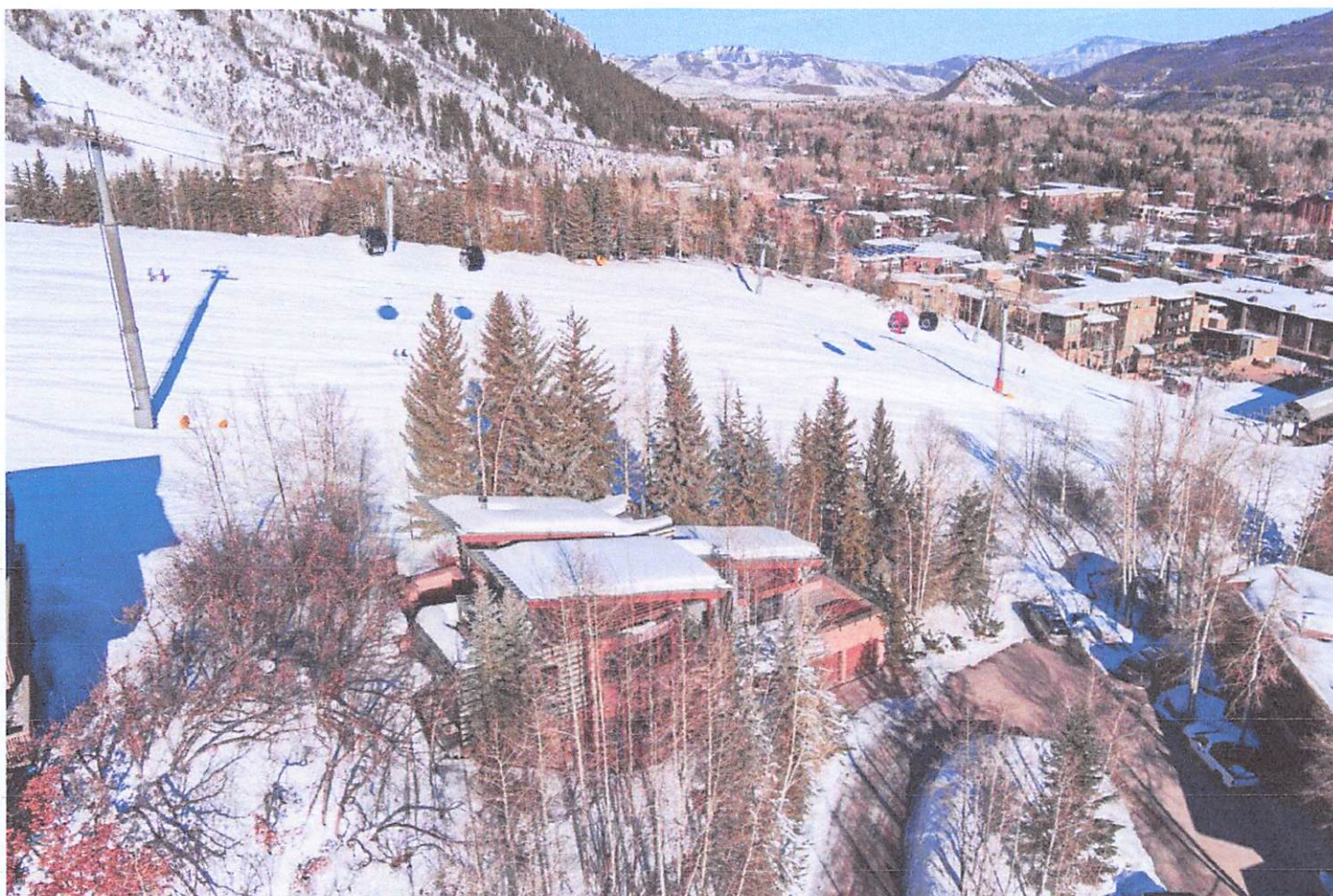


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Recent sales netting tens of millions the more extreme examples in already flush real estate market

Megan Tackett, Aspen Daily News Editor
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The 7,150-square-foot property on Aspen Mountain that Tommy Hilfiger and his wife Dee Ocleppo sold last week for \$50 million to an unnamed buyer. The couple had recently purchased the ski-in, ski-out home in December for \$31 million.

