

Brickell Key office complex set for near-record sale

By Susan Stabley
October 20, 2006

The only office complex on Miami's Brickell Key has been put up for sale for the first time.

Courvoisier Centre is expected to sell for more than \$170 million, according to Jones Lang LaSalle, which is exclusively marketing the two-building, 335,000-square-foot Class A mixed-use office complex.

"We think it's going to command top market pricing," Jones Lang LaSalle Managing Director Tom Beneville said.



That might translate into record pricing for office space. If Courvoisier Centre sells for \$170 million, that is about \$476 a square foot, including the retail square footage with the office space.

Those numbers would rival the recent record sales of a pair of Miami Beach office buildings: The Lincoln, which sold for \$74 million, or \$458 a square foot in August; and Lincoln Place, which sold for \$62 million, or slightly more than \$440 a square foot in June, according to Cushman & Wakefield.

"Records are meant to be broken," said CB Richard Ellis Executive VP Christian Lee, who handled the Lincoln Place transaction. "Miami now trumps Chicago from an investment point of view. Manhattan and D.C. are the only other markets on this coast that are more desirable."

Foreign buyers from as far as Dubai and Australia have been inquiring about the property for more than a year, said Gavin Campbell, president of complex owner Florida Office Property Co.

"Miami was the best of the second tier. Now, it's in the big five," he said, citing San Francisco and Los Angeles as the two other major markets.

Campbell said he expects the property to be bought by someone looking for a long-term hold - possibly as long as 30 years - what he called a "generational buyer."

"Tell me where in the continental U.S. can you buy a Class-A office building on an island, surrounded by a sea of high-end residential and a five-star hotel?" he said, referencing the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

The Courvoisier Centre property includes 22,000 square feet of retail, a waterfront jogging park, tennis courts and some land for potential development. But its biggest attraction may be the building's

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revenue-producing 941-space parking garage - the only public garage on the private island, just off Miami's financial corridor.

"Companies that want to move to our building tell us: 'We like your office building, but we really like your parking garage,'" he said.

Courvoisier is 85 percent leased and is currently bringing in as much as \$45 a square foot, Campbell said. Rates at Courvoisier Centre have increased by 30 percent over the last 12 months.

Tenants include Credit Lyonnais, Sony Ericsson, Young & Rubicam and Swire Pacific Holdings, which developed the gated community.

Florida Office Property Co. is a privately held REIT in the process of divesting its holdings. It bought the two buildings from Swire in an off-market transaction in February 1999 for an undisclosed amount.