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## 'Selling New York' comes to Sullivan County

BY THERESA KEEGAN

One of the Catskills best kept secrets is about to be shared with 3 million people when the "Selling New York" television show features the Sullivan County and a small building company that creates simple, specialty homes.

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As builder of those cottages, Petersheim knows the show is simply documenting an on-going evolution of people escaping

citylife and finding refuge in the Hudson Valley. And their quest, which is repeated daily by young and old alike, is proving almost recession proof.

"We've been busy throughout the recession, with the wind in our faces, (but) now with a little bit of tailwind, we hope to really move forward," he said. He expects

response from the show will be significant, but doesn't expect to alter his successful business model.

Petersheim knows of the need to find a secure spot in the world.

He moved to Sullivan County from the city after 9/11 left him shaken and dis-

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## Selling New York

traught. At the time, his home was a shack he'd just bought with a credit card for \$24,000. The lack of plumbing was not enough of a deterrent - he wanted a place to call home. He set about re-building the parcel with that in mind and that simple desire is what directs all the houses he now builds for others.

Catskill Farms has seen business increase every year since its start, when Petersheim built three houses in 2004.

"You either make it or you don't," he says of doing business in New York. "There's no middle ground. The cost of operating will just bury you. It's totally frustrating to be against workman's comp and all the regulations."

Unlike some developers who complain about planning agencies and local zoning, Petersheim has found a way to work within existing agencies.

"We've adapted, created, morphed our business to try and stay out of the tentacles of the bureaucracy morass," he says. "We've created a business plan that navigates the regulatory quagmire of New York."

Already this year the company has met its annual goal of building 12 houses in Sullivan County and Petersheim expects 20 properties will be built before the end of the year. The company now builds in Ulster County as well, and has found that its fundamental beliefs of embracing centuries-old farm-house accents, while building top-grade homes, results in a winning combination.

At the heart of Petersheim's clients are 30-something professionals, mostly from Manhattan, who want a place to call their own, without gong broke. And these new consumers, post recession, are finding the Hudson Valley real estate market opening up to their advantage, especially when they scout out general contractors and builders.

"More people, more buyers, are taking their heads out of the sand, and seeing that not many players exist anymore," he says. "They trust us as designers and builders."

As one of a few independent builders left post-recession, Petersheim sticks with simple, straight designs specific for each

plot of land he develops. There's no need for mega-housing developments. His goal, as president of Catskill Farms, is to offer the lifestyle that he's found in the Hudson Valley, to others.

"We're just constantly listening to what people are saying and building our houses, within reason, to meet their concerns," he says. "They want it fast and they want it good. Our niche, which we've never strayed from, is young, New York City, urban professionals."

The impact is impressive. Petersheim estimates the company has invested almost \$32 million in the local economy since 2004. He directly employs 14 people and has almost 100 more as subcontractors. There's also property tax revenue, purchasing building items from local suppliers, mortgages funded, at times, by local banks. (Although he often builds houses to spec, he doesn't sell a property until it's complete.) And then residents support local businesses as well.

"People miss the economic impacts these individual homeowners have," he says.

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