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HD **Neighbours team up for sale bonanza**
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Real **estate** boom - Developers bulk-**buy property**

Neighbours in Sydney suburbs are doubling, and in some cases, tripling the value of their homes by teaming up and selling rows of homes to land-starved developers.

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Agents say the recent influx of **Chinese** money is generating stiff competition between local and offshore players with savvy home owners reaping the rewards. In Lane Cove and Epping, wealthy Asian firms have **purchased** as many as nine houses at a time, a growing trend that is not lost on the owners of a block of flats at Bondi Beach.

When investor brothers Nicholas and Andrew Peros decided they wanted to sell their two-bedroom Bondi unit they called a block meeting and proposed that all four neighbours band together.

Nicholas, who works in construction, had "tested the waters" and found sufficient developer demand for the **site** at 171 Glenayr Avenue, which is 500 metres from Bondi Beach.

Neighbour Carolyn Lockhart, who has lived in the block for 20 years, said she was surprised that everyone jumped on **board** so quickly. "There was no convincing needed ... we could all see that it was an opportunity that was too good to miss."

Tony McGinley from Richardson and Wrench Projects, who is selling the block with Ian Wallace, said based on comparables the individual apartments might be worth about \$1.25 million each. But now the price guide is above \$5 million - just how much will depend on who battles it out on auction day.

Although Mr McGinley said beachside properties were not something **Chinese** investors "would automatically look at", he noted increased competition between local developers and overseas groups looking for safe havens.

In suburbs on the train line the demand from overseas developers is much more pronounced.

Matthew Ramsay from CBRE recently negotiated the **sale** of eight freestanding homes on Cliff Road in Epping. The total **sale** price was about \$30 million, meaning that each home owner will pocket roughly \$3.75 million.

"If they weren't rezoned and if they were selling them just as a house they would be worth \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million," Mr Ramsay said. "They've tripled their value."

A caveat has since been placed on all eight properties by a **company** called SJD Epping, the three directors of which are from Shanghai.

In Lane Cove a **group** of homeowners has had similar success with Holgate First National agent Scott Henry.

Mr Henry was approached by two home owners wanting to sell but when word got out two became four and four became nine.

"To get a number of properties together is always difficult at the best of times," Mr Henry said.

"You need to be a psychologist sometimes more than a real **estate** agent.

"The secret of it was keeping everybody in check because everyone started to hear about real **estate** agents knocking on doors and developers were offering them trips to Shanghai to sell now to them."

In the end, an offer from a local developer of about \$20 million was trumped by an "Asian-based **company**" who agreed to pay close to \$3 million per **property** as well as the deposit upfront.

"If you looked at what they would get for their original homes, it would probably be \$1.4 million maybe \$1.5 million," Mr Henry said.

Save Our Suburbs president Tony Recsei said the trend was "a very serious concern" and people who **sold** their suburban houses to developers were "selfish".

As well as increased congestion, he noted that "people who live in those new units will look onto the gardens of the people that remain and the people that remain have got to look onto units".

"It is a theft of amenity," he said.

But in already heavily built-up areas such as Bondi Beach, selling to developers is not as contentious.

For Ms Lockhart it will mean she can move closer to Royal North Shore Hospital where she educates nurses. "I'm nervous, it is a big unknown and it is hard to know what will happen until the night," she said.

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