

PRIVATE PROPERTIES

Mega Homes for Massive Money: The 10 Biggest Deals of the Year

From Ken Griffin's splashy \$238 million buy in Manhattan, which spawned a political backlash, to the 17,000-square-foot aerie planned by Amazon Chief Jeff Bezos, the largest residential buys of 2019 broke the record for \$100 million-plus sales

In 2019, a small group of enormous real-estate deals, while bearing little relationship to the overall market, had an outsize impact on the national conversation about wealth inequality and the rapidly expanding billionaire class.

A boom in ultrahigh-priced deals in Palm Beach this year, including the \$111 million sale of an oceanfront estate, raised questions about the number of wealthy New Yorkers fleeing to Florida in response to a 2017 change in federal tax law. A string of \$100 million-plus deals completed in Los Angeles put the spotlight on high-end real estate on the West Coast.

Hedge-fund manager Ken Griffin's roughly \$238 million purchase of a New York penthouse, which set a price record for the nation, bolstered the arguments of legislators who support additional property taxes for the super rich.

These megadeals don't necessarily speak to a broad surge in real-estate values. In general, the U.S. luxury real-estate market faced a slowdown in 2019, thanks to oversupply in certain markets, tax changes and a general decline in foreign purchasers.

Read on for a closer look at the top 10 deals of the year, a record six of which topped \$100 million, according to research by The Wall Street Journal and appraiser Jonathan Miller. Mr. Miller said he believes the previous record was three \$100 million-plus deals, achieved in both 2014 and 2016.

1. 220 Central Park South, New York

Price: Roughly \$238 million

Ken Griffin's purchase of the roughly 24,000-square-foot Billionaires' Row apartment "came to personify the issue of income inequality for many people," said luxury agent Jason Haber of Warburg Realty of the deal.

Soon after, the New York legislature expanded the so-called mansion tax, designed to target buyers of properties priced at \$2 million or more, and increased property transfer taxes. The deal also helped reignite discussions around a pied-à-terre tax, which would tax multimillion-dollar second homes as a funding source for the city's beleaguered subway system.

Mr. Griffin has rarely spoken publicly on the issue. At an event this year hosted by Bloomberg News, Mr. Griffin said he wished presidential hopeful Sen. Elizabeth Warren spent more energy on education, rather than attacking "those of us who have been successful."

This purchase was one of a string of record-breaking acquisitions by the billionaire in recent years. In 2017, the Citadel founder bought several floors of a Chicago condominium for a record \$58.75 million. He also bought a London home for about \$122 million, and a piece of land in Florida for \$99.1 million (see below).

The recently completed tower has quickly become New York's new "it" building. Other buyers include musician Sting and hedge-fund executive Dan Och (see below).

Buyer's agents: Tal Alexander and Oren Alexander of Douglas Elliman

Seller's agent: Deborah Kern of the Corcoran Group

2. Chartwell, Los Angeles

Price: \$150 Million

Lachlan Murdoch, co-chairman of News Corp, which owns Dow Jones & Co., publisher of The Wall Street Journal, paid about \$150 million for a Bel-Air estate in December, setting a record for the Los Angeles area, according to people familiar with the deal. Observers said it was the second-priciest sale ever recorded in the country for a single-family home.

While the price was huge, the property was the latest in a line of homes to sell for a major discount. The roughly 25,000-square-foot mansion came on the market in 2017 for \$350 million, making it the most expensive listing in the nation at the time.

Designed by Sumner Spaulding around 1930, the property came with a Wallace Neff-designed five-bedroom guesthouse, a pool, a tennis court and a car showroom with space for 40 vehicles. Mr. Murdoch didn't respond to requests for comment.

