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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russians Buy Up Property in Occupied Mariupol As Counteroffensive Looms

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The Russian-occupied port city of Mariupol in southeastern Ukraine. **AFP**

Russians are buying up real estate in the occupied Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, over a year after a relentless siege by Moscow left it mostly in ruins, the independent news outlet Bumaga reported.

Russian authorities have for months boasted of large-scale reconstruction efforts in Mariupol following the destruction of approximately 90% of the city's residential buildings and 60% of private homes.

Up to 1,500 civilians were killed and 350,000 fled Mariupol as Russian forces laid siege to the city between late February and May last year.

According to Bumaga, property buyers from Russia are looking to invest in Mariupol's real estate market as a potential tourist destination due to its location on the Sea of Azov.

But they expressed little concern about Ukraine's ongoing counteroffensive in territories

leading to the outskirts of Mariupol, some 80 kilometers north of the city.

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“It’s scary that fighting can break out again, but the war won’t go on forever,” Irina, a property buyer from the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, told Bumaga.

The independent outlet reported that around 100 groups on VKontakte — Russia’s largest social media website — advertise real estate properties in Mariupol, the first of which appeared in early May 2022, as fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces continued to rage in the city.

Russia’s popular classifieds website Avito lists dozens of apartments and homes for sale, with the average price of an apartment in the city at just 3 million rubles ($34,000) and 4.8 million rubles ($54,500) for homes.

“Our borders are securely protected by [Russia’s] Armed Forces and the war is nearing its logical end,” said another buyer, Eldar.

“The worst thing that could have happened there has already happened,” Olesya, a resident of the Siberian city of Omsk, told Bumaga.

Mariupol is part of eastern Ukraine’s Donetsk region, which President Vladimir Putin annexed along with three other partially occupied regions of Ukraine — Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson — in September 2022.

Putin visited Mariupol in March on his first trip to the occupied territory.

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