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Boston condo prices average \$572,000

By **SCOTT VAN VOORHIS**

The average Hub condo price has hurtled past the half-million-dollar mark, powered by surging sales in Boston's richest neighborhoods, data show.

Even as some experts make predictions of a real estate bubble, the average Boston condo sale price has already hit \$572,000 and could pass \$600,000 by year's end, said downtown condo expert Kevin Ahearn.

Meanwhile, condo sales in Back Bay, Beacon Hill and the South End shattered records again in the first quarter, piling up huge increases in total sales when compared with the same 2004 period, ERA Boston Real Estate Group reported.

"Certainly the numbers for Back Bay, Beacon Hill and the South End were all surprisingly strong," ERA Boston's Brian Rugg said.

"Each of the last five years, this kind of quarter has outdistanced the previous year," Rugg said. "These are all-time highs."

Back Bay led the way, racking up total condo sales of more than \$139 million in the year's first three months. That's nearly a 60 percent improvement over the \$88.5 million in condo deals struck in early 2004.

Beacon Hill sales passed the \$38 million mark in the first quarter, up from \$26.8 million a year earlier.

South End condo sales jumped 22 percent in the same period, to \$87.7 million, according to ERA Boston.

Still, even as the overall sales volume soared, the average Back Bay condo price slipped, to \$884,000 from \$941,000.

But average South End and Beacon Hill condo prices rose 24 percent and 30 percent respectively, to \$573,000 and \$635,000, ERA Boston reported.