**Hi to all the viewers of Punta Cana Homes. Get ready, today we are hosting a special guest. Her name is Maria. No, don’t worry – no Maria the hurricane which already went away from the Dominican coast. Today, we are talking with Maria Williams – one of the respected real estate brokers from «Reliable Realty» in Punta Cana.**

**Hi Maria! How do you feel with such a “hurricane-like” name? Are there any correlations?**

It is funny you asked that, because I was very mad when I found out they named this hurricane Maria. And in 100 years it's only the third hurricane that's ever sideswiped the Punta Cana east coast of Dominican Republic. So, no, there are not any correlations. The only correlation that I can think of is that I'm strong like a hurricane. Very strong person. But that's the only correlation, trust me.

**I am Dominican and can confirm that local people believe that our country was blessed by God. That is why many disasters do not affect it. Do you agree?**

That is I totally agree with. In fact, even before you said that Anna, that has been one of my speeches that I tell my clients when they're considering buying property here. I tell them the locals believe that the East Coast Punta Cana is a special place that it's blessed by God - that it's got the kiss of God. And in fact, they believe that so much that they believe that God owns vacation property here in the East Coast. So yes, we do feel blessed. But then there are also scientific reasons.

I am a Christian myself and I I believe it wholeheartedly that if people come together and they pray, and they all come together, and they believe through faith (especially the name Maria probably said I better not mess around with God's territory) so who knows, maybe she did move.

But there are scientific reasons why the Hurricanes don't really affect the east coast of the Dominican Republic, Punta Cana specifically and Bavaro. And that is because of unique situation geographically - because Punta Cana is on a sharp point and Puerto Rico is only about 85 miles distance (their West Coast from our East Coast) when hurricanes are developing that happens is - they are attracted the land mass. But because of the atmospheric conditions (low pressure, high pressure, scientific reasons) hurricanes typically start going north. They will sometimes go over Puerto Rico but (fortunate for Puerto Rico, very unfortunate - I have family in Puerto Rico, so very unfortunate). But what it does is - it breaks down the size of the hurricane for one thing. And then those jet streams, that around that shirt point, they start pulling the hurricane from the North and the South, away from the east coast of the Dominican Republic. Additionally, we have a protective coral reef around the whole coast of the Dominican Republic, so we don't have to worry about those storm surges - that water coming in and flooding the whole area, because that protect of coral reef is so strong, that when it hits there, it really protects and keeps those water levels nice and low. So, there's a lot of reasons why we believe that the east coast of the Dominican Republic (Punta Cana) is definitely blessed by God. And God maybe put these geographic, atmospheric and all these other conditions in there. So, there's a scientific, but I agree with you Anna - I think that Punta Cana is definitely blessed by God.

**Seriously speaking, how can you estimate the damage to Punta Cana resort and residential areas after hurricane Maria? I know that you manage many properties. Have they been affected by this natural disaster? According to some news programs, there is nothing left to sell or manage here…**

That's a really good question Anna. Yes, I would say that most of my emails, that I've been answering have been from all those clients who purchased properties from us and I put it to the rental program. And of course, they were very concerned about their properties (and they should be concerned). So most of our time has been just assessing the properties and letting them know, that their property is okay. So much, so I had to actually create report, a news report, because I couldn't keep typing the same thing over and over again. We had assest all the properties and from all 70 some properties that we manage, there were only about four of them that actually had a little water that came in. So we were extremely impressed. As far as structural damage – none. No structural damage whatsoever - no roof set came off, no fallen walls, nothing like that. Everything was fine. Just a little water came into some of the condos, which (you know) it's concrete construction, it's ceramic tile floors. So, you know, it just takes the clean up crew to mop it up and get it out of there. And everything is perfectly fine.

It's important to understand that there's good construction and bad construction. Good construction is going to have a lot of rebars, it's going to have a lot of deep footings, is going to have a lot of pylons – and these are really important, because that's going to withstand - we are going to be a hurricane proof, they're going to withstand a hurricane.

Of course, we did have some damage here, I'm not trying to say we didn't. But those were some of the old places that were built by mom-and-pop here 25-30 years ago, before the government-mandated codes. They may be didn't have rebar in there. So of course, those places were affected by the hurricane and there was actually quite a bit of damage to those places. They are right now in the process of being rebuilt and that's fine. They're building them back a little bit further from the beach. So that's good, it's actually going to give us some more beachfront. So yes, there is a big difference between a good construction and not-so-good construction or old construction.

In fact Anna, today I would like to take you to a construction site that is under construction, and we can actually talk to somebody there - a structural engineer, who can explain a lot more technical things about hurricane proof: What does it mean - hurricane and earthquake proof? How our construction in the Dominican Republic is mandated by the government to be a hurricane and earthquake proof? We're going to go there and talk to him, and he's going to explain in more detail (technically speaking) why we don't have any structural damage here.

**So, follow us and don’t move.**

We are here, at «Playa Corral» one of Noval's prime properties, right here, on the ocean. Absolutely beautiful view all the way around us. And it is well under construction. In fact I believe it's going to be finished around June 2018. We sold a few properties in here. It consists of 9 buildings with 72 units - one bedroom, 2 bedrooms, three bedrooms - all different floor plans. Unfortunately, guys, you're probably too late, unless you buy within the next week or two – there are only four units left and the prices have gone up. From the pre-construction price for you - early bird smart investors, it has gone up and probably substantial already. And it will continue to rise, of course, once the project is completed. So, we're here with Anna and Anna is going to actually talk to somebody else, who has joined us.

