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In the Region/Long Island; In Homes, Too, Horsepower Adds to Prices

By CAROLE PAQUETTE

WHEN John Carbone bought a new 3,600-square-foot, five-bedroom colonial three years ago, it was the "big house" of his wife's dreams, he said. But there was one hitch. While the house, in Hauppauge, was large enough for the family, which included three children, its half-acre lot was too small for their three horses.

"The horses were boarded out; it was hard," Mr. Carbone said. "I just couldn't see that, so we started looking for property where we could keep the horses at home.

"We looked all over, from a 10-acre piece in Manorville and out to Mattituck, but we didn't want to move that far," said Mr. Carbone, who owns the Carbone Contract Cleaning Corporation in Hauppauge.

"Then one day my wife called and said, 'I think I found something that would work for us,' " he said.

The one-and-a-half-acre property turned out to be ideal. It was in the town of Smithtown, which permits three horses on an acre, and backed onto 600-acre Blydenburgh County Park with its miles of bridle paths. The 2,000-square-foot, four-bedroom ranch house was smaller than the Carbones had been accustomed to, but it did not matter. The horses could come home.

The Carbones paid \$550,000 for the property and moved in last summer, horses and all. "We will expand the ranch -- that's not a problem," Mr. Carbone said. "We are so delighted we can walk right onto the horse trails."

The Carbones are among the growing number of horse owners who are choosing to keep their horses on their property. In doing so, they often pay up to \$100,000 more for their homes, simply because they border a park or an area with bridle paths.

Often referred to as "backyard horse people," these homeowners are representative of economic changes in the last decade, according to those in the equine business.

"We've seen a great change in the number of horses on Long Island, and in the number being kept at home, especially since many of the large boarding stables have closed and been sold to developers," said Jerry Trapani, of East Islip, who has been a farrier for 40 years.

"I had been going to the big barns, spending a day shoeing 125 horses in one place," he said. "Now I travel, doing about three stops a day in backyards. And it's not just rich people owning a horse anymore. They are more accessible now to anyone with a moderate income."

A typical price for a "decent horse, not a show horse" would range from \$5,000 to \$10,000, he said.

There are an estimated 40,000 horses on Long Island, up from 30,000 a decade ago, according to Cyla

Allison, president of the Nassau-Suffolk Horsemen's Association.

The cost to board a horse can range from \$450 a month in Smithtown to \$1,500 a month in Brookville, said Sharyn Guzzi, a realtor who owns Long Island Horse Properties in Hauppauge.

Keeping a horse at home costs about \$100 a month, "and the horse gets out more and you have easier access to it," said Mrs. Guzzi, who has three horses on 1.3 acres next door to the Carbones where she lives with her husband, Dean, a farrier, and her daughters, Jacqueline and Jenny.

FOR years, Mrs. Guzzi had been an agent with real estate companies in Dix Hills and Valley Stream, where she advertised that she specialized in horse properties. When she began getting a lot of calls, she recognized a strong need for a company solely dedicated to horse properties, she said.

She opened her own agency 18 months ago with two assistants, covering Smithtown and Medford. The agency has since grown to 10 offices that cover Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Most important to the value of horse property is its location, she said. The prime market areas are those that border parks that have bridle paths, such as the 460-acre Belmont Lake State Park in North Babylon and the 3,473-acre Connetquot River State Park in Oakdale.

Property zoned for horses and bordering a park with trails could add up to \$100,000 to a price, Mrs. Guzzi said.

Most of the horse property in the town of Brookhaven is in Manorville, which is in the 100,000-acre Central Pine Barrens, where there are many bridle paths, according to Nicholas Aliano, the owner of Aliano Real Estate, which has offices in Hauppauge, Miller Place, Mattituck and Cutchogue.

There, the average size of a horse property is about five acres with a house and barn, and ranges from \$600,000 to \$1 million, he said.

Since Sept. 11 and the downturn in the stock market, a new type of client has appeared, Mrs. Guzzi said. "They know nothing about horses but want to invest in horse property and have us rent it out," she said.

Rents for a horse property on one acre -- with a three-bedroom house and four stalls -- in Central Islip would be \$2,500 a month. In that area, the same house without a barn would rent for \$1,500, she said.

A large part of what is considered horse property depends on the municipality and its zoning codes. Regulations govern the size of the property, barn and corral setbacks, as well as the location of the required sealed manure containers.

Taxes are the same as for nonhorse properties, with the exception of the barn, which can add an average of \$1 a square foot a year, Mrs. Guzzi said.

In Brookhaven, two horses are permitted on one acre and no more than eight horses are allowed on a residential property. A barn is not permitted within 50 feet of the side and rear boundaries.

Zoning in the town of Huntington allows a resident to have a maximum of three horses on a minimum of an acre. The average residential lot in the town is a half-acre, said Don McKay, a town spokesman.

With some exceptions, as in a corner lot, a barn may not be built within 30 feet of a side or rear property line. And a corral must be within 10 feet of a side or rear property line.

In Huntington, the most popular location for horse properties is next to two town-owned parks, as well as the 854-acre West Hills County Park and the approximately 1,500-acre Caumsett State Park, all of which

have bridle paths.

According to Katy Anastasio, who owns Anastasio Associates in Huntington, a house on one acre in Huntington ranges from \$550,000 to \$850,000, with the value up to 10 percent higher if it is near a bridle path.

Mr. Trapani said that when he did an informal count of backyard horses within a half mile of Connetquot State Park several years ago, there were about 2,000. He and his wife, Rita, have six horses on their two-acre property a short distance from the park, which is in the town of Islip.

Islip requires a half-acre for one horse but one acre for four horses. Horse fencing must be 10 feet from the property line.

Horse owners prefer being "near other horse people and where people are more horse-friendly" because often neighbors who do not have a horse complain, even if the horse owner has abided by all the rules, Ms. Allison said.

"Many of them have erroneous ideas about horses, that they attract rats and flies, and that the manure causes diseases," she said. "In fact, the highest population of rats are found around bird feeders and fly control is important to a horse owner because they can make a horse sick. The manure is clean, and in fact, Brookhaven just passed an ordinance allowing horse people to compost the manure."

Mrs. Guzzi said she was trying to change a setback rule in the town of Smithtown that requires horse owners to store the manure 50 feet from each side of the yard. "We are trying to change the rule to 45 feet, or something more reasonable, because most properties are 100 feet wide," she said.

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