

DREAM HOMES

HOME

The real estate market saw a boom throughout 2020, with multimillion dollar listings and style to spare.

By Tess Lopez

One may have predicted that COVID-19 would spur a wave of interest in Southwest Florida real estate, as people escaped the cities and searched for sunny climes. But few could have predicted just how much. Pending sales nearly doubled over 2019, and median prices jumped. Sought-after listings in premium locales led to a record-breaking \$18.2 billion in residential sales in Collier County, (Lee County closed the year with \$8.2 billion). Here are a few recent listings that mark the pinnacle of the market.

Historic Estate

Many of the Spanish and Mediterranean Revival homes that punctuate Palm Beach were the brainchild of praised California-born architect Addison Mizner. Mizner carried his eye for opulent structural design to the Gulf in the 1920s, setting the tone for years to come. As the decades passed,

many of these older estates were demolished. Only a handful remain, including the 1926 Mizner-designed estate at 670 Gulf Shore Blvd. S. in Port Royal that sold for \$22.5 million in January.

Dante DiSabato, the agent representing the buyer and the seller, says the four-bedroom and five-bathroom home is his favorite in the city. Though it has undergone several remodels over the years, its exterior and several parts of the interior—like the Spanish tile inserts on the stairs—remain true to the original architecture. “I think everyone comes to Naples wanting new, but if you can find something historical that’s been updated, it has that charm,” DiSabato says.

A covered, open lounge area mirroring the pillared veranda runs the length of the lap pool outdoors, anchoring the home in the center of the 1.1-acre property, where mani-



Courtesy Amerivest Realty (2)



This 1926 Port Royal estate designed by Addison Mizner has undergone several remodels over time, but it remains true to its original charm.

cured hedges border brick walkways and palms loom over courtyard fountains and pools. “Not a day goes by where you don’t see someone stop and take a photo of it,” DiSabato says of the landscaping.

Stylish Origins in Fort Myers

When Chico’s founders Marvin and Helene Gralnick were searching for a home in the late ’90s near the headquarters of their fashion company, which they started on Sanibel Island in 1983, they opted for a sprawling 35-acre estate in Fort Myers. The couple’s late friend and architect Joseph St. Cyr customized the blueprints for a modern, Florida cottage-style home on the gated lot. The winding, wooded drive and the lily pond affords the owners a secluded, rural feel, despite being close to town.

In 2019, they listed the property with Joan Crompton, of Coldwell Banker Realty, who notes that prospective buyers are enchanted by this quality.

Upon stepping inside, the space takes on a sudden urban aesthetic. An open area with bamboo flooring sets off the industrial details, like the kitchen’s stainless steel cabinets and floor, and the vaulted ceilings with skylights. A lifetime of international travel and appreciation for arts led the Gralnicks

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to accentuate each room with sculptural pieces and hand-crafted doors imported from around the world. Marvin, an artist himself, uses the studio to create expressive paintings akin to the works of Jean-Michel Basquiat. A warehouse-sized space with a loft toward the back of the home serves as a gallery and showroom.

The home isn't only for artists—car enthusiasts will can store their babies in the four-stalled, air-conditioned garage that sits in the driveway. The garage includes a loft overhead, and glass doors to showcase each automobile—with roll-down shutters for extra security. Across from the garage, just steps from the main residence, is a two-bedroom, two-bathroom guest house. And, there's room for others, too. The opposite end of the property includes the original art studio, duplex and another home.

Explaining why he chose the area, Marvin adds that it's "close to Interstate 75 and 41 as well as all the area has to offer, but very much in a country setting. Modern, classic, simple, functional, elegant architecture never goes



Outside, the sprawling 35-acre Fort Myers estate of Marvin and Helene Gralnick, the founders of Chico's, has a secluded, rural feel. But inside, the aesthetic is urban, industrial and modern.

Courtesy Coldwell Banker Realty (2)

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This coastal contemporary Marco Island home features 469 feet of water frontage.

out of style.” The home was listed at \$5.9 million as of early April.

