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# Orlando Magic's Dwight Howard pays a record \$8 million for Longwood mansion

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Orlando Magic basketball star Dwight Howard has bought a spacious new house in Seminole County for \$8 million -- apparently a record price for a single-family home in a county already known for its minimansions.

The Chateau d' Usse, which had been listed for \$9.7 million, captured all the awards this year during the local Street of Dreams luxury-home show. Karen Arbutine, a real estate agent with Re/Max Central Realty in Lake Mary, helped broker the sale of the 11,026-square-foot home in Longwood's Lake Club development.

Arbutine described the lavish home off Markham Woods Road as a "castle" with a cathedral-like entry and an ornate, handcrafted interior. Interesting features include an office with a secret room that leads to the master-bedroom closet and bathroom, and a swimming pool with a "lazy river" system and a waterfall.

Roger Soderstrom, broker-owner of Stirling Sotheby's International Realty, confirmed that Howard was the buyer. Chocky Burks, Stirling's director of new homes in Lake Mary, negotiated the sale for the seller of the property, Hillcrest Homes.

Burks said the multistory, European-style home sits on 3 acres of lakefront land and contains five bedrooms, five full and two half baths, a game room, family room with large stone fireplace, home theater, art gallery, two guest suites and a four-car garage.

According to real estate consultant Kathy Llamas, the Seminole County Property Appraiser's Office estimated that the previous record for a single-family home purchase in the county was about \$7 million, based on a review of sales in recent years.

Million-dollar homes sales in the Orlando area have dropped sharply this year from the record pace of a few years ago. A survey by ERA Williams Real Estate Group shows 140 homes sold for \$1 million or more



during the first half of 2008, down from 231 during the first half of 2007.

The average price paid for those homes was up a bit, however: \$1.78 million versus \$1.71 million a year earlier.

The priciest home sold locally during the first half of the year was a five-bedroom, five-bathroom house in Isleworth, near Windermere in southwest Orange County. It sold for \$9 million.

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