

AS SEEN IN THE:



# Superiority Complex: Life's a country club at Queens North Shore Towers

By Jason Sheftell  
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Jeanne Noonan for News

You can't miss them. Three towers climbing out of the grassy border of Floral Park, Queens, near the Grand Central Parkway.

But outside anyone who lives there or knows someone who does, rarely does anyone see it. That's their loss, because *North Shore Towers and Country Club* is a world unto itself. It has an arcade of shops, indoor and outdoor pools, fitness center, 460-seat movie theater, two restaurants, an 18-hole golf course, five Har-Tru illuminated tennis courts and 1,844 apartments.

Studios can be bought for \$175,000 and up, with one-bedroom/one-baths starting at \$199,000. The big two-bedrooms in perfect condition with views of the Manhattan skyline and Queens countryside (yes, it's a countryside) can go for up to \$800,000, although they can start in the mid-\$500,000 range.



From left, co-op president Bob Ricken, real estate agent Linda Rappaport and G.M. Glen Kotowski (Jeanne Noonan for News)

"This is like living in a resort, but it's totally self-sufficient," says Glen Kotowski, general manager of the complex and former NYPD precinct commander at the nearby 105th. "We have our own power generator, a staff of 250, and we're literally active 24 hours per day. It's not unlike running a precinct, except we're not dealing with life-threatening issues. Crime is virtually nonexistent here."

Entering the gated driveway to North Shore Towers starts a series of real estate surprises.

The place is more than nice. The outdoor section of the parking lot is tree-filled, circling around the three lobbies, all of which have the feel of updated luxury with dark paneling and shiny marble. A floor below, a shopping arcade connects the 33-story towers. Shops include restaurants and a catering hall, a Chase bank, an interior designer/contractor, resident library, Pوران's Beauty Salon, Spa & Boutique, a grocery store, organic fruit and specialty market, pharmacy, dentist, that movie theater, resident library, a dry cleaner, car wash, a podiatrist, law offices and the Charles H. Greenthal Property Sales office, the Manhattan-based real estate entity that manages the towers and is the on-site real estate broker. Every one of these places makes house calls or delivers.



*Pouran's salon has been in the towers since the complex opened in 1976  
(Jeanne Noonan for News)*

Especially the real estate office. Run by Linda Rappaport, who has lived in the towers with her boxing promoter husband Dennis since 1987, Greenthal is one of the most productive one-office real estate offices in all of New York City. Rappaport, who began at Greenthal in 1998, can execute up to 10 transactions a month, good times or bad.

“It’s a service business, but I like to exceed everyone’s expectations,” says Rappaport, whose mother, mother-in-law and 30-year-old son live in separate apartments spread about the property.

“Some people want more space, others want less space. People think it’s just for old people, but the singles and younger families are starting to find us again.”



*Residents Dudley Barkin, Hanna Stein and Leon Hammer under the gazebo  
(Jeanne Noonan for News)*

On a recent Saturday morning, Rappaport’s office sees a steady flow of people with questions. June Rocheider moved from Long Island to the Berkshires and back after she found North Shore Towers. She and her husband want more space after just one year.

“I lived in Great Neck my whole life, and I had no idea it had all these amenities,” she says. “We love the outdoors and we get that here. People come to stay with us and they never want to leave.”

After that, Bob Ricken comes down. Ricken is the president of the co-op board that works with a \$43 million operating budget. More than \$18 million of that goes to real estate taxes. Ricken, a former superintendent of schools for Mineola who teaches and has written books on education, is working with the board to minimize expenditures. They also maintain the grounds and hired the Greenthal management team run by Kotowski. Ricken played tennis that morning.



“People just don’t know about us,” says Ricken, who lives with his wife, Susan, in a corner one-bedroom/one-and-a-half bath with city skyline views. “This is ideal for empty nesters or young people. We’re so big each building is its own voting district. The politicians come here to make speeches. Hillary Clinton was here.”

Ricken, in his 70s, is fit for his age. So are many of the other residents who use the fitness center, tennis courts, indoor and outdoor pools and spa services.

“There is no other place for me,” he says. “I think

living here prolongs your life. Try to find another building in the world that has amenities like this.”





Outside the real estate office, North Shore Towers bustles. A few older couples wait for a film to start in the basement theater lobby. A gin game heats up with serious card players. Some kids play in the playground. Others hang by the pool.

Annie DeJohn owns an insurance business. In her 40s, she moved to North Shore Towers for convenience to her office 10 minutes away. Born in Williamsburg, DeJohn “loves the Towers. The people, the amenities, they’re great,” she says.