One-in-a-Million in Marco

Jim Prange, the listing agent for Premier Sotheby’s International Realty, witnessed two phenomena over the last year: the lowest real estate inventory on Marco Island since he moved there in 1980 and the rapid sale of this home, or “castle” as he calls it. “Marco hasn’t had a custom home to that magnitude built for somebody,” Prange says. “The island needed it.” The home in question was built for a buyer who purchased an entire finger of Hideaway Beach, combined two lots at the tip and directed the three-year construction of a

coastal contemporary abode suited exactly to his liking. Jutting out into Collier Bay, the 8,675-square-foot home has 469 feet of water frontage that “doesn’t restrict the kind of boat you have,” Prange notes. A wraparound lanai, with an infinity edge pool, spa and water features, overlooks the view. Around the front of the home, a soaring porte-cochère and a five-car garage ensures ample room for the finest rides; the interior accommodates all the guests. In addition to four en-suite bedrooms, there’s a master suite and kitchen on both the first and second floor for separate living spaces. Those seeking some extra privacy can stow away to the third floor, which includes a bonus sitting area and

a terrace overlooking the water. Earthy shellstone tiles are a subtle nod to the surroundings while transferring the focus to the open living area on the ground floor. Just above, a large opening in the ceiling gives rise to views through the home up to the third floor, with a series of staircases looming overhead—just like a castle.

Contemporary Stunner in Naples

Builder London Bay Homes paired up with Kukuk Architecture & Design and Romanza Interior Design to create this ultramodern estate on another desirable Port Royal plot at 700 Admiralty Parade West, looking out to Keewaydin Island. Inside, Romanza’s Michael Scott com-

Courtesy Premier Sotheby's International Realty/Michael Anderson



Modern blonde wood combines with sleek surfaces in this Port Royal modern compound, where lighting, shades and other comforts are tech-enabled and the aesthetic is pure luxury.

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bined cream walls with blonde maple in the flooring, tray ceilings and range hood to unify the spaces and nod to the natural elements outside. He called in Soho Kitchens and Design to assemble Shaker-style cabinets along the kitchen wall and in the two islands to maximize storage space.

With five bedrooms, five full and two half bathrooms, plus an additional multipurpose room, the home needed to maintain its modern appeal without compromising on the comfortable atmosphere. To achieve this, the team dreamed up an abundance of long, vertical windows in nearly every room to pull in more sunlight and water views. Scott anchored the his-and-hers studies with elements like suede wallcovering and a leather chair to balance the lighter walls and trim. The bonus room was converted into an entertainment space, with a black, built-in media wall and a full bar.

The back patio—fully equipped with a kitchen, fire pit, infinity-edge pool and lounge areas—makes the transition to outdoor living simple (as do the pocket doors in the entertainment room and main living area). Add in the technological software that enables control of the interior lighting, shutters, shades and pool and landscape lighting, and it's easy to see why this property fetched \$18.5 million and several awards.

Courtesy: London Bay Homes/Venjamin Reyes

A series of R.G. Designs and Potter Homes collaborations are making a mark on Bonita Beach with multistory abodes steps to the sand.



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MARKET WATCH

BONITA SPRINGS' HICKORY BOULEVARD BOOM

An observant eye is quick to notice the crop of stylish homes going up on Bonita Springs' Hickory Boulevard. A series of similar multistory homes, many of which were mapped out by R.G. Designs and built by Potter Homes, sprang up on the waterfront stretch within a matter of months. Individually, they've made up some of the highest-priced sales in Lee County for 2020.

Ryan Potter, a partner at Potter Homes, explains that despite all the similarities, these builds aren't part of a residential community; they're custom projects.

The direct beach access is a big appeal, but also the quieter locale compared to Fort Myers and Naples.

Until recently, older homes from the '60s and '70s sat on the 50-foot-wide parcels along Hickory. Those moving to the area wanting ocean views found themselves with little options other than to purchase the lots and rebuild. And when building, the company aims to impress. The facade of each home is nearly symmetrical: the front door sits in the middle, with a garage door on either side and windows for different rooms stacked neatly

on top. The general layout incorporates the common areas, like the kitchen and great room, with a couple bedrooms on the first floor, facing the road. Guest bedrooms, the master suite and a study are situated upstairs, for a total living space of more than 5,000-square-feet.

The homes are outfitted with smart technology, like automated lighting and motorized shutters, for extra coastal comforts, and an elevated infinity pool just beyond the pocket sliders blends in with the coast, for "a view that can't be beat," Potter says. ■

Courtesy Potter Homes