

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

March 23, 2020

Selling Homes in the Age of Coronavirus

Real-estate agents reveal how they're safely showing property amid the pandemic



Q: How are you selling homes while maintaining safe practices during the coronavirus pandemic?

Colette Harron

Realtor at William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty in Essex, Conn.

Up until last week, I was still having showings. I wiped down my car with alcohol every time before I got into it. I used a scarf to put over my face. I wiped down the door handles and the counters when I got to the property before I showed it. I stayed 6 feet away from the people. Then I gave people plastic gloves when they came to see the home, so if they touched anything I didn't have to wipe it down again. Nobody objected.

But now we are only showing homes virtually, until further instructions. We have to be safe.

Ben Belack

Director, residential estates at The Agency in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Social media can be so meaningful right now. People are consuming real estate on their cellphone. They're swiping through photos like they're swiping through dating partners. I shifted to video awhile ago. I received two sight-unseen offers last year on a \$6 million house from the property video only, which is crazy.

If people are apprehensive about coming out, we can send them a quick tour or a quick walk-through. We'll do like a live open house, on whatever we think the most relevant platform is. Let's say it's a two-bedroom condo. We may go live on Instagram and do an open house tour and go live. If we're in a neighborhood that's a little bit more family driven, we may do a live walk-through or a tour

on Facebook. You just want a quick couple of bullets, just like a movie trailer. It doesn't show us the entire movie, it's just meant to get us there.

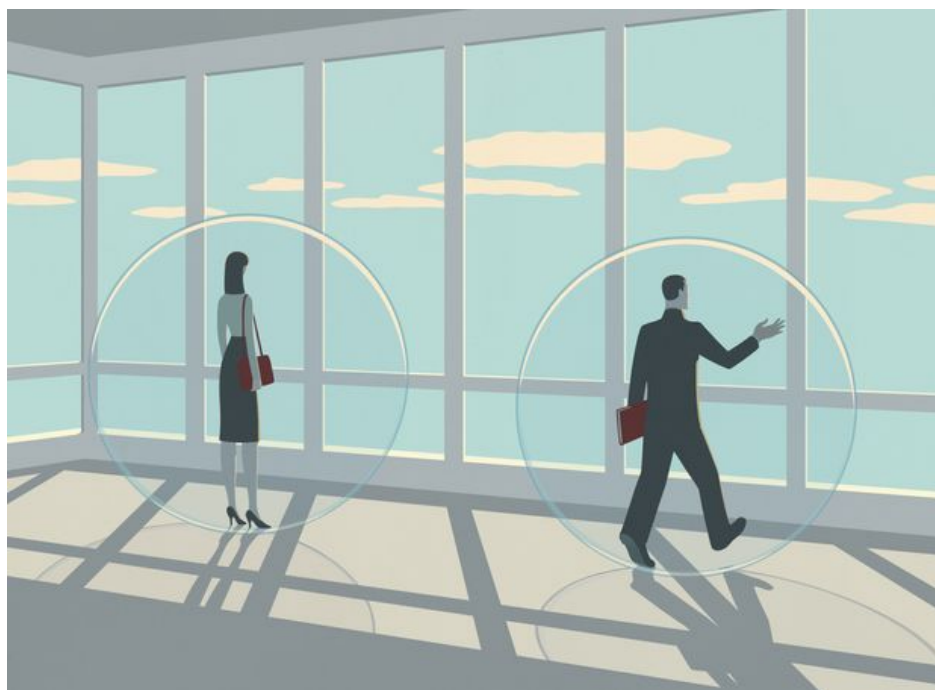


ILLUSTRATION: JON KRAUSE

Steven Gottlieb

Real-estate agent at Warburg Realty in New York, N.Y.

Real-estate agents are no longer allowed to do showings in New York City, but at the last one before the lockdown, everyone washed their hands without even being asked. Normally, we don't leave containers of dish soap and hand soap out on the counters—we try to make it look as if the home is the most aspirational version of itself—but that time we did. We were trying to convey a sense of comfort, that this home is clean and safe.

Normally, we would love for a bathroom to look like a hotel bathroom. I would put out a new bar of soap from a luxury brand like Hermes or Asprey, because we are selling an aspiration. In this new moment we are in, I almost want to advertise the fact that we have Clorox wipes and Purell. They're certainly not luxury brands, but they get the job done.

Shaun Osher

CEO, Core NYC in New York, N.Y.

Under the new guidelines sent out by Gov. Cuomo, real estate is not an essential job, so we've been instructed to not show apartments—to not endanger anyone's health. Basically, we've been ordered to stay in place. We don't have real-estate agents out conducting tours or doing appointments.

What we still can do, is use technology to educate buyers about real estate. New development projects have sold real estate before it's even built. We have marketing materials—a video tour, renderings, pricing. You could certainly have a Zoom or Facetime or Skype call with one of our agents. Basically, we're educating the consumer without that personal touch, but making it as personal as possible through technology. Health is obviously our No. 1 priority. This thing has moved faster than I think anyone can imagine, and our job changes daily.**am**

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