“It’s like being in camp,” says Susan

Zwetchkenbaum, DeJohn’s pool pal.



Nearby, someone asks Ricken about getting walks from her car to the elevator at night. The gym has a few people doing chinups. In his early 60s and cut with muscles, Bob Weinstein remembers when North Shore Towers was the place to live in the 1970s. (See story, right.)

“I spent most of my adult life here,” he says. “It was the best pickup place in New York back in the day.”

Today, there’s less swinging, the bulk of the population being over 65.

Built in 1971 by one New York City developer, Sigmund Sommer, North Shore Towers was originally a rental. Sommer partnered in 1987 with the Bronfman family, who took the building co-op.

Some renters bought apartments, and many remain 24 years later. According to Ricken, about 35% go to warmer climates in the winter. Rappaport estimates 70 apartments are currently for sale. They range from \$175,000 studios to large units for over \$1 million.

Maintenance fees start at around \$700 monthly, past \$2,000 for a two-bedroom. Some rentals are available starting at \$1,500 for alcove studios. General country club membership dues are \$1,000 annually, with golf and tennis free the first year, and include the fitness center and pools, with golf and tennis adding an additional \$850 and \$3,000 annually.

At the door to her office, Rappaport meets Daisy Denenberg, a clinical psychologist who is about to move into a one-bedroom. She’s downsizing, and is starting to feel the stress of a life change.

“I came here because I heard it was the place to be” says Denenberg. “I’m excited and nervous.”

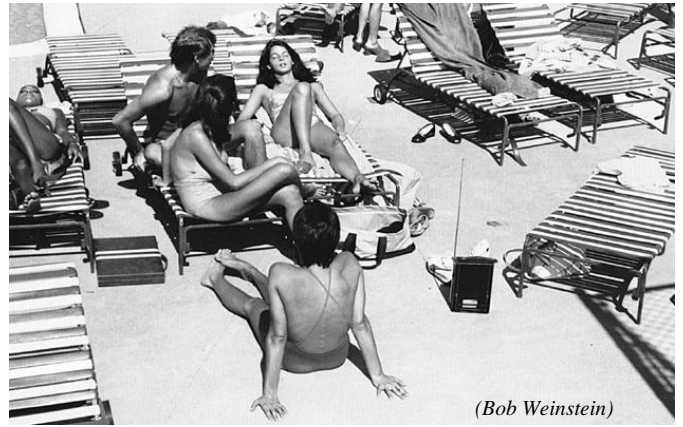
Rappaport has heard this before. There were over 40 transactions in the complex from May until August.

“I feel like I’m part of something big in people’s lives,” she says. “It’s funny. Newcomers are nervous, but once they get here, they never want to leave.”

## *The Swinging Seventies*

Dennis Rappaport, one of the first to move into the towers in 1975, called it Disneyland. Bob Weinstein, who has lived there 35 years, says it was as sexually charged as the Playboy Mansion.

The place was so hopping Howard Stern lived there as a young disk jockey before he got married. New York Cosmos goalie Shep Messing had a bachelor pad. Rappaport, a boxing promoter and businessman who worked with heavyweight sensations Gerry Cooney, James (Bonecrusher) Smith and recently Russian fighter Oleg Maskaev, remembers the weekends filled with women and pro athletes.



*(Bob Weinstein)*



*Rappaport with singer Connie Francis at Chop House (Dennis Rappaport)*

“Lots of Nets, Islanders and Jets lived here,” says Rappaport, who arranged for Smith to train at the towers’ gym in the 1990s. “The Chop House (an on-site bar) was hopping. If you were a single guy, it was heaven on Earth.”

Weinstein, who can do more chinups than most 20 year olds, keeps photographs of the old days. He has shots of young women in bikinis by the pool and large groups of adults hanging at the complex.

“Let’s put it this way: Even at the indoor pool during the wintertime you could meet someone you didn’t

know before and spend the weekend together,” he says. “Nothing had to be planned. It would just happen. There are 1,800 apartments here. Someone was always having a party. The prettiest girls in Long Island would come here to meet their husbands.”

North Shore Towers almost didn’t happen. Developer Sigmund Sommer had to battle with politicians, locals and residents who fought the development, preferring to preserve as much of the open space as possible and avoid what one community board member called the “Manhattanization” of Queens.

Considering that Sommer could have attempted to build homes over the entire golf course, the towers plan ultimately passed. Good thing for those swinging residents.



*Howard Stern (Clarence Davis/News)*