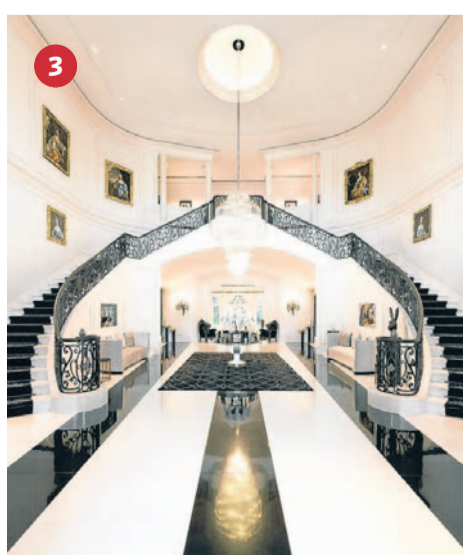
Seller's agents: Drew Fenton, Jeff Hyland and Gary Gold of Hilton & Hyland; Joyce Rey, Jade Mills and Alexandra Allen of Coldwell Banker Global Luxury; and Drew Gitlin and Susan Gitlin of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices California Properties

Buyer's agent: Drew Fenton of Hilton & Hyland

3. Spelling Manor, Los Angeles

Price: \$119.75 million

British Formula One heiress Petra Ecclestone sold Spelling Manor, a sprawling estate built for the late television producer Aaron Spelling, this summer for \$119.75 million, records show. The buyer hailed



from Saudi Arabia, according to people familiar with the deal.

The Holmby Hills property is about 56,000 square feet, making it one of the largest private homes in the country. After Ms. Ecclestone bought it from Mr. Spelling's widow, Candy Spelling, in 2011, she brought in more than 500 workers to do a three-month renovation.

Seller's agents: Kurt Rappaport and Daniel Dill of Westside Estate Agency; Jade Mills of Coldwell Banker Global Luxury and David Parnes and James Harris of the Agency

Buyer's agents: Jeff Hyland and Rick Hilton of Hilton & Hyland

4. La Reverie, Palm Beach

Price: \$111 million

Hedge-fund billionaire Steven Schonfeld and his wife Brooke Schonfeld purchased a Palm Beach estate late this year for \$111 million, setting a price record for Florida, according to people familiar with the deal.

A spokesman for Mr. Schonfeld said the executive isn't planning to make Florida his primary home. Still, prices in the area have held up, thanks in part to a 2017 tax law that imposed a \$10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions. The law caused some wealthy individuals to flee higher-tax states for areas like Palm Beach.

Known as La Reverie, the over 70,000-square-foot property has 11 bedrooms, 22 bathrooms, a bowling alley, a candy parlor, a pool, a tennis court and an ice cream stand. The seller was hair-care entrepreneur Sydell Miller, records show. She didn't respond to a call seeking comment.

Seller's agent: Lawrence Moens of Lawrence A. Moens Associates

Buyer's agent: Christian Angle of Christian Angle Real Estate

5. La Follia, Palm Beach

Price: \$110.25 million

Another Palm Beach estate known as La Follia sold this summer for \$110.25 million, after coming on the market for \$135 million the prior October, records show.

Both La Follia and La Reverie are on Palm Beach's Billionaires' Row, a narrow stretch of South Ocean Boulevard just south of Mar-a-Lago, President Trump's resort.

La Follia had been home to socialite Terry Allen Kramer, a producer of Broadway shows like "Kinky Boots" and "Evita." Sitting on almost 5 acres, it is about 37,500 square feet and has 13 bedrooms.

