

Ep #3: Armonk: A Sophisticated Lifestyle with a Country Feel



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Harriet Libov

[Your Real Estate Connection in Westchester](#)

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Welcome to Your Real Estate Connection in Westchester. A show for people looking to buy or sell homes in the Northern Westchester County area. Join local real estate expert Harriet Libov as she shares her professional advice on the local real estate market, connects you with knowledgeable community residents, and gives you helpful insights behind the home buying and selling process. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Hello everyone. When thinking about moving, the first step is to Google and find out about a town. You get the Wikipedia version. In this episode I want to give you a personal view of Armonk. A charming village in Westchester County, north of New York City, that I love and call home. Located about 45 minutes from Midtown Manhattan, in the town of North Castle.

Armonk offers a sophisticated lifestyle with a country feel. It's a real community in every sense of the word. The schools are award winning. And the amenities have improved so much since I moved here from Manhattan 32 years ago. Better retail, restaurants, and great services. The same qualities are still what bring young people to Armonk today.

We will hear from two Armonk residents I have come to know from my real estate business. Jennifer Eisenberg, who moved to Armonk when we found a home together in 2015. She and her husband Evan quickly got entrenched in the community, and in 2020 up-sized within the school district.

We'll also hear from Anita Greenwald, who has owned three homes in Armonk. She moved here in 1994, raised her family and is now an empty nester. She's going to share why she and her husband Rich have stayed here and why they still love staying here in Armonk.

Thanks for being here today. I appreciate you tuning in. Let's settle in and begin the conversation.

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One thing I am reminded of every single day in my work, it's so daunting when you move. Buy or sell a home that is a huge asset in your portfolio. When I get started with a new buyer, I ask a lot of questions. I always ask people where they grew up and why are they thinking of moving to a particular town. Most of the time they've done some research on their own. Or know someone who lives there.

Listening to their story gives me some background to understand the fit. I'm helping them find the place to build their future. It's one of the most important decisions they will make, and my clients are inviting me in to help navigate them through the process. It's really an incredible privilege that I have been chosen to guide them.

If a client is selling a home, I will always ask why they have loved living in their home and living in the community. When listing a property, I'm storytelling inviting the public in for the first showing. I try really hard to tell that story.

When I first drove in to the town of Armonk, I loved the small-town feel, and the hills, and lakes. I grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania, now famous for being the birth place of our new president, Joe Biden. But the physical attributes of lakes, and hill and terrain felt right to me. Because it felt like home, and it still does. There's a gut feeling that I think happens when you find a place to live. At least it did for me. I knew a few people to call through friends of friends if I had questions. But no one influential enough to help me make a decision.

Today is my personal tour of Armonk for you, and a few stats. There's so much information online on sites like niche.com. So, I'm not going to bore you with the details. I'm posting links to sites that I consider valuable for you to read if you want to dive in for more information.

Armonk is considered a hamlet, a term I never heard of before I moved to Westchester. And located in the town of North Castle. The population here

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is about 4400. But the school district, known as Byram Hills, has a larger population incorporating other areas, like the town of Mount Pleasant. It's about 38 miles from Midtown Manhattan. And the commute on Metro North from North White Plains makes it a pretty simple commute to Grand Central.

Armonk is also centrally located to Connecticut, New Jersey, or within the county. The taxes are relatively low for Westchester as it's home to many corporate businesses like IBM and Swiss Re. New York City is also a tax payer as their water comes from our reservoirs. They all help pay a good portion of the property taxes for homeowners. The tax revenue was really well thought out by past town supervisors when developing this town.

Byram Hills schools are a real attraction. At least it was for me when I was looking. Our school district promotes from within. Our current superintendent was my daughter's English teacher in middle school. I like that.

But as I said earlier, I also fell in love with the physical beauty. The country feeling. Lakes, reservoirs, and natural surroundings. I liked that each home had privacy, and more land than any other towns that I had visited in Lower Westchester. And our town center is really charming. But no matter where I travel, or where I used to travel, I come home and feel my hometown is equally as beautiful. And that's pretty cool.