Courtesy of Mountain Home Photo

Last week, even the Wall Street Journal took interest in Tommy Hilfiger and Dee Ocleppo's \$19 million profit off selling their Aspen Mountain estate — which they themselves had just bought in December for \$31 million — for a cool \$50 million.

It wasn't the Hilfigers' intent to flip the property, Compass' Steven Shane, a luxury broker who represented both the Hilfigers and the unnamed buyer in the transaction, said. But the circumstances that led to the sale — and the significantly appreciated sale price — speaks volumes to the Aspen housing market right now.

"Very often when a buyer purchases a property, it validates the value of that property in the eyes of the people who are considering buying it as well," Shane said, noting a nondisclosure agreement that prevented him from identifying the buyers by name. "And in this instance, I believe it's even further validated because the buyers are sophisticated real estate purchasers and are fashion icons with impeccable taste."

And while the sale of the Hilfiger home — the 7,150-square-foot, ski-in, ski-out residence at 550 Aspen Alps Road — made national headlines for the \$19 million net on a four-month flip, it's far from the only property (residential or commercial) in the Aspen-Snowmass market that has commanded a significant return on investment. Earlier this month, on March 4, news of the land parcel voters passed for the future development of the Gorsuch Haus selling for \$76.25 million sent shock waves through the community, especially given that Aspen Skiing Co. had sold the same 41,268-square-foot property to Jeff Gorsuch, Jim DeFrancia and Bryan Peterson for roughly \$10 million in July.

Far less talked about but more-frequently occurring are the kinds of deals like that of 922 E. Cooper Ave., which closed for \$5.9 million in July 2020, a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic. It sold again in November last year, for more than \$8.8 million — and then again on March 22, this time for \$10 million, according to Colorado's Multiple Listing Service, or MLS.

Tim Estin, an associate broker with Aspen Snowmass Sotheby's International Realty, tracks and compiles such data and uses it for his market analyses, published on his website, www.estinaspen.com.

In February 2022, the combined Aspen-Snowmass dollars sold totaled more than \$438 million — in February 2021, the figure for the same time period was just shy of \$385 million, marking a 28% increase, according to Estin's site.

But a significant portion of that uptick goes to the number of properties selling for north of \$10 million. By February 2021, those high-value properties accounted for more than \$124 million of the total. This year, February's figure in the same market segment was over \$285 million — a 130% increase.

"What's happening in the upper end of the Aspen real estate right now is beyond rational," Estin said via email. "Typically, real estate markets are anchored to comparable sales data but in a number of respects now, they have lost their meaning. There's an unpredictability to the Aspen (and Snowmass Village) market now removed from any sort of metrics."

It's a sentiment more or less echoed by Shane.

"The ultra wealthy pay for what they want," he said. "But the fact of the matter is we have a finite amount of inventory in Aspen — we don't have any developable land, so we establish new baselines every day."

Indeed, looking at the year-to-date comparisons regarding the number of properties listed in the Aspen-Snowmass area backs up Shane's assertions regarding inventory. In February 2021, there were 431 properties listed for sale; last month, there were only 122. And of the 60 units sold through February this year, 14 of them had price tags above \$10 million, according to Estin's report.

“In the upper end of our market — say above \$20 million — that ... is being driven by billionaires, their passions and impulses. We are into another realm of billionaires pumping up property values, where a common \$5-15 million difference in price doesn’t seem to make any difference,” Estin said. “Yesterday’s sale is the deal you missed and there are more and more examples of ‘off-market,’ unlisted properties trading at record prices.”

The Hilfiger sale was just one such example of an unlisted deal.

Megan Tackett is the editor for the Aspen Daily News. She can be reached at megan@aspendailynews.com or on Twitter @MeganTackett10.

Megan Tackett

Editor in Chief