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How real estate celebrated 2013: PHOTOS

The past year was largely marked by a recovery for residential real estate in New York City, as sales began to take off in the first part of the year — despite a persistent inventory shortage — and rents met, then exceeded, their pre-recession levels. When it came to brokerage holiday parties, many firms were also on the rebound from housing bust cutbacks, though not quite at pre-2008's lavish levels.

Douglas Elliman went with small gatherings at individual offices in lieu of a massive corporate party that was norm before the bubble burst. One such event for the firm's Long Island brokers doubled as a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society, during which guests bid on items ranging from beauty supplies to hotel excursions. Elliman President and CEO Dottie Herman was in attendance, as was actor Joseph Gannascoli, better known as Vito Spatafore, Sr. from HBO's "The Sopranos."

Town Residential threw its holiday bash at club and restaurant Tao Downtown at 92 Ninth Avenue at 16th Street in the Meatpacking District, drawing almost 800 brokers on the third anniversary of the brokerage's founding. An open bar and nibbles ranging from chicken lollipops to tuna tartare kept guests fueled throughout the shindig. Last year's bash at the Dream Downtown Hotel, also in Meatpacking, drew nearly 1,000 guests.

Others went with their traditional yearly formula, such as Halstead Property and Brown Harris Stevens. Though both firms are owned by Terra Holdings, they celebrated separately in individual bashes at Guastavino's, a 15,000-square-foot event space under the 59th Street Bridge. "We always throw a holiday party, good market or bad market," Jim Gricar, president of Halstead, told The Real Deal via email. "We just thank our people for all the hard work they do ... the real point is for all of our people to be able to relax and connect."

Platinum Properties again fêted at Cipriani's at 55 Wall Street, where cocktails and hors d'oeuvres such as meatballs in sauce and caprese skewers were on hand. White-jacketed servers handed out Bellinis to the guests — about 200 were invited, up from last year's attendance of 130. Attire ran the gamut, from tuxedos and floor-length gowns to flannel and spiked boots. And a portion of the evening was devoted to handing out awards, including Best Customer Service to D.J. Dashti and Social Media Guru to Hilah Williams, who at the time of writing boasted 4,866 followers on Instagram.

Rubicon Property similarly handed out awards at its holiday party, held at restaurant Corvo Bianco at 446 Columbus Avenue on the Upper West Side, though of a sillier nature. Styled after "The Dundies" on the NBC show "The Office," Rubicon dubbed its awards ceremony the "Rubies," CEO Jason Haber told The Real Deal. Guests enjoyed an open bar and Italian goodies such as gamberi al pepperoncino, bruschetta burricotta, arancini and polpette.

Awards were also the order of the evening at the Spire Group's holiday party, where designations at the 100-person party at House Play at 20 West 23rd Street included Damon Young for Most Swagger, Fastest Rising Star Kosta Blyznakov and Best Karaoke to broker Chad Ryan, who honed his vocal chops as the lead in "The Phantom of the Opera" on Broadway. Recipients and other guests sipped Spiretinis — green apple martini-inspired drinks in the company's signature color.

Other firms, meanwhile, went bigger than last year.

Barbara Fox, founder of Fox Residential, once again welcomed a host of industry insiders to her Upper East Side home. Her annual bash, which started with a small crew of around 50 brokers, this year welcomed more than 220. With space tighter thanks to the growing crowd, the party trimmed down the usual musical offerings of piano, bass and guitar to one solo piano and Internet radio station Pandora, Fox said. Guests also sported Fox Residential t-shirts. After all, Fox told The Real Deal, “I don’t want people to forget why they’re there.”

Miron Properties held its holiday party at the Highline Loft at 508 West 26th Street in Chelsea, gathering over 600 guests for a bash that almost tripled in size from last year. The soiree opened with a show with the band Shiksa that was followed by hip hop and dance performances from Art Start.

Still others are bucking the holiday party juggernaut altogether. CORE, having experimented with party dates both before and after the holidays for a few years, is opting to hold this year’s bash Feb. 4, after all the madness is over.

“We find it’s so crazy, everybody’s competing against each other because there’s parties every night, so we started the tradition a couple of years ago,” Emily Beare, a longtime broker with the firm, told The Real Deal. “We had it in January one year then last year we did it in early December, then decided to go back this year to doing it after the holidays.”



From left: Sang Oh, Dezireh Eyn, Daniel Hedaya, Daniel Blatman, Julia Bryzgalina and Khashy Eyn of Platinum Properties



From left: Sang Oh, Daniel Hedaya, Dezireh Eyn, Julia Bryzgalina, D.J. Dashti and Khashy Eyn of Platinum Properties



From left: Marley Frankel of Platinum Properties, Elise Levy of Guaranteed Rate, Stephanie Supancic, Nilu Amin, Dezireh Eyn, Stephanie Runow, Teresa Stephenson, Julia Bryzgalina, Melanie Kohler and Courtney Younghouse of Platinum Properties



From left: Sandy Eyn and Aaron Daniels of ADReal Estate, D.J. Dashti of Platinum Properties and David Eyn of D&D Antiques