The town center is vibrant, the stores are mom and pop and not big box stores. And the restaurant scene is now pretty good. The Armonk art show every October is a big attraction. Almost every home in Armonk has something hanging from the art show. Frosty day during the holidays is a lot of fun for the kids. There's so many different neighborhoods that I tour with my buyers. Each that have their own personality, some of which I'll cover on future episodes.

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So, in the world of COVID, with no inventory to show at all in the beginning of January, I gave a town tour last week to new buyer clients of mine. We were both in our own cars, both on our phones, and I was able to point out the highlights of what Armonk offers.

It always reminds me when I do a tour how lucky I feel to live here. I love hearing my buyer's positive reactions and enthusiasm about what they're seeing. And how much they appreciate getting a personal tour, and their reaction to the small town feel that we have here in Armonk.

When I'm asked questions that have answers that naturally change with time, for example, nursery schools or train parking, I like to refer a friend in town that is experiencing it with their kids or commuting in real time. If I'm asked specifics about the schools, I want them to hear it from the school districts themselves. It's how I work and how I'm comfortable. I can't be an expert on everything, nobody can.

So, today we'll meet and hear from two women I know and respect so much who live in Armonk. At each a different stage of their lives. Jennifer Eisenberg can speak to what it's like to raise a family in Armonk today, she's living it. She's the co-owner of RJ Classic, an equestrian clothing manufacturer. She has two sons; Jake is seven and Justin is four.

Jennifer is the former co-president of the Byram Hills Preschool Association. Evan, her husband, is active in our local baseball league. I just know they will continue to give their energy and time during different aspects of their lives in Armonk. Because they just enjoy it and they like to give back. Welcome Jennifer.

Jennifer: Thank you for having me.

Harriet: Oh, I'm so excited to have you as my first guest on this podcast series. So, thank you for doing this with me. Well, so here's my first question, how's life in your new home that you moved into in 2020?

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Jennifer: Our new home is amazing. While it's definitely a crazy time to move, and when we think back to moving in June it seems insane. I can't believe that everything ended up working out, because COVID is just a crazy time to move.

But it's amazing, we moved into a new house and got the additional space that we wanted and needed. And honestly, putting COVID aside, it's actually the benefits of moving during a time like this you have a lot time to unpack, you get to enjoy your home because you're spending a lot of time there. So, in half the time it feels like home. You get to meet all your neighbors because everyone is just walking around the neighborhood.

Harriet: That's true.

Jennifer: So, there was a lot of benefits to moving during this crazy time. And it's been amazing, we're really, really happy in our new house.

Harriet: I know, and I'm sure also, I mean, knowing that you moved from what, around 2,000 square feet to how big is the new house?

Jennifer: I think a little over 4,000 square feet.

Harriet: Okay, so I mean you have offices, you have a basement for the kids. All of those reasons you just said I'm sure it's really incredible.

Jennifer: It is.

Harriet: I can't remember, before your first house, where you lived prior to Armonk. Where you in the city?

Jennifer: No, we were in White Plains for about three years.

Harriet: Okay.

Jennifer: So, we moved out of the city and [crosstalk]

Harriet: You rented in White Plains?

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Jennifer: Yes, we rented.

Harriet: Okay.

Jennifer: Yep, so we were there for about three years. We had our first son there and when he was two, we moved into our first house in Armonk.

Harriet: Okay. And I remember I was showing you certain towns and you were referred to me for the areas I know. And then you were looking with other agents as well, I believe maybe in Rye Brooke or other areas south.

Jennifer: Right.

Harriet: Why did you end up choosing Armonk?

