



A 2-bedroom Catskill Farms home, just outside Narrowsburg, N.Y., \$285,000

Catskills: Green Counties

WHEN PATRICK SWAYZE LIFTED BABY OUT OF A CORNER in “Dirty Dancing,” the Catskills took off. Already famous for Rip van Winkle, the Borscht Belt and Woodstock, the mega-hit 1987 film, brokers and homeowners said, was publicity that the region was leafy, riddled with lakes and, if Jerry Orbach was behind the wheel, a relatively short drive from the city.

In the late 1980’s and early 90’s, actors and art-worlders began to relocate there, to towns like Monticello, Livingston Manor and Bethel, site of the Woodstock Festival. Immigrants, at least for the weekend, were people of one name: Yoko, Uma, Bobby (okay, de Niro.) Then the real-estate downturn hit the region, and some towns in the Greene, Delaware and Sullivan counties became rundown, foreclosures rose and mid six-figure sales slowed.

Today, for home-buyers, the entry point is relatively cheap. The average price for a home in Sullivan County—the nearest to the city and a Rhode Island-sized rural area with towns like Monticello, Livingston Manor, Bethel—in the last three months

was \$152,740. In April, three houses in the region brought more than \$400,000, ending a recent drought of demand at the higher price level, according to data compiled by David Knudsen, of www.catskills4sale.com <<http://www.catskills4sale.com/>>. Waterfront is ridiculously plentiful, as the region has a few dozen lakes. Buyers can’t haggle much: single family home on average sold for 89% of their asking price.

The buyer demographic is changing, said Mr. Knudsen, more eco-conscious twenty and thirty-somethings, and privacy is a big lure. Some are looking for a “farmette,” he said, as a “status symbol.”

As for new construction, Chuck Petersheim of Catskill Farms, which builds vintage-style homes in the region, said a 900-square-foot house costs about \$160,000, while a 2,000-square-foot-home would be about \$400,000. The appeal of the Catskills to buyers, he said, was that it isn’t just a “vacation town turned into a leafier version of the city.”

That was probably a shot at the Hamptons. ●