



## Auction Anticipation has Snell Isle Abuzz

By Cristina Silva (St. Petersburg Times)

ST. PETERSBURG - Jim Hosten doesn't usually brake for homes with "For Sale" signs.

But for a house on Snell Isle? On Brightwater Boulevard? With a rare "auction" sign posted on the lawn?

That's definitely worth a second look, Hosten said.

"I just have never seen anything like this before in this neighborhood," he said on a recent afternoon, after he pulled his Toyota Camry over to gawk at the home.

And he wasn't alone. The curious sight of a house for auction in Snell Isle has tongues wagging in this part of St. Petersburg. Auction gossip has become common fodder at certain types of dinner parties in the area. Local real estate agents are also discussing the sale, which they say is the first real estate auction on Snell Isle.

On a recent afternoon, motorists who drove by the house stopped upon seeing the "auction" sign and pulled over to investigate.

The home, at 1817 Brightwater Blvd. NE, is being sold by auction because its owners have been relocated by one of their employers, said G.T. Bynum, a spokesman for Williams & Williams, the Tulsa-based firm behind the auction. The sale has little to do with the state of the Snell Isle market but is in line with the growing popularity of property auctions, Bynum said. "The point behind an auction is to determine the market value of something in the quickest possible time."

With its gourmet kitchen, 60-foot wide balcony overlooking a swimming pool and the bay, and three-car garage, the home is ideal for a growing family, Bynum said. The house also boasts five bedrooms, 5.5 bathrooms, nanny or guest quarters, and 6,172 square feet to play in.

The sale value of the property, according to the Pinellas County property appraiser, is \$2.8-million.

The Times was unable to reach Forrest and Rochelle Wolfinger, the owners of the property, for comment last week.

The sale has generated buzz on Snell Isle, where, with its well-manicured lawns, tree-lined streets and classic European and Spanish style homes, property tends to sell quickly, even in today's tepid market.

A Williams, Williams & McKissick Co.



At least two waterfront homes sold for more than \$5-million on Snell Isle in the past six months.

“I was kind of surprised when I heard” about the auction, said Frank Malowany, a real estate agent who specializes in Snell Isle properties. “Brightwater is our upscale neighborhood, where the demand is usually higher than the supply.”

The opening bid of \$250,000 has inspired some to dream about making a play for the luxury home. Potential buyers need only to show up for Wednesday’s auction with their driver’s licenses.

“Can you imagine getting this house for half a million dollars?” said Hosten, a maintenance worker. “I would retire tomorrow.”

Snell Isle resident Nancy Burgess said she would not be attending the auction out of fear. “I’m scared I might raise my hand,” she said.