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## HOUSING

# Midtown stokes real estate prices

Plantation's housing market is hot around its rising city center -- and luxury home prices are soaring, too.

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From quaint homes set amid leafy neighborhoods, to luxury houses in gated communities and townhomes on the park, Plantation's housing market covers a range of tastes and prices.

Its soaring real estate prices reflect the trend all over South Florida, but Plantation's market is somewhat fueled by new development in and around its emerging city center, known as Midtown.

"People are having to buy townhomes because they can't afford single-family homes," said Dondi Hopkins-Callanan, a Realtor with Coldwell Banker in Plantation.

Hopkins-Callanan said one of the hottest spots is the Central Park area, north of Broward Boulevard between Pine Island and Nob Hill roads, because it is close to restaurants and malls.

Central Park has several townhouse developments, including Majestic View, the Trellises and Lake View Courts.

Majestic View's buildings are older, but many have been renovated. A 1,400-square-foot two-bedroom, two-bath town house there sells for about \$275,000 to \$350,000.

Town houses at the nearby Jacaranda Country Club are running from \$350,000 to \$375,000 for a 2,000-square-foot three-bedroom, three-bath home. Most of them were built in the 1970s, but they've been renovated and usually include a pool and tennis courts.

The ones that haven't been redone are going for about \$275,000.

Single-family homes in the Central Park area can be pricey.

Plantation Palms, for example, is a gated community where homes can run from \$900,000 to \$1.6 million. A five-bedroom, 3,700-square-foot home there recently listed for \$835,000.

More affordable homes are east of University Drive, in the older part of town.

In neighborhoods like Secluded Gardens, Plantation Park, and Lake View, a four-bedroom, two-bath house with a two-car garage and a pool goes for about \$425,000.

Many of the homes in that area have not been renovated, so Hopkins-Callanan said it's possible to get a three-bedroom, 1,800-square-foot home at Plantation Park, for example, for about \$400,000.

Plantation Park, east of University just south of Broward Boulevard and east of Florida's Turnpike, has natural beauty. It is surrounded by the Plantation Preserve Golf Course and Club, Plantation Heritage Park and other smaller parks.

"Three years ago, you could buy these same houses for \$200,000 or \$250,000, but now they are \$450,000," Hopkins-Callanan said.

El Dorado Estates, east of University, west of the Plantation Preserve Golf Course and Club, is a gated community with older homes, many of which have been renovated. A four-bedroom, three-bath house with a two-car garage and a pool goes for about \$600,000.

Plantation's newer luxury homes are west of University, which was cow pasture as recently as the 1970s.

The houses at Westport, just west of Nob Hill Road, were built between 1989 and 1997. Four-bedroom, 2 ½-bath homes of 3,000 square feet run from \$688,000 to about \$781,000.

At Hawk's Landing \$946,000 will get a 2,700-square-foot home with four bedrooms and three baths. A five-bedroom, six-bath home with 5,400 square feet costs about \$3 million. The community offers tennis courts, a pool and a clubhouse.

Condos may be a more affordable alternative.

Paragon Plantation is a condominium building recently converted from rental apartments off Pine Island north of Broward Boulevard. A two-bedroom, two-bath condo there runs about \$300,000.

"This is where everyone wants to be," Hopkins-Callanan said. ``People want to be able to walk to the restaurants."

A short drive away, the more affordable Grove East project recently broke ground.

This mixed-use development by the Altman Companies will have 220 condos and 20,000 feet of commercial space at Broward Boulevard and U.S. 441. One-bedroom units will sell for \$180,000 to \$220,000, two bedrooms for \$270,000 to \$330,000, and three bedrooms for \$350,000 to \$370,000.

The complex will include a fitness center, clubhouse, cyber cafe, children's park and pool.

"We're seeing all walks of life buying these units -- couples, families buying for their children," said Alfred Smith, a sales manager for Grove East. ``It's the convenience of the location. . . . We're close to downtown Fort Lauderdale, the turnpike, I-95, I-595 and relatively close to Miami."