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Buyers leave L.B. for San Pedro

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By Don Jergler

Real Estate: Vue development offers prospective condo owners a cheaper alternative.

SAN PEDRO – Duane and Shakena Myles have been in love with Long Beach for the eight years that they have lived there, but the cold hard facts of the area's booming condominium market has begun to wrench that arrow from their hearts.

"I actually enjoy the city of Long Beach," said Duane, who works for a real estate firm in Los Angeles. "There's a lot of culture, and I love how it's growing in its urban process, but I need something that's affordable. I've looked in Long Beach, and it's very, very expensive."

The two 29-year-olds want to move out of their one-bedroom apartment on Pine Avenue near Willow Street in Long Beach and become owners, but even with Duane's salary and Shakena's earnings as an account manager in Hawthorne, they won't be part of Long Beach's ongoing renaissance.

Instead, the couple has set their sights on one of San Pedro's newest residential projects.

Spillover from Long Beach's downtown condominium boom is contributing to San Pedro's yet-to-emerge urban renaissance, according to developers of Vue.

The interest list for the \$175 million development overlooking San Pedro's harbor opened last week, with ads running in the Press-Telegram and Los Angeles Times.

The list has grown rapidly in the past week, with more than 70 people with "562" prefix phone numbers expressing interest, many of whom say they are from Long Beach, said Rhonda Slavik, marketing manager for Vue.

"With Long Beach being just a five- or 10-minute drive over the Vincent Thomas Bridge, moving to San Pedro makes it a natural sort of progression for buyers who are being priced out of Long Beach," Slavik said.

San Pedro is undergoing an urban renaissance akin to downtown Long Beach's revitalization, with an arts district, cafes, restaurants and retailers starting to open in downtown.

Construction on the 318-unit project, a partnership of Galaxy Commercial Holding LLC and the Carlyle Group, is set to begin in summer, with completion slated for early 2008.

Interiors offer stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, wood cabinets and amenities like a pool deck with spa, a roof deck on the 16th floor with an entertainment area, a weight room and pilates-yoga studio.

However, Vue's biggest draw may be its price.

Units start in the mid-\$300,000s for 700-square-foot one-bedrooms. Units go to three bedrooms measuring 1,700 square feet. Sales start in April.

"For waterfront property, it's one of the lowest price-points on the Southern California coast," Slavik said. "So many people waited so long to buy in Long Beach that they were priced out of those amazing waterfront views."

At West Ocean – a \$196 million residential project that will yield 246 luxury condominium units in two towers on Ocean Boulevard in Long Beach – remaining units start in the mid-\$500,000s.

Other downtown Long Beach condo developments have sold for \$600,000 per unit or more.

Patrick Duffy, with Hanley Wood Market Intelligence, credits Long Beach's condo boom to the city's improved image, and he said San Pedro is on course to do the same.

"The positive image of the city is catching on," he said of Long Beach. "San Pedro is at that place now where they're offering lofts. It's one of the most affordable areas along the coast."

Duane and Shakena, who want a two- or three-bedroom unit so they can start a family, see San Pedro's Vue as their best option.

"We've been looking in Long Beach for the past two years and property prices have just been soaring," Duane said. "We were considering Riverside, but it was too far of a commute. And in San Pedro, we will still be 10 minutes away from everything that Long Beach offers."