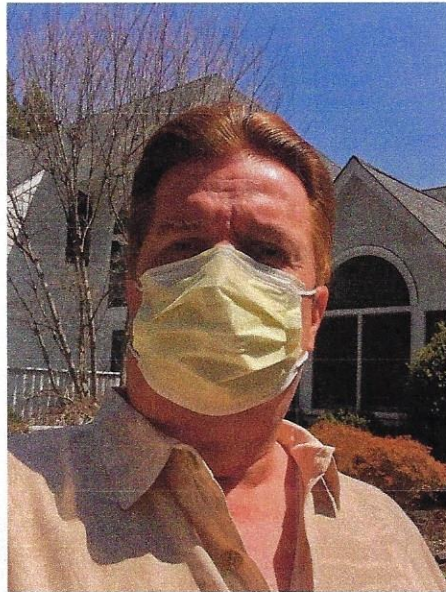


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Simon Harrison: Real Estate Changes But Stays Strong In Crisis



It will probably come as no surprise to hear that real estate prices, at least in Sag Harbor, are holding steady, and sales numbers are actually higher than at this time last year. After all, the COVID-19 crisis has forced most everyone to spend a lot more time in their homes than ever before.

How that real estate gets sold has changed, though, according to Simon Harrison of Simon Harrison Real Estate in Sag Harbor.

“On-site showings are down 70 to 80 percent,” Mr. Harrison said this week. In fact, the longtime broker recently sold a sizable home on the basis of a kind of video tour he created and sent to an interested buyer.

“I walked the property with a cellphone and sent three videos and sold the house based on that,” he said. “It’s kind of amazing, really.”

And when showings do happen, Mr. Harrison said he has bottles of alcohol, hand sanitizer and facemasks at the ready — for himself and his buyers — and he strongly suggests no one touch anything on or in the property.

“We’re in a kind of bizarro world, but we’re adapting and making it work, and I’m happy to say it seems to be working,” he added.

Contract prices are up, homes are selling for very close to their asking prices, and it’s possible the pandemic could result in a real boom time for real estate sales this year, Mr. Harrison said, based on his recent experience. Whether that is due to the long-term stability of the East End market, or the fact that with people spending more time at home they want larger houses to live and work in, or a combination of both, agents are busy.

“I’m grateful. I mean, I’m not doing so well I have survivor guilt, but ... I have 20 agents and brokers and some staff, and I’m glad for all of us to be doing okay,” Mr. Harrison said, adding. “Of course, I haven’t seen any of them for more than a month, except in Zoom meetings.”

Jennifer L. Henn