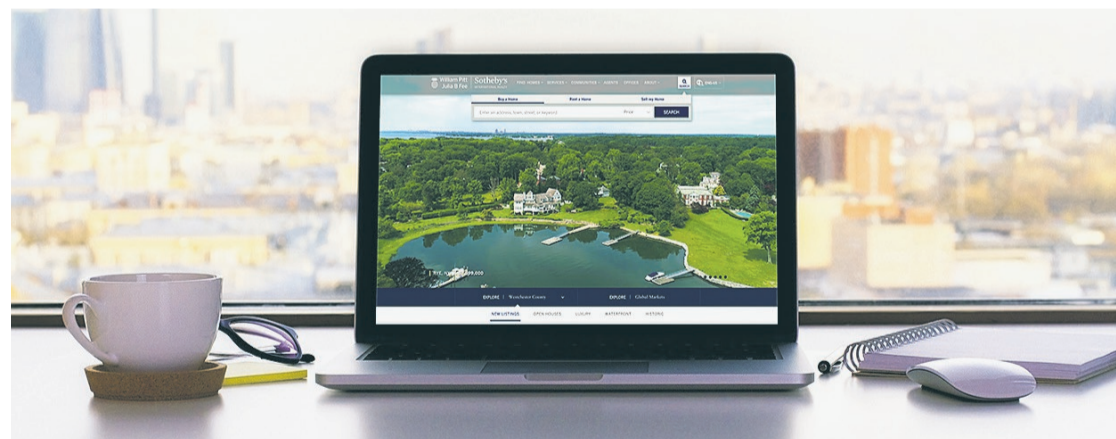
"We see so many unique new retailing concepts coming out of the city," he concludes, "and Westchester and Fairfield both have several shopping venues that will attract those concepts."

Joseph Dobrian is a freelance writer specializing in real estate matters.



Buyers seek open-plan kitchens and family rooms—loft-style living is the trend.

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William Pitt and Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty is proud to announce that the company has been honored with several awards for its website design and layout by the trusted real estate news source REAL Trends, including No. 1 Best Design in the country, No. 2 Best Overall Website and No. 2 in Property Detail Pages. This is the second time in three years that the firm has been honored by REAL Trends after the company took home a handful of honors in 2015.

This year, the REAL Trends web consultants reviewed nearly 700 residential real estate websites solely based on their excellence in the following categories: Best Mobile Experience, Best Use of Video, Best Community Pages, Best Property Detail Pages, Best Design and Best Overall. Websites were submitted online and those brokerages on the REAL Trends 500, a ranking of the top residential real estate brokerages around the country, were automatically entered.

REAL Trends recognized williamspitt.com as the No. 1 real estate website nationally in the category of Best Design, which is based on user experience consisting of several variables including layout, clear navigation, usability and branding on a website. William Pitt and Julia B. Fee Sotheby's International Realty was one of two Sotheby's International Realty branded offices to make the Top 10 in this category.

It's easy to see why our website has received so many accolades, with features including full-screen, high-definition property and community videos, robust content on every listing page, 3D virtual tours built seamlessly into property detail pages, site customization according to the user's location, the ability to custom tailor with personal preferences, strong search functionality and more.

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William Pitt
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EXPLORE NORTH OF NYC THIS FALL



In an effort to excite New Yorkers contemplating a move out of the city, Houlihan Lawrence, the leading real estate brokerage serving Gotham's northern suburbs, has released *NorthOf.NYC*, an interactive lifestyle guide that celebrates the people and places that make New York's Hudson Valley and Western Connecticut such exciting and thriving places to live, work and play.

The visually stunning micro-site is organized through the lens of six local lifestyles: the Villager, the Equestrian, the Trailblazer, the Waterfronter, the Locavore and the Cosmopolitan. Each takes viewers on a photographic journey and profiles a local resident, business owner or influencer who shares their story. Another cornerstone of *NorthOf.NYC* is its interactive map, a hub for visitors to discover more than 250+ curated stops, restaurants, attractions and more. The map exclusively features independently-owned businesses, nodding to Houlihan Lawrence's local roots.

North of NYC is an ongoing campaign for Houlihan Lawrence that began with Instagram hashtag [#northofnyc](https://www.instagram.com/northofnyc). Engaging local Instagrammers through photo contests and promotions, the feed for the tag today includes over 4,000 community-generated images from our area, providing a foundation for the full-fledged lifestyle guide. Through high-end technology, seamless design and creative direction, Houlihan Lawrence is proud to engage locals and city dwellers alike in order to initiate a digital narrative explaining why there's no place like its home for the past 125+ years.

Start your journey and look for the Harvest Season icon to explore seasonal recommendations: <http://northofnyc.com>



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