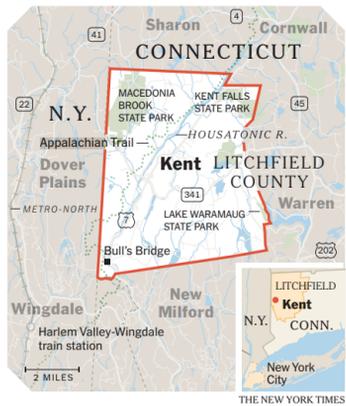


LIVING IN | KENT, CONN.

A Beautiful Small Town That Encourages a Slower Pace



By SUSAN HODARA

When drivers cross the Housatonic River into the Litchfield County town of Kent, Conn., about a mile from the New York State border, they must stop before entering Bull's Bridge, a historic one-lane covered bridge that invites those passing through to slow down. It's an apt welcome to a town set in the foothills of the Berkshires, scattered with forests, lakes and rolling fields.

Slowing down was one reason Sarah Bacon, 44, moved to Kent. In 2013, Ms. Bacon, a writer, was living in a loft she owned in Brooklyn when she learned that she had a progressive lung ailment. A year later, she paid \$760,000 for a weekend home in Kent: a 1,900-square-foot, three-bedroom, 18th-century colonial on five acres.

"I fell in love with the area — the land, the water, the beauty," she said.

These days, she divides her time between Kent and a rental in Harlem (she sold her loft in 2018), making the drive in under two hours with her cat, Sake, and dog, Lucky. "I still want a toehold in the city," she said. "But Kent has become my favorite place."

Of Kent's population of approximately 2,850, roughly half are part-time residents. Last April, Peter and Abigail Hanby joined the full-time half when they moved with their two sons into a 2,000-square-foot, three-bedroom ranch. They paid \$430,000 for the house, built in 1940 on two acres.

Mr. Hanby, 40, is an architect who works in neighboring Sharon. Ms. Hanby, 38, commutes twice a week to Manhattan, where she is a director at an educational strategy consulting company. They moved to Kent in search of more space and a different lifestyle when they outgrew the apartment they were renting in Brooklyn.

"One thing that's unique about Kent, compared to the surrounding towns, is that it has a year-round population," Mr. Hanby said. "There's a real community here, in a practical way. It's a beautiful small town with all the amenities you need."

True, but Kent faces challenges. One is a decades-long dispute with the Schaghticoke Native Americans, who assert that portions of Kent belong to them. A faction of the tribe is currently petitioning the Bureau of Indian Affairs for federal recognition. If granted, Bruce K. Adams, who stepped down last month after a 10-year stint as Kent's first selectman, said, "it could change this town dramatically."

Another issue is economic. "There's affluence here, but there's also an underbelly that people don't see," Mr. Adams said. Kent has a food bank that feeds 25 to 30 families weekly, he said, adding that many residents are quick to help when the need arises.

"People of all types and walks of life are very generous," Mr. Adams said.



About a third of the town of Kent, Conn., along the western edge of Litchfield County, is protected open space, some of which is maintained by the Kent Land Trust.

What You'll Find

With about a third of its nearly 50 square miles preserved as open space, Kent contains three state parks: Macedonia Brook; Lake Waramaug; and Kent Falls, where 17 waterfalls cascade 250 feet.

The town is crisscrossed by Route 341 and Route 7. At the intersection of those roads, Kent's downtown covers a few blocks lined with shops, businesses and restaurants, as well as a library.

Housing options include Cape Cods and ranches, renovated farmhouses and large estates. Patricia S. Braislin, Kent's assessor, said the town had roughly 1,390 single-family homes and 15 multifamily homes. There are 138 condominiums, one rental building with 10 units and three affordable housing complexes with 58 units.

What You'll Pay

"There are houses between \$200,000 and \$300,000, usually on a main road and in need of work," said Ira Goldspiel, an agent at William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty. "Then you can go all the way into the millions."

Based on information compiled by SmartMLS, Inc., as of Dec. 6, there were 39 single-family homes on the market, from a 718-square-foot, two-bedroom bungalow listed for \$127,500, to an 8,933-square-foot, six-bedroom colonial, listed for about \$8.9 million. There were five condominiums for sale, priced from \$169,000 to \$262,000, and eight rentals, from a 645-square-foot apartment for \$990 a month to a 3,066-square-

foot home for \$20,000 a month.

The median sales price for a single-family home during the 12-month period ending Dec. 6 was \$378,000, down from \$425,000 the previous 12 months. The median for condominiums was \$186,000 this year, up from \$177,000 last year.

The Vibe

Mr. Goldspiel described the town as "liberal and inclusive, a place where you can be anyone you want to be."

Nature-lovers can swim, fish, boat and hike on miles of scenic trails. Dining options include the locally sourced Swyft, the Frank Food Company, Fife 'n Drum Restaurant & Inn and Chinese and Korean restaurants. Residents can mingle at events like the 43-year-old Pumpkin Run and a Holiday Champagne Stroll downtown.

Kent's downtown has several boutiques as well as a hardware store, a dry cleaner and the Davis IGA supermarket. Kent Barns, a complex of modern barnlike structures, is filled with galleries and businesses, including the House of Books.

The Schools

Kent is served by Regional School District No. 1, which also serves several nearby towns. Each town has its own school for kindergarten through eighth grade; this year, 208 students attend Kent Center School. Most of the district's 1,364 students converge at Housatonic Valley Regional High School, in Falls Village. Three are also three preparatory boarding schools in Kent.

Pamela Vogel, the superintendent, said that on the 2018-19 Smarter Balanced assessments, 84 percent of Kent Center School's fourth graders were proficient in English language arts and 68 percent were proficient in math, compared with 55 percent and 52 percent statewide. Mean SAT scores for Housatonic's 2019 graduating class were 522 in evidence-based reading and writing, and 492 in math; statewide means were 529 and 516.

The Commute

Commuters to Manhattan, about 85 miles southwest, can catch Metro-North Railroad's Harlem Line at the Harlem Valley-Wingdale station, about 10 miles away, in Dover, N.Y. Through trains to and from Grand Central Terminal take 103 to 111 minutes; round-trip fares are \$51.50 peak, \$38.50 off-peak and \$521 monthly.

Drivers can head west into New York and take Route 22 to Interstate 684.

The History

For more than a century, artists have made Kent home, inspired by its natural beauty. Among the first was Robert H. Nisbet, who ran off to Kent in 1910 with his mentor's wife. Colleagues followed, and in 1923, nine of them founded the Kent Art Association.

In the 1980s, Jacques Kaplan, a furrier and collector, arrived from New York and opened the Paris New York Kent Gallery. "He was determined to make Kent a mecca for artists," said Marge Smith, the Kent Historical Society's curator and archivist.

ON THE MARKET



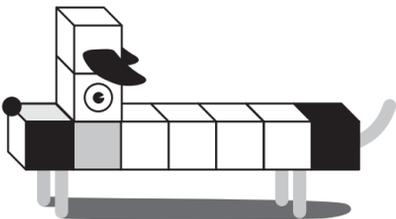
77B Segar Mountain Road

A four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bathroom house, built in 1990 on 48.4 acres, listed for \$2.5 million. 917-626-3481



18 Highland Road

A two-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bathroom house, built in 2017 on 8.61 acres, listed for \$1.895 million. 203-671-9067



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