

Our real estate panel (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT): Preston Phillips, Shannon Willey, Tim Davis, Carol Nobbs, Pamela Muller, Diego Reyes, and Vincent Ancona.



Relocate or Refresh?

A PANEL OF EAST END REAL ESTATE AND DESIGN EXPERTS WEIGHS THE PROS AND CONS OF MOVING VERSUS RENOVATING A HAMPTONS HOME. **MODERATED BY MICHAEL BRAVERMAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY TANYA MALOTT**

Michael Braverman: Let's say you have a great old house, but it needs a lot of work. Do you try to cash out and move up to the next level, or do you take that house and do something with it?

Carol Nobbs: It depends on the location of the house. If you have a magnificent home on the ocean, I don't think you would cash out; you would do an alteration if you could. Tear it down, which seems to be the thing to do these days. But if it has magnificent original details, my own personal preference would be to restore those details.

Pamela Muller: Also, you have to think about the economics, because renovating a house is really more expensive than building a new house in some ways.

Vincent Ancona: I think it's a degree of aggravation that some of us don't want in the Hamptons.

These are second homes. We come out here to relax, to enjoy, to spend time with our family; we don't necessarily want to come out here and start thinking about sheet rock, contractors, permits, and also the biggest factor, which is you can't use your home. [Renovating] takes time away from your family; it's very difficult to entertain. It could be simpler just to sell and start over.

Shannon Willey: I also think, though, that because we're so seasonal, there are times of the year when people aren't using their homes. So if the decision is to renovate, [you] do have the option of renovating in the off-season with professionals overseeing it.

Preston Phillips: We're currently renovating the first house I ever designed out here, back in 1978. It's not an old house, but the family loved it. It's a block off the beach in Bridgehampton. The

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MEET THE PANELISTS

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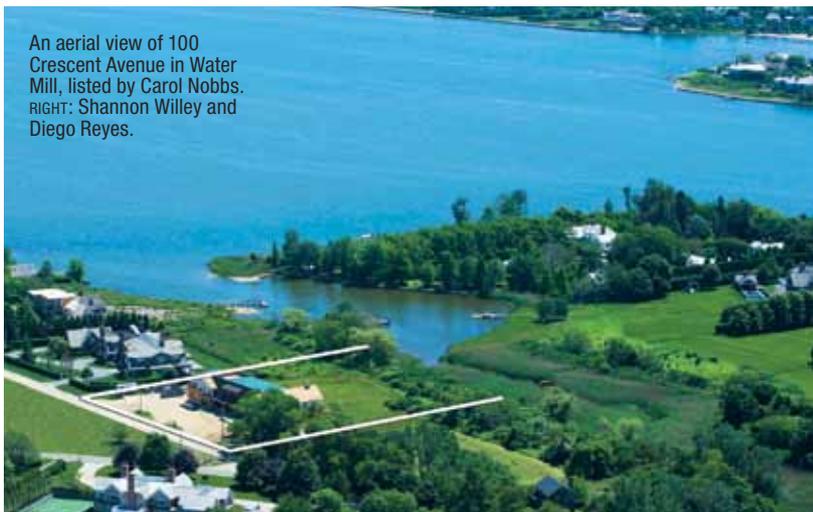
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Carol Nobbs, real estate broker, *Douglas Elliman*, 70 Jobs Lane, Southampton, 204-2714; elliman.com

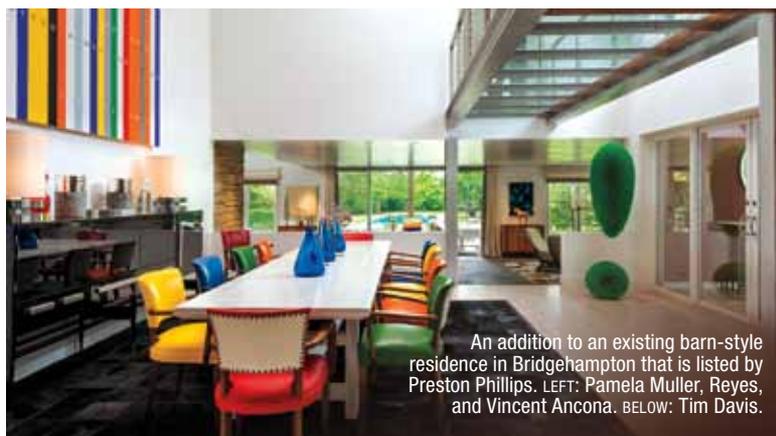
Preston Phillips, architect, *Preston T. Phillips*, Bridgehampton, 537-1237; prestonthillips.com

Diego Reyes, president, *Hampton Dwell*, 17 Lion Rock Road, East Hampton, 902-9568; hamptondwell.com

Shannon Willey, owner/designer, *Sea Green Designs*, 40A Jobs Lane, Southampton, 259-3612; seagreendesignsllc.com



An aerial view of 100 Crescent Avenue in Water Mill, listed by Carol Nobbs. RIGHT: Shannon Willey and Diego Reyes.



