

# suburban life

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**Rima Kapel of Vanguard Realty Associates** uses her in-depth knowledge and experience to help each client build a long-lasting foundation in and around the Plymouth Whitemarsh area. page 78



# Building Community

**RIMA KAPEL OF VANGUARD REALTY ASSOCIATES** USES HER IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO HELP EACH CLIENT BUILD A LONG-LASTING FOUNDATION IN AND AROUND THE PLYMOUTH WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP AREA.

BY ERICA YOUNG | PHOTOS BY NINA LEA PHOTOGRAPHY

**When scouting for a new home, prospective buyers have many factors to consider—namely, the square footage, the floorplan, and the durability of construction, among others.**

A home's essential elements include factors that extend far beyond the space contained within its four walls to include the neighborhood and surrounding community.

In other words, it comes back to the time-tested adage of location, location, location.

Rima Kapel of Vanguard Realty Associates has spent the last 30 years of her life in the Plymouth Whitmarsh area, raising her kids and growing alongside the ever-evolving Montgomery County community. As a Realtor, she has been helping buyers find homes in and around Plymouth Meeting for more than 20 years. Her personal and professional lives combine to give her an unrivaled knowledge of the area, from its perks and conveniences, to its exceptional schools, to the intangibles that make the Colonial School District area in her words, “the best place

to grow up and live.”

“Plymouth Meeting is the center of the universe,” she says. “It’s a half hour from everywhere—King of Prussia, Center City, South Jersey; nothing is too far. It’s great for couples working across the area who want balanced commutes, and its great schools make it a place where families can thrive.”

Kapel likes almost everything about her work, but it’s the “people side” of real estate that has kept her engaged for so long. She gleans great satisfaction from matching clients with homes that suit their

individual needs, and then watching their dreams come true. Having raised her own family in the area, Kapel now sees the “kids” that her family grew up with return to the area to purchase homes and start families of their own.

“People who have grown up in the area want to come back home,” says Kapel. “They want their kids to grow up in this area and go to the schools and experience this area like they did. It’s so rewarding to see the kids coming back. I also see homebuyers who grew up in other Montgomery County areas, want to move to the Plymouth Meeting area because they are looking for the neighborhood appeal that they’re struggling to find in other townships.”

One of Kapel’s most exciting ventures has been her involvement with selling new homes including three new subdivision communities brought to life by Sal Paone Builder: Whitemarsh Station, Maple Hill, and Plymouth Valley Estates.

“These new developments have the neighborhood energy new homeowners are looking for,” she adds. “Because they are new developments, everyone is getting settled into the neighborhood together. It helps develop friendships in the neighborhood, and helps strengthen those bonds that make the communities so rewarding.”

The Plymouth Whitemarsh area offers plenty of real estate opportunities for buyers other than families that are just starting out. In fact, Kapel works with many clients in or near retirement who are looking to transition from their longtime family home to a downsized or “right-sized” home.

“These are people who are looking for a change,” says Kapel. “They have raised their kids already and are looking at their giant backyard, formal dining

room, and sitting room, and realizing they are more of a waste of space than they once were. The popular phrase is *downsizing*, but I think it’s important to consider *right-sizing*, which means finding a home that is right—not necessarily smaller—for your new lifestyle.”

Right-sizing might not necessarily mean a *reduction* in square footage; rather, it refers to making the *best use* of every square foot of a home.

“There are a lot of great town-home opportunities with community services and plenty of space,” explains Kapel. “You may not shrink square footage, but now you’ll have a two-car garage to protect against the elements, a community service to take care of lawns and snow removal, bedrooms on the first floor, and a great room to host your family and grandkids.”

In this current real estate market, Kapel says she tends to offer prospective buyers three primary pieces of advice: carefully consider your needs, remain focused on the goal at hand, and stay flexible. At the same time, she cautions against relying too heavily on what they may read in the headlines.

“Higher interest rates are a recurring fear I hear about regularly, which is why I tell my clients to ‘marry the house and date the interest rate,’” says Kapel. “The interest rate will change and fluctuate, and it will go down. So, that’s an opportunity for you to refinance, which will lower your costs, while allowing you to still own a home without losing money through rent.”

While some areas have seen a tamping down of the bidding wars that began a



few years ago, Kapel says they remain a fact of life in Plymouth Meeting and surrounding areas. She works closely with each client to understand their precise needs and budgetary considerations, and then isolates her search only to properties that fall within those parameters. Doing so allows her clients to navigate the competitive market as seamlessly as possible.

Clients often ask Kapel about when it is a good time to buy or sell. Her answer is always the same.

“The short answer is, ‘Whenever you are ready,’” she says. “Whether it’s a buyer or a seller, I use my experience and my understanding of the market to serve my clients first. If you’re ready to move or even have questions about the process, call me and we’ll talk. I’m easy to work with, and can bring a home to market quickly with a team of stagers, photographers, handymen, etc. I also have the expertise needed to negotiate the best price for my clients.” ■

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—RIMA KAPEL,  
VANGUARD REALTY ASSOCIATES

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