

BUSINESS INSIDER

Think NYC is dead? One of the agents behind the city's most expensive contract says 3 features are leading luxury's comeback.

[Libertina Brandt](#) Sep 14, 2020, 11:50 AM



Alexander Spatari/Getty Images

- **A penthouse in Manhattan has claimed the title of most expensive contract signed in New York City this year, the asking price was \$33 million.**
 - **Compass' Eric Brown says it sends a 'message about the confidence in New York and the resilience of New York.'**
 - **UrbanDigs COO John Walkup paraphrased Mark Twain, saying 'reports of the luxury market's death are greatly exaggerated.'**
 - **Brown said luxury buyers are especially looking for boutique buildings, more indoor space, and outdoor space.**
 - **[Visit Business Insider's homepage for more stories.](#)**
-

A Manhattan penthouse went into contract in late August with an asking price of \$33 million, claiming the title of most expensive contract signed in 2020, according to [UrbanDigs](#).

Penthouse [11A at 90 Morton Street](#), in the West Village, boasts five bedrooms, five bathrooms, and over 5,000 square feet of interior space. It was developed by [Brack Capital](#) and is represented by [Reuveni Real Estate](#).

[Eric Brown](#), who represented the buyer, explained to Business Insider that this off-market deal highlights the resilience of New York City's luxury market, and shows a glimpse into what prospective high-end buyers are looking for in Manhattan.

Brown has been a real estate agent in New York City since 2012. He currently runs a team of five at Compass.

"It's a message about the confidence in New York and the resilience of New York. Despite only being a small subset of the market, the real estate world takes cues from the luxury segment," he told Business Insider. "To me, what happens on 57th Street, Park Avenue, Tribeca, and the West Village are huge indication markets for all price points."

New York City, once the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic in the US, has been slow to pick back up when it comes to real estate, especially when compared to its surrounding suburban markets. However, Brown said he believes the setback is temporary.

"At the end of the day, people want to be in New York. I have people who have certainly left for one to two months, six to seven months, or they're not planning to return until 2021, but a majority of my clients are coming back. New York is a five-minute city," he explained.

John Walkup, the COO & cofounder of [UrbanDigs](#) agrees.

"To paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the luxury market's death are greatly exaggerated. After a protracted period of inactivity, the luxury market has slowly started to recover," he told Business Insider.

"The reality is that luxury market buyers have been physically absent from the market and are just now starting to tiptoe back from other locales," Walkup said.

With the equity and credit markets providing a constant backdrop of opportunistic volatility, he said those in finance may be looking to upgrade while prices are moderating. In the end, while there are many open questions regarding the city's future, he said there always seems be willingness from some people to pay top dollar for luxury Manhattan real estate. "While we are short-term bears due to the lingering uncertainties, we are long-term bulls."

Both Walkup and Brown agreed, however, that despite an eventual comeback for the city, it will still bear the influence of the pandemic.

Brown said prospective high-end buyers are seeking three things in particular. "To me, there is a huge push not just for boutique buildings, but bigger apartments with more interior square footage and, number one on the list, outdoor space."

1. Boutique buildings

Boutique buildings are smaller and less populous, which takes away stressors like sharing elevators and crowded lobbies, Brown said. It also allows for more personal space throughout the building.

"You're seeing people who want to be really comfortable in the city and really have space. Now, obviously, that's a luxury and people who can swing it are attempting to," he said.

2. More Interior square footage

With working from home the new norm for many, Brown said he's seen a heightened appreciation for larger spaces among his clientele.

He's even noticed that people are upgrading their spaces to multiple-bedroom apartments for the purpose of more living space.

"Two weeks ago, I rented a near 6,000-square-foot rental in Soho that was asking \$50,000 a month," he explained. "To me, there is a huge push for bigger apartments with more interior square footage."

[Realtor.com's](#) deputy editor, Rachel Stults, told Business Insider that one thing homebuyers are on the lookout for these days are home offices. She suggested, for those interested in selling, that if there is a place in the home that isn't being used, like a guest room or a nook, they should consider turning that into a home office for showings. This can be as simple as placing a desk in the open space.

3. Outdoor space

A substantial amount of outdoor space in New York City is not easy to come by. Brown said he thinks this will be one of the biggest attractions an apartment can offer, especially since social distancing is the new normal in the city.

And the \$33 million penthouse makes the need for outdoor space abundantly apparent: 11A at [90 Morton Street](#) boasts 2,029 square feet of exterior space.

Brown declined to comment on anything related to identifying the buyer of this deal.