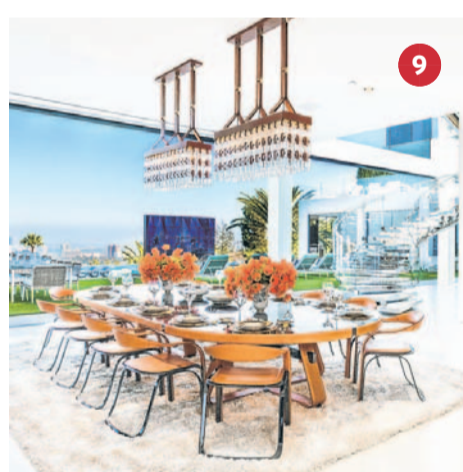
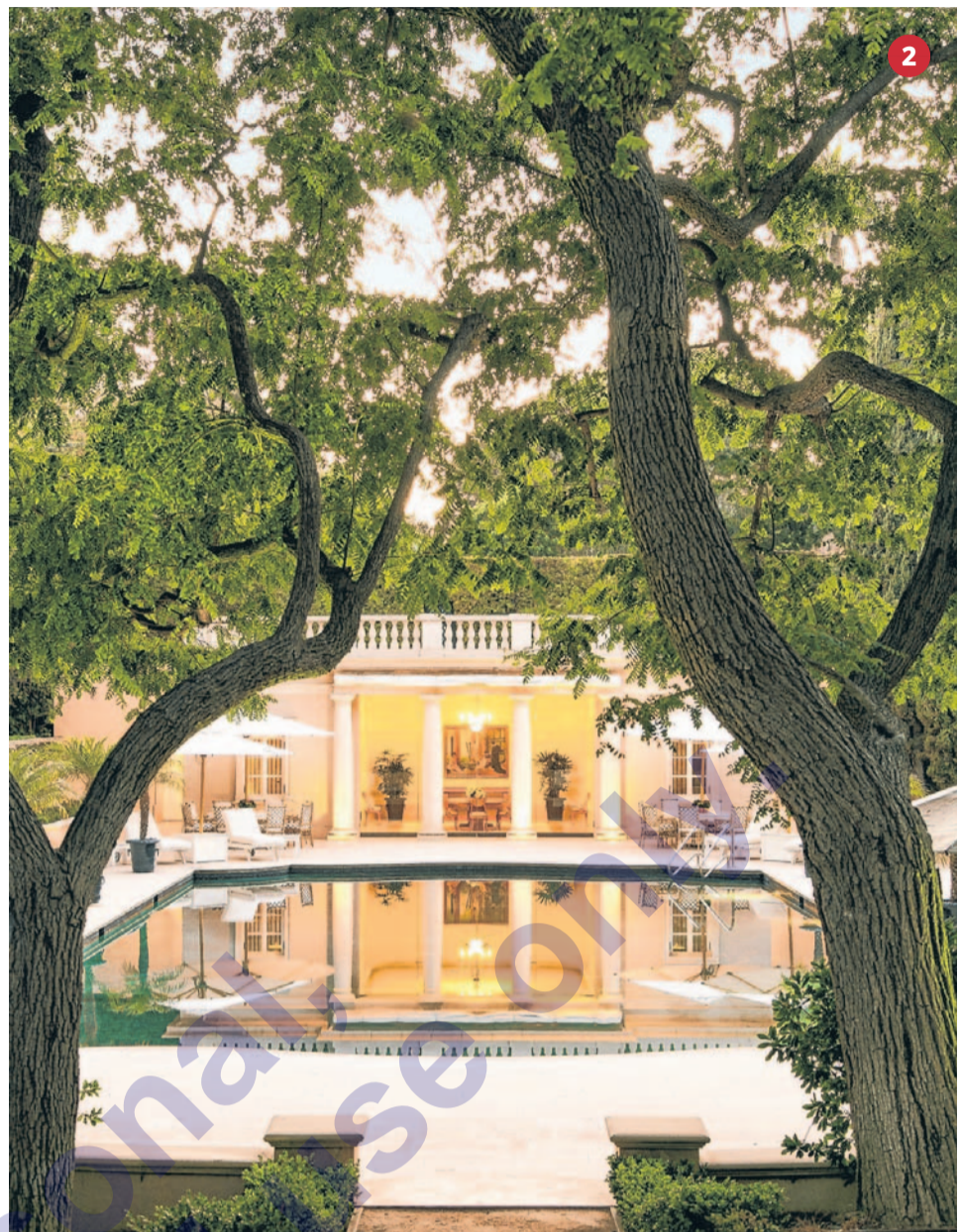
Seller's agents: Gary Pohrer, Ashley McIntosh, Cara Coniglio McClure, Lisa Wilkinson and Adam McPherson of Douglas Elliman

Buyer's agent: Lawrence Moens of Lawrence A. Moens Associates

6. A Charles Gwathmey House in Malibu

Price: \$100 million

Ron Meyer, vice chairman of NBCUniversal, sold his Malibu, Calif., home for \$100



million in August to Jan Koum, founder of messaging service WhatsApp. The property was listed for \$125 million.

