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TOP STORY

WINTER PARK IS LIVING LARGE



1. \$9,922,651
Windermere



3. \$8,425,405
Windermere



5. \$8,054,361
Winter Park

BY MARY SHANKLIN | Staff Writer

The rich at least appear to be getting richer in Winter Park.

The city of brick streets and Park Avenue shops surpassed celebrity-studded Windermere this year to become home to the greatest share of Central Florida's 100 most expensive houses.

"Winter Park is now becoming the address to have," said Bill Sullivan, division president for Potomac Land Co., which compiled the tax-roll data for the Orlando Sentinel's list for the third year in a row. "Disney's Golden Oak jumped up on the list. Isleworth is still the top dog."

"But now we see more equilibrium between Windermere and Winter Park."

In the past, he said, more high-income newcomers might have considered buying in gated sanctums of Windermere rather than along historic lakefronts of

Please turn to **MANSION, A9**

 Map online

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MANSION

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Winter Park. During the last year, though, big-ticket renovations, expansions and new construction in Winter Park have boosted that city's luxury-home cachet, he added.

Overall for the region, values for the multimillion-dollar houses have climbed. This year, the least expensive house in the top 100 was valued at \$4.09 million — last year everything was valued at more than \$3.6 million. Winter Park properties edged up slightly more in value than Windermere's.

Values are county property-appraiser estimates of market conditions and don't directly reflect sales prices and construction costs of the homes.

Southeast Orlando's fast-emerging Lake Nona community, with its installation of new hospitals and medical-research enterprises, all but faded from Central Florida's Top 100 homes. Two years ago, the Tavistock development had eight houses on the list, but it now is down to just Swedish golf star Annika Sorenstam's 7-acre estate, which is nestled among lakes and fairways at the Lake Nona Country Club.

Another change this year: More of Central Florida's well-heeled homeowners call the area home — at least for tax purposes. The number of owners claiming their Orlando-area house as their permanent address increased from two-thirds of the list last year to three-quarters this year. They benefit not only from property-tax savings but also from Florida's lack of a state income tax.

One of the newcomers who now lists Orlando as his home address is former Wal-Mart Chief Executive Officer H. Lee Scott, along with his wife Linda Gale Scott, according to home-stead property-tax records. They also own a home in Longboat Key and are examples of the type of wealth moving to Disney's Golden Oak community. His reported income in 2009, after he oversaw the global retail giant for almost a decade, was \$30 million. And he owns about \$220 million of company stock, records show.

Derrick Builders constructed a six-bedroom home for the couple last year in Golden Oak, which is a gated luxury community where owners can access private Disney theme-park parties, clubs and the Four Seasons Resort.

"I think a lot of these homes will be generational homes handed down to family members," said builder Derrick Koger. He would not comment on the Scotts' home but said buyers from around the world are intrigued with the novelty of living on Walt Disney World property.

At the pinnacle of Central Florida's list of most valuable residential properties, just as it has been for at least the last two years, is the Isleworth lakefront estate of former Orlando Magic player Vince Carter.

While Orange County property overall increased about 7.8 percent in value from last year, Carter's lakefront home with 29,000 square feet of living space slipped in value from \$9.98 million last year to \$9.92 million this year.

Orange County Property Appraiser Rick Singh said the value drop likely reflects what's going on in the market of million-dollar-plus residential properties.

Orlando appraiser Joyce Potts recently appraised an Isleworth home and said Windermere has some amenities that elude Winter Park: proximity to theme parks, sports stars including Shaquille O'Neal and Ken Griffey Jr., and a chain of lakes that is considered a mecca for water sports.

But, she added, some of the houses there are showing their age.

"Windermere is more of a celebrity magnet, but I will tell you that some of the houses in Isleworth are getting pretty old," Potts said.

Isleworth resident David O'Reilly, chief financial officer of Orlando-based Parkway Properties, said that even though some of the properties have aged, many are being renovated or completely rebuilt.

"We're wrapping up our own renovation, and there seems to be increasing activity in Isleworth," he said.

Farther from the tourists and guarded subdivisions of the Windermere area are the redos along the oak-canopied brick streets of Winter Park.

New to the list this year is a house first built in 1926 on Winter Park's Palmer Avenue fronting Lake Osceola and just a few blocks from the sidewalk cafes and locally owned shops of Park Avenue.

Real-estate developer Jerome Henin owns the seven-bedroom house,

which has been entirely renovated and is valued at about \$4.1 million on the tax rolls.

The native of France said he has studied most pockets of Central Florida and thinks Park Avenue is closest to the European experience of strolling to a diverse array of unique restaurants and bumping into friends and acquaintances along the way.

In Winter Park, Henin said, he doesn't use his car: "I walk two blocks, and I'm eating whatever I want."

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2. \$8,837,130
Windermere