**One more guest has joined us. Yvarionex -a structure engineer from one of the largest East Coast Dominican construction companies, NOVAL.**

**Queremos saber, ingeniero, como se protegen sus edificaciones para huracanes o cualquier tormenta, que venga de la naturaleza. Sabe usted que estamos expuesto porque estamos en una costa. Por que leyes se rigen? Pero me gustaria que Usted nos informa un poco mas especifico y en los detalles.**

Tenemos unos reglamentos, que estan avalados por normas internacionales y esas normas son que rigen todas construcciones de nuestro pais. Esas normas especifican cargas para tipo de sismo y de tipo de viento de huracanes. Y depende de la construcción y por zona se toma en consideración que tipo de carga puede utilizarse dependiendo siempre de edificación. Regularmente edificaciones de que se construye en este país son de hormigón armado mampostería. Prefabricados se usa un poco. Se usa también estructura de metálica en naves y así. Pero las edificaciones el tipo te veas (de viviendas) son regularmente de mamposteria y hormigon armado el cual se hace muy pesadas, y en cosas de huracanes o esa temporada ciclonica no nos hemos afectados o no se puede ver danos considerables ninguna edificacion.

**Si, cabe destacar que veo que este nuevo proyecto, que esta aqui, estuvo antes de que viniera Maria o sea se esta construyendo, y veo que sigue igual no veo que paso ningun disastre.**

Exactamente como tu puedes ver no hay ningun dano a ningun edificacion, que se pueda considerer, estructural y casi ni estetico. Podemos decir, que tecnología que utilizamos aqui para construcciones, y los codigos, nos ayudan a que todas sean realmente resistente. Esto tambien nos da el beneficio, porque nuestro pais tiene un clima calido el ano entero. Entonces estas construcciones podemos hacerlas asi con eso material - en otro pais seria muy dificil.

**When the hurricane Maria was occurring (being a structure engineer) were you concerned all about all the Noval construction sides going on right now? Or did you sleep like a baby than night?**

Claro que si, pude dormir toda la noche, porque todas las construcciones siempre se mantienen en optimas condiciones. Tienen entre otras cosas un nivel de proteccion muy, muy fuerte, y tendria que ser que la madre naturaleza nos castigue con algo demasiado, demasiado grande (porque en verdad la madre naturaleza lo puede todo) - pero para todos los huracanes y sismo, que se han registrado, las construcciones tienen un nivel de seguridad mucho mas alto.

**Muchas gracias, ingeniero, por su aclaracion. Asi que si usted tenia miedo de venir a invertir aqui pues ya sabes que aqui nos regimos por leyes y por normas antes de construir.**

**Maria how safe are real estate investments with properties under construction? Is it worth investing?**

So yes, there is an advantage to buy in pre-construction or under construction. And that advantage is that you're buying early. And since we've taken the concern in the worry out, we're putting our name behind these developers. So all, the people have to worry about is: which one are we going to choose? They have that time, they can spread out to pay it (pay for the property) and so then it's just a matter of which property they going to choose. So, pre-construction your prices are going to be much lower. Those are for the savvy investors. In fact, our savvy investors they don't buy just one pre-construction property. If they know and they worked with us, and they know the developer, and they have that experience with them - they're going to buy two or three or four or a whole block of those condominiums. So the prices are going to be lower, when you by early. As the construction is being completed of course the prices go higher. It's all in relation to the market, with the market is calling.

In Punta Cana for example construction, pre-construction and under construction sells so fast - to be honest with you sometimes they can just launched, just break ground and within 2 to 3 weeks all 47 or 50 units are sold already. We don't even have time (as a real estate agency) to list these on our website. So it's a really good idea to pay attention to what's going on what construction, to work with the reliable real estate agency, that's going to walk you through the steps. They're going to take photos of the construction progress, they have a project management department, that they can help you get that condo already and it helped you inspect it, get the electric meters, get everything in there - your furniture, your décor, all your accessories, your dishes. So that then we could just pass it off to a rental program, you can start making some really good investment income off from that property by renting it to our vacationers.

**What do you think about the effect of the hurricane season on the local real estate market? Should we wait for the rise or fall?**

Interesting question and a good question. Because if you're a savvy investor, actually purchasing during the hurricane seasons, which are really going to be around July to November - that's really going to be the best time to buy. The first reason is because some people might be afraid to buy it during that time. But savvy investors know – that the prices are going to be lower during that time. And also because when most people are considering purchasing a property here, they're trying to do it at the same time that maybe they're vacationing here. And those people come during the high season which is December through April, then everybody's here and the prices are higher (everything is higher during high season). But if they come and they buy in lower season, prices actually go lower. You're going to see more of a flat market in the lower price. So savvy investors (if you're smart and savvy investor) you're going to want to buy during the buns of June to November. For those reasons, so there are two reasons

**So, today we learnt a lot about hurricane Maria from a very reliable source, from Maria the broker. I hope you all your fears are eliminated, and you are ready to become a happy house owner in the Dominican Republic.**

Thank you very much, it's been a pleasure to be on this episode, and I am looking forward to be in many more. Thank you!