

IN THE REGION | WESTCHESTER

The Non-Hamptons Vie for Renters



Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times

A house for rent in Bedford.



AS temperatures heat up, so has the demand for summer homes in what some real estate agents call the “non-Hampton Hamptons”: Bedford, Pound Ridge and other semirural northern [Westchester](#) towns and villages with acres of open space and lots of greenery.



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Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times

The rent is \$20,000 a month for the Bedford house.



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A grazer at Sunnyfield Farm in northern Westchester, where interest in vacation houses has picked up.

April is described as the prime month for selling and renting vacation homes, whatever the location. But brokers less than an hour north of Midtown say their territory is special. It may not offer stretches of sandy beach and oceanfront vistas, but it counters with something pretty appealing: getting there doesn't entail the "traffic nightmares" often experienced on the Long Island Expressway, said James B. Renwick, the broker-owner of the Renwick Sotheby's International Realty in Bedford Village.

And then there is the privacy, and the scarcity of paparazzi lurking in the shadows.

"Northern Westchester is not a place you go to be seen," Mr. Renwick explained, adding that the area attracts people whose idea of leisure is to sit by a pool and read a book, or to go horseback-riding or hiking on the many trails that crisscross the area. The celebrities who do retreat to Westchester — like Glenn Close and Ralph Lauren — may get a glance or two from passers-by, but for the most part they tend to blend into the landscape.

"When it comes to a comparison with the eastern end of [Long Island](#)," he said, "a place like Bedford or Pound Ridge is a different animal altogether."

That different species of weekend retreat was exactly what drew Beth Chartoff Spector, asset manager for a financial firm, and her husband, Jason A. Spector, a surgeon at NewYork-Presbyterian /Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan. Three years ago, they and their sons, now 6 and 9, began spending weekends in a sprawling four-bedroom six-bath colonial

in Bedford Corners with spectacular views of the countryside. The owners had paid \$2.7 million for the four-acre property in 2005, but rarely used it and decided to rent it out for \$8,500 a month.

The Spector family, who spend the week in their three-bedroom co-op in Greenwich Village, had been “getting antsy to escape the city,” Ms. Chartoff Spector explained, and they jumped at the opportunity to rent a fully furnished country house.

For Dr. Spector, who occasionally has to race back to the city on weekends for an emergency, the house is “only 35 minutes door-to-door to the hospital,” his wife said. They had considered the [Catskills](#), but decided they were too far from the city. As for [the Hamptons](#), Dr. Spector ruled out the unpredictable Long Island Expressway. The house in Bedford Corners, a natural for entertaining, was perfect for them in many ways, and on weekends Dr. Spector, an accomplished cook, sometimes prepares dinner for 15 or more guests.

After several seasons when rentals and sales of summer homes slowed, agents like Ghy Manning, owner and principal broker of Vincent & Whittemore Real Estate in Bedford, are finally noticing a pickup in the number of people — families and couples of all ages, she said — lured by the spring weather into traveling north in search of a summer getaway.

“Last year was one of roughest since the downturn,” Ms. Manning said, noting that the mild winter had helped change the dynamic. Some of the hunters, she said, are renting for the summer “with an eye to buying and moving up here full time.”

There is no way to know how many houses are being acquired for vacation use, said Anthony Cutugno, a senior vice president for luxury properties at Houlihan Lawrence in Bedford. But sales in summer-house territory have increased: 972 homes were in contract countywide as of March 31, versus 742 on the same date in 2011. The rental market is also percolating, he said, and some owners who cannot sell are waiting out the market by negotiating short-term leases.

Summer rentals, which traditionally run from Memorial Day to Labor Day, run the gamut from \$35,000 to \$120,000 for the season. Among those currently available is an 18-room colonial with a saltwater pool on four acres in Bedford, listed by Ms. Manning for \$20,000 a month; and a four-bedroom colonial on four acres in North Castle, listed by Renwick Sotheby’s for \$10,000 a month. Typically, Mr. Renwick said, the owners rent out their

homes while they spend the summer in Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket or Fishers Island off Long Island.

The Hamptons tend to be pricier. In [East Hampton](#) for the entire season, prices range from about \$30,000, for a three-bedroom, two-bath house with a pool but no water view, to \$200,000 for large waterfront properties, according to listings on the Corcoran Web site.