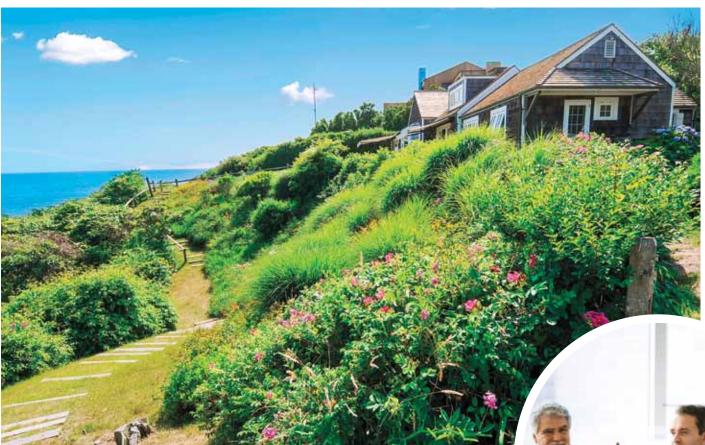
LEFT: Oceanfront property, 644 Old Montauk Highway, from Kieran Brew; BELOW, FROM LEFT: Aram Terchunian, Frederico Azevedo, James Zizzi.



Natural Instinct

EAST END BUILDERS, BROKERS, AND DESIGNERS DISCUSS BUILDING HAMPTONS HOMES THAT MELD WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT.

MODERATED BY MICHAEL BRAVERMAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY TANYA MALOTT

Michael Braverman: Let's talk about respecting the environment. What issues are important to you in what you are doing?

Kieran Brew: Unfortunately, it seems our buyers are least interested in the respecting the environment. Their primary issue is wanting to know what they can get away with: "How close to the wetlands can I put the pool?" "How big can I make the house?" It's a challenge for all of us who live here.

Philip Rossillo: Design is a big part of that. Appreciating and respecting the landscape starts when the architect sits with the client or a developer, and they start planning. If the design is better connected to the site, it will then bring people outside into the environment, and then they could walk around and say, "Maybe a monster house here is not what's appropriate."

MB: Jonathan, do you see more respect of the environment in your business?

Jonathan Tibett: Absolutely. We're a product of mining; environment is a huge part of the process. We have to affect it as little as possible when

unearthing our materials. The technologies that are available today make it much, much better.

MB: Let's expand upon Kieran's point. You say buyers are pushing the envelope as much as they can on the regulations. Are the regulations sufficient?

KB: The regulations are probably sufficient, but the municipalities have taken the lead in establishing what's appropriate and what's not. The guidelines currently are pretty sufficient, but the question that we always get is, "Can I get a variance?"

Aram Terchunian: That's what I do every day. The regulations on the East End are the most stringent regulations in the US—period. They are hugely protective of the environment, as they should be.

James Zizzi: I understand we're one of the most highly regulated areas, but what we're doing is creating uniformity. Where is beauty? And whose eye is to decide this? You go into the villages and you go into the towns and they have architectural review boards, and the architectural review

CONTINUED ON PAGE 118

MEET THE PANELISTS

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"THREE THINGS THAT WE HAVE TO ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND IN THIS BUSINESS: INNOVATE, ADAPT AND PERSUADE." —ARAM TERCHUNIAN

boards tell you what something has to be. But how do you know they're right? People came out here for the light, the sun-the homes weren't overly dynamic. There were restaurants all over the waterfront. Today, regulatory agencies have removed all the opportunities for people to interface with the water, plants, and the environment. For example, Westhampton Beach, Quogue, East Quogue-there used to be two dozen restaurants on the water. Today, you have maybe three or four, which are—in some way, shape, or form-defined as violating the environment. That isn't right. I'm afraid we're creating a uniformity out here that never existed before. Frederico Azevedo: I totally agree. The regulations sometimes impede us as designers to be more creative.

AT: The uniformity thing that Jim brings up makes our job a lot harder. When you have heavy zoning regulations, the houses look the same. That's why innovation is so critical to our process.

MB: Let's talk about a positive example of great design that respects the environment.

AT: The largest project that's been done in the past decade on the East End was privately financed. It's the huge restoration project in Sagaponack, Bridgehampton, and Water Mill. Six miles of beach, \$25.5 million, funded 95 percent by 144 property owners on the beach. That beach is the single-most valuable asset of the entire town of Southampton.