Jennifer: I think at the end of the day, you know, we only knew so much about Armonk. We knew a couple people who lived here and heard great things. We ultimately found the most value in Armonk. There were all these, you know, boxes that were checked off. Armonk had the good school district, and it was a smaller town. So it checked off a lot of boxes of things we were looking for. But ultimately, we really fell in love with the house and the neighborhood that we ended up in. And we really found value of buying a home there.

Harriet: For the lifestyle?

Jennifer: Yes. Yes.

Harriet: Right, right.

Jennifer: And just everything about it really came together. And when we saw that house, we just realized that same house in other towns, you just weren't getting as much for your money we found. So, we really felt the most value was in this home in Armonk.

Harriet: Okay. All right.

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Jennifer: That's what ultimately made the decision.

Harriet: All right, that makes sense. I remember that. Okay. So, I can't believe Jake is seven. And I remember when the first owners of your first home, I should say the owners of your first home, left that little chair for him that he used to sit on when we went to the house. Remember that?

Jennifer: I know, we still have that chair. Now our younger son is too big for that chair.

Harriet: Okay. But now that he's seven you're introduced to Byram Hills in the schools. And I know it's crazy now with COVID, but I guess I would just want to get your feelings about it pre-pandemic and how they've reacted to helping the kids during the pandemic.

Jennifer: So, pre-pandemic we always heard such amazing things about the school district and everything that we've experienced so far has lived up to those expectations. So, Jake is at Coman Hill, which is the school where there's kindergarten, first, and second grade. And people would always describe it as the sweetest school, and that's exactly what it is. It's adorable, it's not intimidating.

Harriet: It's a happy place, that's how I always felt.

Jennifer: Yes, it's a very happy place. And it's the perfect way to introduce you to the school district. They love the parents, you know, during a normal year they love the parents to get involved, to be guest readers, to go on field trips. And there's so many opportunities for parents to be involved and it's like the perfect introduction into the Byram Hills school district.

Also, just an amazing thing about this school, they have an amazing before and after school program. Which is really great for working parents, and the kids can just stay right at school and do all different activities. And that was also just an added bonus. The program is not through the school district but Coman Hill allows it to be run in their schools.

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Harriet: I remember that, I think when my kids were there,

Jennifer: Armonk Children's Corner.

Harriet: That's what it was called. That's right.

Jennifer: Pre-COVID it certainly was an amazing school, it still is. I'll get into the during COVID period. But, it's really an amazing school and it makes you look forward to what's next in the next school and to see what comes down the line in the school district.

But, during COVID, obviously a lot of things have changed. You are not able to be in the school like you used to. They keep it very tight, only faculty and kids. But despite that, obviously at a time like this we don't expect to be able to go in the school. The district has handled everything so perfectly. I don't think I could have written a better script for how this would all turn out.

The superintendent is incredible, they keep everybody informed, they've done an amazing job. I don't think I know any other schools, or only maybe one or two, that have had kids in school full time this entire time. They've just done an amazing job and we're so grateful that these kids get to be in school so they've done... Yeah, obviously the school looks a lot different, has a different experience, especially for the parents, but we're just so happy the kids are there and they've done a phenomenal job.

Harriet: That's really nice to hear. So, last question I have for you, what are you most grateful for that you chose Armonk now that you've been here for a number of years overall?

Jennifer: We're really grateful to just be part of this wonderful, little community. You get kind of that small town feel, but it's not too small, but it's not too big. It's like the perfect size and you just feel a part of something. There's so many ways that you can get involved in things.

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And it's just the greatest little community to be a part of. Even just I think about on the weekends in the spring time or in the fall, we're taking our kids to sports and then we're grabbing a cup of coffee and running into somebody. And it's just a wonderful town, we've met so many wonderful people. And we really feel a part of the community and it's a really wonderful place to live.

Harriet: It's really nice to hear. I mean I feel the same way, I'm still here. And I think most people do. You find your own people and yet the community overall is strong. And it's strong in good times, it's strong in hard times, but it's always there. So, that's a really good point. Thank you. Thank you for joining me.

