

Redefining Luxury Living – Can Connecticut Adapt?



The event was presented by *New England Home* magazine, in partnership with HBRA of Fairfield County EO, Jackie Bartolone and AIA Connecticut Executive Director, Gina Calabro.

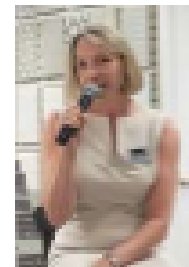
A panel of five of the region's top builders and designers, discussed where and how high-end residential is being redefined in Connecticut. The panelists included Tara Vincenta, principal, Artemis Landscape Architects, Rich Granoff, Granoff Architects, Beth Krupa, Beth Krupa Interiors, Seth Greenwald, Silver Heights Development, and builder/developer Arnold Karp, Karp Associates.



Connecticut Stone Vice-President Tyra Dellacross

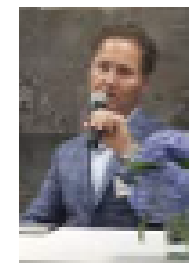
The term "Luxury home" used to mean a secluded estate with a sprawling lawn and tons of square footage. But for today's high-income homebuyers, a desirable lifestyle increasingly means a hassle-free commute, easy access to activities, minimal maintenance, and innovative technologies designed to enhance a life on the go. Developers are responding to this demand with exclusive communities across the country.

In July, Connecticut Stone hosted a panel discussion on *Redefining Luxury* at their spectacular showroom in Milford, and more than 100 industry professionals enjoyed the beautifully designed vignettes and displays of Connecticut Stone's interior and exterior stone products.



New England Home Connecticut editor-at-large Debra Salba did an outstanding job as panel moderator. Here is how she opened the panel discussion:

"In Fairfield County, we do BIG really well. We do exclusivity and grand landscapes really well. But the luxury homebuyer has changed. How would you define the new luxury?"



Rich Granoff, Granoff Architects: "In response to the market, we are designing for less maintenance and to help our clients save time."





Beth Krupa, Designer

– “The new luxury is easy care, connectivity, wellness, and fun things like faux skylights.”



Landscape architect Tara Vincenta – “For today’s young families and empty nesters, we are using newer materials in a fresher way creating that

vacation feeling or boutique living in smaller spaces.”



Seth Greenwald, Developer – “We are developing homes in small luxury packages with contemporary interiors and a sense of community”



Arnold Karp, Builder “Flexibility is key... we are building Merritt Village, 100 units in downtown New Canaan, that will be 1/3

rental and 2/3 condo for millennials and downsizing empty nesters.

“What are the challenges you are facing?” – Debra Silba

Seth Greenwald – “Finding properties that will accommodate a walk to town in a smaller, luxury living package.

Arnold Karp – “Pricing is a big challenge. Potential homebuyers all like the house, but want it at 20% under what we are asking. Another challenge is towns with anti-development zoning. It took two years and \$2 million for us to get Merritt Village approved in New Canaan.”



Merritt Village

Tara Vincenta – “The town of Fairfield is more accepting of multi-family, and landscaping can create beautiful outdoor spaces, and community spaces to entertain a large number of people.”

“The trend of wanting to be close to town is universal, so what can be done to help communities accept this kind of development?”

Seth Greenwald – “We have a seven unit condo development in New Canaan that we got approved on Arnold’s coat tails. It took nine zoning meetings and two years to get the development approved... The barriers are there... From the buyer’s perspective, it’s as much product driven as anything else. Older houses are not selling because of changing taste”.

“Are there designs that are more acceptable to a community, and what are people looking for?”

Rich Granoff – “There’s really no formula. Every town and every site is different... Clients no longer want traditional moldings or details... they are looking for modern interiors... on the exterior, the question is what level of modern... we have to deal with architectural review and historic committees that are dug in.”

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“Do we need to keep the New England aesthetic on the exterior?”

Seth Greenwald – “It depends on who’s sitting on the boards of these towns. At 42 Forest Street in downtown New Canaan, we have 2 luxury residential lofts, 5 townhomes and 1,300 SF of retail space on the ground floor, so one side of the building is commercial and one side is residential. The town dictated the width of shutters and even the type of brick. The building is red brick Federalist, but the interiors have modern poured concrete floors.”



Arnold Karp – “It’s crisis management. For each town, you need a land use attorney, the right architect, the right landscape architect and the right civil engineer. It costs \$10,000-12,000

per zoning meeting for a six consultant team. . . We need to get reasonable people on these boards. They are torturing each of us in the same way.”

Tara Vincenta – “People are a lot more sensitive to price than they were in the past. Landscape elements add up, and clients are surprised at the cost. They want all the amenities, like swimming pools or lap pools with auto cover, year round plug & play spas, a swim spa that looks like a water feature, outdoor kitchens, covered spaces and pergolas, fire pits and outdoor lighting . . . the farm to table trend has made vegetable gardens popular.

Beth Krupa – “On the interior of a smaller home, every foot matters, and clients want it done to the nines. When they rent, they’re spoiled with a spa, reading room, gym, & other community amenities, so they want a lot of that in a home with clean, crisp interiors.”

Rich Granzoff – “Clients want larger glazed openings as a matter of course . . . we’re also using green roofs, which help with drainage, coverage and in gaining approvals.” □

According to final statewide permit data from DECD, in 2018, the state authorized a total of 4,815 new housing units, and 1,225 demolished residential units last year. This leads to a net gain of 3,590 units for the year.

Connecticut New Housing Authorizations in 2018 By State and Counties

Number of Housing Units

Permit-issuing Places	Total Units	1 Unit	2 Unit	3 and 4 Units	5 Units or More	Demolitions	Net Gain
Connecticut	4,815	2,553	108	99	2,095	1,225	3,590
Fairfield	1,097	753	30	27	287	701	396
Hartford	1,134	502	6	14	612	86	1,048
Litchfield	126	117	4	0	5	37	89
Middlesex	164	160	4	0	0	84	80
New Haven	1,166	406	48	18	694	222	944
New London	666	297	12	0	357	49	617
Tolland	289	145	4	0	140	29	260
Windham	173	173	0	0	0	17	156

Source: Census, DECD

Compiled by DECD Research