An addition to an existing barn-style residence in Bridgehampton that is listed by Preston Phillips. LEFT: Pamela Muller, Reyes, and Vincent Ancona. BELOW: Tim Davis.

owners raised a family there, and now that they have grandchildren, they really wanted to stay there. They just wanted the house to expand. We have yet to tear down a house, thank goodness.

Diego Reyes: One of the biggest challenges now is maintaining that heritage. We don't know what's coming in terms of technology or amenities, so our challenge is building houses or upgrading houses in a way that they're open to bigger upgrades in the future. Otherwise, we're going to end up tearing down every house around because we renovated in a way that we can't just step back and start over.

Tim Davis: A lot of what drives the process is zoning and restrictions—architecture review boards that either allow you or not allow you to make changes. There is, of late, probably over the past five years, more of a drive to preserve historic structures. Adding on to them and changing them can be done, but there is a process to doing that. If you look at what's happened in the marketplace, with so much new construction that's selling, the idea that people will take on a historic structure and add to it or change it is more difficult. It's more costly. Buying something new for the immediate gratification has been very popular. We'll probably go back to a phase in the marketplace in which those kinds of [older] homes will be

more sought-after, but, at the moment, “new” seems to be a very big buzzword.

VA: One of the biggest challenges in renovating out here, is not just the permit process—which in and of itself could be a nightmare—it's also who can you work with. For a lot of us, this is a second-home market. People come out here on the weekend and in the summer, but that doesn't necessarily mean you develop relationships with contractors. What happens is you don't have a comfort level with the people who can do the work in your home; and because it's a small market, you don't have a lot of price competition. When the market gets smaller, and the availability of the professionals to do the necessary work shrinks, that normally means the price goes up.

TD: That's why you call upon someone like Preston, who's in the marketplace as an architect and understands the process and can walk somebody through it. [An architect like him] has resources, as we all do in this industry, to connect people with honest contractors who will fairly price something for you.

MB: It's inevitable that the Hamptons is going to thicken up over time because it's so desirable, but what's going on that's really innovative or exciting?

“AT THE MOMENT, ‘NEW’ SEEMS TO BE A VERY BIG BUZZWORD.”

—TIM DAVIS



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY KERRY SHARKEY MILLER (BARN-STYLE RESIDENCE)

A Tim Davis listing on Herrick Road in Southampton.



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—DIEGO REYES



SW: Homes that are now LEED-certified, Energy Star homes—that’s huge for our entire environment. We’re looking at energy efficiency and [more efficient] water usage, which just helps in general.

CN: One of my clients bought this beautiful, historic house on Howard Street in Sag Harbor. She’s maintaining the front, but then in the back she’s building all [new]. The integrity of the building from the street is actually going to be maintained, but the whole structure will be new. It’s really fabulous.

SW: One of the things I’m seeing with interiors is, even though the facade of a house or the architecture of a house might be traditional, people are looking for cleaner lines in terms of their furnishings.

MB: I gather there are really two drivers here for renovating versus moving: One is a personal lifestyle, and one is the Hamptons market. Should the audience be looking at both of these factors?

CN: Given the amount of money that’s in this town and what people are building, they can

do what they want, I think.

PP: Whether you’re buying a house, renovating, or building, economics plays a role in terms of budget. But emotion is high on the list because [people often consider] their emotional attachment to a house.

VA: As homeowners out here, it’s not about economics; it’s about how much extra time do we really have? We’re busy in our jobs, we’re busy in our lives, and then maybe you get one or two days on the weekend to come out here. Do you want to deal with the aggravation of renovating when all you have to do is just basically take a key, put it in the door of a brand new home, and start your memories all over again?

SW: I live in a small home; this discussion is pertinent because I have two young children, and we’re at that stage where we feel like we either need to renovate or relocate. We love the school district that we’re in and love being in Southampton, but we’re in a position where we’re ready to make a change. It’ll be interesting to see now, based on this discussion,

whether we renovate or relocate.

CN: I live on a farm in Southampton Village. We had the house built, and I love the location, so I have done two alterations to the house rather than move.

DR: I’m a contractor, so my house is always under construction. I’m sure when I have it the way I want it, we’ll move into a place where I can plan it better, because, for me, the most important thing in a house is natural light. I wish I could have a house that faces south all the time.

VA: I’ve had a house in East Hampton for 15 years, and I love my home. I’ve watched my kids grow up here. When I bought the home, it had a swing set in the backyard, and that was even before I had children, so it’s always had a great emotional attachment to me. But one of the most important things about the Hamptons to me isn’t the house; it’s the state of mind. When driving up Montauk Highway, there’s a little sign in Bridgehampton on the side of the road that says “Second Wind.” That’s what I feel when I get out to my home. **H**