

THE ASPEN TIMES

December 1, 2011

Big Discounts Highlight Big Aspen Real Estate Deals

Rick Carroll

ASPEN — The 1 percent apparently fancy Aspen real estate with steep discounts.

That point was punctuated by a trio of property sales combining for \$51.75 million in November, marking three of Pitkin County's 10 most expensive real estate deals for the first 11 months of the year. The same three properties' original listing prices were a collective \$80.9 million.

"There are still wealthy people in the world who appreciate Aspen and would like to be here," said Steven Shane, the listing broker for the single-family home at 24 Little Cloud Trail, which, packaged with a lot above it, fetched \$16 million. "This is a unique place offering four seasons of entertainment, and there are people with the wherewithal to own a second or third home."

The six-bedroom, seven-bathroom, 9,331-square-foot Little Cloud Trail home, built in 2010 by Aspen and Florida developer Thomas E. Lewis, had been listed for \$22 million. The adjacent lot was not on the Multiple Listing Service at the time of the sale, Shane said. Lewis bought both lots, undeveloped, for \$3 million apiece in January 2008, records show.

At the time of the Nov. 17 sale, the home was listed for \$18.8 million, Shane said.

"You could make the argument that \$16 million versus \$22 million represents a discount of 27 percent off the asking price, but the buyer acquired the lot above it," Shane said, noting that home purchasers are getting discounts that weren't seen in the boom days of 2008 and before. "The toughest thing used to be finding property to show to your buyers because it would turn so fast and furiously that the better properties, inventory and homes would go away in a hurry. That was the biggest challenge to me as a real estate broker when business was at its peak in 2008.

"Now the biggest challenge is finding a reasonable buyer and seller."

Last year Bloomberg Businessweek listed the Little Cloud home as one of 2010's most expensive new homes. Joining it were the Red Mountain homes at 379 and 389 Ridge Road, which sold Nov. 22 for \$22.75 million, and a home at 151 Nighthawk Drive, which brought in \$15 million on Nov. 16.

Likewise, Craig Morris, the listing agent for the single-family home and adjacent guest-house — a likely tear-down candidate — said Aspen's high-end real estate market is currently being molded by buyers seeking lower prices and sellers willing to offer them.

The sale of the Ridge Road properties — originally listed for \$35 million — "tells me the seller had recognized the market has changed and made adjustments and recognized this [buying price] was not



This home on Little Cloud Trail in Aspen and an undeveloped lot above it sold for \$16 million in November. Aspen brokers Steven Shane and Craig Morris say high-end properties are selling for much less than their original listing prices.

unreasonable on the new market," Morris said.

Public records show 389 Ridge Road Development Co., based in Fort Worth Texas, as the seller; Top of Mill LLC of Missouri was the buyer. Mark Haldeman, who works with Morris at Aspen's Morris & Frywald firm, represented the buyer.

The main home, covering 11,300 square feet — and including a 1,600 wine-bottle room and theater — was built in 2009 and designed by Aspen architect Charles Cunniffe. The guest home, at 4,178 square feet, was constructed in 1990.

The Nighthawk Drive home, also on Red Mountain, had been owned by Florida developer Charles Rowars, through Nighthawk Investment Properties LLC. The 10,688-square-foot home was acquired by Franklin Mountain Aspen, an LLC based in EL Paso, Texas. Like the other two properties, the Nighthawk home was sold for considerably less — \$8.9 million — than its original listing price of \$23.9 million. It most recently was on the market for \$17.5 million.

Chuck Frias was the listing broker; Bob Cadger of Mason Morse Real Estate represented the buyer.

Morris said that this year Pitkin County has seen more property sales eclipsing the \$10 million mark than previous years. County sales records show 21 sales have surpassed eight figures.

"That's a reason to be optimistic but the prices are a lot different than when they were," he said. "It says the buyers out there are provided pricing in line with today's world, and there is a demand for real estate."

This year's most expensive real estate sale came in June when the Silvertree Hotel in Snowmass Village sold for \$38.75 million.