KB: The big question is how do you bring those people together? How does that happen? AT: It happens through crisis. It happens through leadership. It happens through innovation. When the problem first started to become not just noticeable, but chronic, 25 years ago, several owners said, "What do we need to do?" The technology was there, but they couldn't get critical mass because not everybody was affected. And, when people were widely affected, we had to go through a massive campaign to quantify the problem and then educate and lay out the entire solution so that it was, "Wow, if I don't do this it's going to cost me more money, and if I do it, I'm going to increase my property value." It's a huge

effort, and it was sparked literally by four property





owners. Four property owners finally said, "We've had enough. Tell us what we have to do, and we'll go talk to our neighbors."

JZ: In Quogue, they formed a partnership of individuals and sold shares in the restaurant. It became a community center, and they rehabilitated a very, very important building. Now it's a wonderful destination restaurant, which is an interesting way of privatizing the historical aspects of Quogue. MB: What's a recent client that exemplifies building around the environment? Patrick McLaughlin: I'm seeing that people want the design to blend in with the environment. More architects are trying to be integrated with the environment. It's not terrain of flat lawns going up to a sweeping house; it's more diverse than it used to be. JZ: One of my clients had a place in Sag Harbor and

wanted to move toward Westhampton because of

the traffic; they bought a 100-year-old home along the water in Westhampton. The choices were knock it down or renovate. They renovated the whole building, and, in fact, we left some of the defects in the building because [it added to its] beauty. KB: Jim is painting a picture of very different customers: There is the customer who's going to take a 100-year-old house and restore it to its original condition, or even better, probably at a greater expense and more time than it would take to build a new house; [then there are] the people who want to drop their bags, plug in the Keurig, then head to the beach; and [there are] the people who are building their houses from nothing who want to incorporate all of that together. How do we bring these markets together? Houses that are built into the square zoning blocks south of the highway

CONTINUED ON PAGE 120

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that are all very much the same are selling faster than anything else and for more money. That is a great challenge that we have in trying to keep this area beautiful, and yet it's the market that's demanding similar houses.

FA: I bought an old mechanic shop that I transformed into my landscape-design office and concept store, but my building now adds value to the whole street. It makes a difference to the whole neighborhood. I know that takes more time, but, in the end, you are adding something to the community.

PR: I'm working on a project on the water that has a buildable footprint that's actually a bit smaller than what would be needed for a two-acre lot. We wanted to provide the amenities that are common in the Hamptons-the tennis court, the pool-and the only

way to do that was to put [the tennis court] on the roof. Typically, if you do an aerial search of the area on Google, you can see a variety of flat roofs because of the height restrictions. We utilized that space, and eliminated a footprint.

AT: That reminds me of three things that we have to always keep in mind in this business: innovate, adapt and persuade. That's what we do every day. **KB:** Sellers don't realize that when they're marketing their properties, when there are concerns about buffer zones, the more you know, the more you can establish and present to a buyer, the more value that property has. I have a listing in Montauk that's right on the ocean, and my seller has been phenomenal.

"MY BUILDING NOW ADDS VALUE TO THE WHOLE STREET, IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD."

-FREDERICO AZEVEDO

He's said, "I want to get all of the information down on paper, because even if it's worth less than I'd like it to be worth, it's still more than if there were question marks."

AT: We do a ton of that due-diligence work. We've done it for buyers for decades; sellers finally understand that. One of our jobs is to eliminate unknowns. If it's unknown, the value goes down. JZ: Keep in mind: these communities all have unique regulations, and they don't apply uniformly. If you have a buffer in the town of Southampton, there's an individual who establishes it. But if you go to Quogue or Westhampton, there's a different set of laws.

MB: How does having such respect for the environment impact your work every day?

> AT: I'm most passionate about trying to make our environment a little better every day. I went to school in Westhampton Beach, and now I live a block away. My

brothers and sisters all live in the area. We started the Moriches Bay Project-one of my givebacks to the community. We're going to plant and seed a million oysters in Moriches Bay in the next five to 10 years. We've already done about 80,000; we're going to do 100,000 more next year. What's remarkable is not just how great it makes me feel, but to see how infectious it is in the other members of the

community. We have an Indiegogo fundraiser, and I think we're going to hit our goal of \$20,000. JT: This being a resort community, people spend a great deal of their time outside on their property. It's opened up a unique opportunity; houses may not have gotten bigger, but the overall projects and scale have gotten bigger. That opens a door for lots of opportunities for the outside pool and the barbecue area, and the outside kitchens now. PM: What I like most about what I do is when I can find someone a home that really fits their lifestyle. They can really enjoy everything that the Hamptons is all about. H