

Dentist says open (wallets) wide! Buyers vie for home

By Scott Van Voorhis
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A Weston mega-mansion put on the market by a dentist who treats local sports stars and celebrities is homing in on a real estate slam dunk.

Even as the once-hot residential real estate market cools precipitously, Dr. John D. Meola, dentist for the Boston Celtics, the New England Patriots' cheerleaders and beauty contest winners, among others, is closing in on a deal to sell his 19,000 square-foot Weston home for nearly \$11 million, brokers working on the deal report.

The estate includes a second house, built in the 1740s, that, at 4,000 square feet, is nothing to sneeze at either.

A trio of buyers, including two wealthy overseas families looking for a Boston area estate, are vying for the Weston property, said Michael Carucci, chief executive of ERA Boston Real Estate Group, which is selling the mansion.

Amid rocky times for the once-soaring home and condo sales market, the super high end is proving resilient, Carucci noted. Still, even the sellers of multimillion-dollar gilded estates have had to think more realistically, with days of asking prices in the \$20 million range officially over.

"Interest rates and market conditions don't affect those types of deals because they are so high end," Carucci said. "The flip side is there are only so many people who can buy these homes."

For Meola, the Weston mansion amounted to a second job that allowed him to indulge in one of his favorite hobbies — building and architecture.

Meola spent seven years methodically constructing a super-sized mansion that combines a classic, older facade with modern touches. Features include a 55-foot atrium.

"It strikes me as truly record-setting should it occur," said Brian Rugg, a top executive at ERA Boston Real Estate. Still, the nearly \$11 million deal that the dentist to the local stars hopes to soon sign reflects a comedown of sorts from the heady real estate times of the past few years.

Meola says he almost sold his Weston estate for \$18 million back in 2001.

"There was a point in time where you could throw any type of a number out there," ERA Boston Real Estate's Carucci said.