Jennifer: Of course.

Harriet: I think it always helps to hear from somebody who's living it. And I love working with you guys. I love seeing you guys around town, and at dinner recently when we could sit outside.

Jennifer: Yeah. No, and there you go, you're always running into people. And no, it's always a pleasure running into you and seeing you and you're obviously the most wonderful person to work with and help us. Hopefully we will not be working together anytime soon because we're now in the home that you helped us find that we're in love with.

Harriet: It's all good.

Jennifer: But, if the day were to come we'll find you.

Harriet: No, no, it's all good. It's all good. All right, well thank you so much.

Jennifer: Of course.

Harriet: And have a great day.

Jennifer: You too.

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Harriet: And hopefully I'll see you soon.

Jennifer: Sounds good.

Harriet: And now, Anita Greenwald can speak to living in this town for a long time. She raised four kids here and lived in three houses. She began her journey in her first home in Armonk, built a larger home in a new neighborhood, and recently downsized into a renovated home in a gated community.

Anita started her own search and temp company at age 28. And handed the reigns to her husband Rich 26 years ago, who still runs it today. She started three nonprofits and volunteers endlessly. She recently became a yoga teacher and certified health coach in September 2020, and is specializing in working with adults 50 plus years old. A quite impressive bio, lifelong learning and growing. Thanks for being here Anita.

Harriet: Anita, you moved here in 1994, where did you live prior?

Anita: So, first of all, I'm sort of, I spent my entire life in Westchester. I was raised in Yonkers, which is part of Westchester, I guess. And my husband is also from Westchester. So when I was looking to move as an adult, I lived first, in my own apartment in Scarsdale, on Central Avenue. And we bought a co-op. And then we moved to Briarcliff. So, we had our starter house was in Briarcliff on Hardscrabble Road.

Harriet: Right. Not too far.

Anita: Not far at all. But we decided we didn't want to stay there, but that was where I moved from to Armonk.

Harriet: Right. Right, okay. And why did you choose Armonk for your family?

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Anita: It was a really conscious decision, so we did our research. Northern Westchester was kind of new to two Southern Westchester natives. And we drove around, we took our kids who were young at the time to Shutlz' farm.

Harriet: Right, I went there when I looked also, yeah.

Anita: Yeah, and we used to go there every fall for the donuts, and the cider, and sitting on the hill.

Harriet: Those donuts holds real estate.

Anita: Yeah, they're really good. And the hot dogs, do you remember the hot dogs?

Harriet: Yeah, everything. Everything about it, I remember. It smelled good and everything.

Anita: Yeah, and there was a bowling alley.

Harriet: Right.

Anita: And so Armonk was really country back then. And we went to David Chen's.

Harriet: Which still exists.

Anita: Still exists.

Harriet: A Chinese restaurant.

Anita: And we just felt that it was a small town, a country-ish town. And when we did our research, we saw how good the schools were and we decided. Because we knew that this decision our kids would be in school and this was going to be it for a while. So, we decided that Armonk was the place we wanted to be. It just was a small town and we really loved what we saw there.

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Harriet: Looking back I laugh at the question, you know, thinking that you would ever do anything other than a conscious decision, knowing who you are. Okay, so you raised four kids here. And how old are they now?

Anita: Okay, so I know, it's really hard to even let this out of my mouth. But the oldest is 35, and then my son is actually going to be 32 in a couple of days. And 26 and 23.

Harriet: Wow. Okay.

Anita: Yeah.

Harriet: So, I can speak for myself that I had two very different kids who went through Byram Hills Schools and they both thrived in the district. How was it for your kids?

Anita: So, I also have four very different kids and I'm going to say that it was a positive experience for all four, to varying degrees. So, for two of my kids, their best friends are still from growing up from Armonk.

Harriet: Same as mine, right.

Anita: And, you know, that's incredible. And I will say this, all four of them were so successful in college because they got such an amazing education out of Byram Hills Schools.

