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THE EVANS REPORT
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THE ISLAND OF HIGH PRICES

Cost of mansions on Palm Beach see healthy rise.

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PALM BEACH — Mansion prices continue to rise on this posh island, where the real estate market seems immune to the deep downturn afflicting property values in the rest of the county.

The median price of single-family homes sold in Palm Beach rose to \$4.3 million in the first half of 2008, up 9 percent from \$3.95 million in the first half of 2007, according to "The Evans Report," released Friday by Palm Beach real estate attorney Leslie Evans.

"This is some very good news," Evans said. "There never was a bubble here. There never was speculation. And people realize there's a limited number of units on the island."

Evans' report, which looked at sales from January through June, doesn't even include the \$95 million sale of the mansion at 515 N. County Road by Donald Trump to Russian fertilizer billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev.

That sale, the priciest ever in Palm Beach, closed in July.

Among the big sales in the first half of 2008 were the \$81.5 million deal for the oceanfront mansion at 1236 S. Ocean Blvd., the \$68.5 million sale of 60 Blossom Way and \$22.45 million for the home at 212 Via Palma.

"We are — thank God — bucking the trend," said Ava Van de Water, president of the Palm Beach Board of Realtors and a broker at Brown Harris Stevens. "There's not any room for new condos or new major development. You just can't expand a barrier island."

In other words, there's no flood of foreclosures and no glut of for-sale signs in Palm Beach.

"It's a different story across the bridge," Van de Water said. Single-family home prices in all of Palm Beach County fell 12 percent from June 2007 to June 2008,

Mansion market on fire

Palm Beach home prices continued to rise in the first half of 2008, although condo prices fell, according to "The Evans Report."

Single-family homes

■ Median price, first half of 2007: \$3.95 million
■ Median price, first half of 2008: \$4.3 million
■ Change: +8.9%

Condos

■ Median price, first half of 2007: \$850,000
■ Median price, first half of 2008: \$710,000
■ Change: -16.5%

Source: The Evans Report

according to the Florida Association of Realtors.

Still, not all signs are pointing up in the town of Palm Beach. The number of sales of single-family homes fell sharply, from 80 in the first half of 2007 to 57 in the first half of this year, Evans said.

Condo prices and sales dropped, too. The median condo price fell to \$710,000 this year from \$850,000 last year, a decline of 16.5 percent. The number of condo sales dipped 9 percent. That's in spite of the \$12.1 million sale in May of a condo at 300 Seminole Ave., a record for condos on the island.

And while sales held steady on the lower-priced south end of the island, there were fewer condo sales on the north end than a year ago.

Both Evans and Van de Water attributed the decline in condo prices to a larger number of low-priced units changing hands.

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