The house sits on more than 3 oceanfront acres and is about 14,000 square feet. There are six bedrooms, a two-story paneled library, a home theater and a home office. It was designed by architect Charles Gwathmey for Mr. Meyer in the late 1990s. Messrs. Meyer and Koum didn't respond to requests for comment.

The home was at the center of a dispute between Mr. Meyer and his former business partner, Mike Ovitz, with whom he founded the talent agency Creative Artists Agency. In the 1990s, when the two were quarreling over Mr. Meyer's move to Universal, Mr. Ovitz bought the home out from under Mr. Meyer, who had been eyeing it, according to the book "Powerhouse: The Untold Story of Hollywood's Creative Artists Agency," by James Andrew Miller. Mr. Ovitz ultimately sold the property back to Mr. Meyer.

Agent: Kurt Rappaport of Westside Estate Agency

7. 220 Central Park South, New York

Price: \$95 million

Late this year, financier Dan Och closed on a pair of units at this building for roughly \$95 million, marking one of the largest deals ever recorded in Manhattan. He bought a four-bedroom apartment spanning about 9,800 square feet, as well as a smaller unit on a lower floor. Mr. Och is listing his apartment at nearby 15 Central Park West for \$57.5 million.

Agent: Deborah Kern of the Corcoran Group

8. An Assemblage in Palm Beach

Price: \$99.1 million

In September, Ken Griffin paid \$99.1 million for a home on 3.7 acres next door to his oceanfront estate. The seller was Frank McCourt, the one-time owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers. The deal brought Mr. Griffin's Palm Beach holdings to a total of about 21 acres and his total spending in the area to about \$350 million.

Mr. Griffin has demolished several homes on his properties but kept and remodeled two, one for himself and one for his mother, The Wall Street Journal reported. He still counts his primary home as Chicago, where his company is based, according to people familiar with his situation.

Agent: Lawrence Moens of Lawrence A. Moens Associates

9. Billionaire, Bel-Air

Price: \$94 million

A Bel-Air home built on spec by handbag entrepreneur Bruce Makowsky sold for \$94 million in October, significantly less than the \$250 million it sought when it came on the market in 2017. While the deal represented a major price cut, it was still one of the largest ever recorded in Los Angeles.

The house had its own helipad, a crocodile skin-clad elevator and a candy wall. It was decked out in accessories from the likes of Fendi, Roberto Cavalli and Louis Vuitton. The roughly 38,000-square-foot house has 12 bedrooms and 21 bathrooms.

Seller's agents: Branden Williams and Rayni Williams of Hilton & Hyland; Shawn Elliott of Nest Seekers International

Buyer's agent: Ben Bacal of Revel Real Estate

10. 212 Fifth Avenue, New York

Price: \$80 million

Amazon Chief Executive Jeff Bezos closed on the purchase of three apartments in New York's Flatiron District in June, with plans to combine them into a roughly 17,000-square-foot aerie, according to people familiar with the deal. The deal was the priciest ever closed in New York south of 42nd Street.

The property is in a former manufacturing building not far from the Flatiron Building. The unit has a private elevator and sprawling terraces with views of Madison Square Park and the surrounding skyline.

Seller's agent: Nikki Field, Brad Ingalls, Mara Flash Blum and Kevin B. Brown of Sotheby's International Realty

Buyer's agent: John Burger of Brown Harris Stevens

—Katherine Clarke

The WSJ's House of the Year voting is open. **M7**

SIMON BERLYN (2), MALIBU, BILLIONAIRE; JIM BARTSCH (2), CHARTWELL, SPELLING MANOR; DOUGLAS ELLIMAN REAL ESTATE (LA FOLLIA)