Harriet: Wow. That's something very nice to say. I think I can say the same thing. So, looking back at 2020 and starting 2021, I think we're all feeling gratitude for the good things in life. I know for me, I've been living here 32 years, I'm most grateful for my friendships. You've stayed here in Armonk even through four moves. I would say at this point what do you feel most grateful about for your life here at this point? And it's a different town from the one you bought into.

Anita: Oh boy, it's very different.

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Harriet: Right.

Anita: Again, because I'm all about conscious choices, so I can't believe it's going to be five years already. When we became empty nesters, we decided that we were going to move and find something that now fit us. Without four kids in the house, we certainly didn't need the big house that we had.

So, I was actually thinking because two of my kids were living in the city and I was thinking I should go to southern Westchester and be closer. You know, Rich's business is in White Plains and so we had to stay in Westchester. But it all happened on a walk.

So, we love walking and it was like a Sunday, we were walking from our house to town, which was about a mile. And we walked to the town center where DeCicco's is and Tazza. And when we got to that area it was fall, and literally there was 10 people we could say hello to. I'm not talking about friends, I'm just talking about people we knew because with four kids in the school you just know so many people.

Harriet: Right.

Anita: And we realized you can't replicate that when you move somewhere else as an adult. You know, like as an adult with no kids in the school. kids to,

Harriet: Correct.

Anita: So, what I'm most grateful for, to answer your question, so we ended up staying and moving to our third Armonk house, which is in a gated community near town. So, what I'm most grateful for about my life in Armonk is certainly the friendships. But I love where I live now. And I have never experienced such neighborly neighbors and a sense of community. I love our town. Rich actually, now that we're empty nesters with a lot more

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time on our hands, he started to volunteer with the fire department. He's an EMT on the ambulance.

Harriet: Oh, that's awesome.

Anita: So, we're really entrenched in the town now. And I'm just grateful for the people, the neighbors, the community, the small-town feel. When the kids left the house, I had been part of a book club for 16 years while they were growing up, and that disbanded eventually. And I said, "You know what? I need to have a book club of just meeting new people in Armonk." And so we started a book club off of Facebook in Armonk. And very differing ages, very different demographics, but it's all Armonk people. So, I just feel so grateful for our town and for all the nice people who live there and the sense of community.

Harriet: Right. Well, thank you. I agree with you and it's just nice to hear from somebody who's had all the experience here that you have.

Anita: And Harriet, I'm grateful to you. I really am. To know you, you're a fabulous realtor and you're part of the community.

Harriet: Well, thank you. That's a really sweet thing to say. So, thank you for joining us. I really appreciate it. And I hope I see you soon.

Anita: Me too.

Harriet: Thank you so much Anita, always a pleasure.

So, that about wraps up today's episode about Armonk. As I said to Anita, I can tell you what keeps me here and makes me grateful every day. It's all about the friends I've made. Long term friendships over 32 years that now feel like family. Celebrating milestones together.

And I love all my young clients who end up being new friends when they move into town. I get to see their friendly faces and watch their kids grow up. I love that. Even though my kids are all grown and living elsewhere, real

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estate gives me the opportunity to make new young friends moving here. And then watch them on their own journey. And then continue to hear from them. It really enriches my life.

So, that concludes our Armonk tour. Reach out with any unanswered questions and I'm happy to give you whatever info I can. Next episode we'll take a tour of Chappaqua. Thanks so much for listening.

I hope you enjoyed hearing about Armonk. It has so much to offer to so many people. You're bound to find something to keep you coming back. I invite you to take a road trip and explore this charming town with me. It's a pleasure helping people buy or sell a home in this area.

If you enjoyed today's show and don't want to miss an episode you can subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts. And if you haven't already, I would really appreciate it if you would leave a rating and review to let me know what you think and to help others find Your Real Estate Connection in Westchester.

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