

Money admires tranquillity of the native countryside

‘House hunting’ season begins but demand differs across Belarusian regions: being active in some and almost nonexistent in others. What can we expect from the rural property market in the near future?

By Oleg Pimenov

Stable demand

Those seeking a country retreat used to choose places located close to urban links. However, the trend is now changing, with most deciding to travel at least 10km from the urban noise and dust. Moreover, those really thinking ahead look at city plans, to see where future developments are to appear. Particularly, home owners are keen to avoid places where high-rise buildings are located, inspiring many to sell their city properties and head ‘far from the madding crowd’.

Gomel residents seem to prefer prestigious districts — such as Krasny Mayak, Romanovichi, Bezki and Chenki (recently, a plot of land sold for \$12,000 at auction). There’s steady demand for houses priced at around \$150,000, as the Director of a Gomel Real Estate Agency, Oleg Volshtein, tells us. He explains, “An interesting project is being realised: 70-80 terraced town-houses are to be built near Krasny Mayak — each with independent entry. These ‘ready-made’ homes are to be priced at no more than \$100,000 for those buying ‘off plan.’”

Inexpensive houses — situated 30km or more from the ring road — are also on sale, with prices ranging from \$20-30 thousand. “These are enjoying demand,” Mr. Volsh-



Belarusians start appreciating even more leisure in the open air

tein assures us. “However, some elite cottages — worth \$300,000-500,000 — are a challenge to sell. On the whole, we aren’t seeing any indication of prices falling.” He believes that houses within the city will become less popular than those in the countryside in the future, as people seek to escape high rise neighbours and noisy roads.

Close to forests and lakes

Brest is seeing increased interest, although snow is still on the

ground. “Russian buyers are influencing prices, making them rise. More foreigners are arriving this year than last,” admits Brest Real Estate Agency Director Lyudmila Mironyuk. “They view it as prestigious to live in Volki, Litviny, Guli or the Shcherbino area, where houses are selling like hotcakes for \$350,000. A land lot in these districts costs around \$70-80 thousand. Russians tend to choose cosy cottages close to the forest, with a lake or river nearby, for use as summer homes.”

Only two sold

You might imagine the Grodno Region being similarly popular but few Russians are showing interest: deals are rare and prices lower. According to Grodno real estate agent Victor Karpovich, sellers aren’t keen on dropping their price and there are few new homes coming onto the market. He adds, “This year, we’ve sold just two houses — for \$120,000 and \$150,000: both situated not far from the city. Village houses are also for sale, with prices ranging from \$14-35 thousand.”

A house near Mogilev costs as little as \$3,000-10,000 and bargains are also to be had in the Vitebsk Region, although agent Vasily Kabysheko believes the season will pick up.

Proposals made

Rising prices for land lots near Minsk (up by 20-30 percent) may buoy housing prices around the capital but the Director of Minsk’s Country House Real Estate Agency, Vladimir Chernushevich, notes that available lots will soon be all gone, being limited in number. Meanwhile, those received by families in need are, effectively, ‘off the market’.

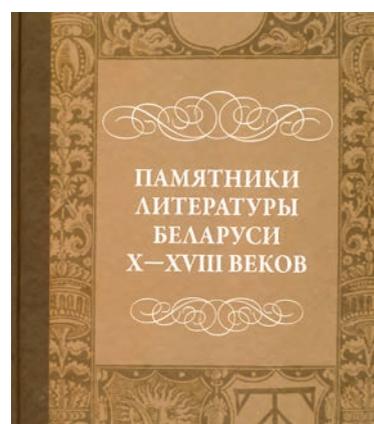
Yelena Akulich, from Tvoya Stolitsa, asserts that, for many years, more rural homes and land lots have been coming onto the market, bringing a fall in prices. “We’ve noticed that prices tend to have fallen by 30-40 percent by the time a deal has been concluded. People are demanding comfortable, well-planned accommodation, so homes built in the 1990s (when few good design projects were available) are difficult to sell,” she says.

Property prices should stay relatively stable this year, with peak interest shown in July and August. The ‘house hunting’ season is just kicking off, with many deals yet to be struck.

Diaries enter history

By Yevgeny Svetlovsky

Unique ambassadors’ diaries collated in new edition: **Monuments of 10th-18th Century Belarusian Literature**



The masterpieces of ancient Belarusian literature have been translated into Russian and adapted to be easily readable today, featuring polemic essays, poetry and spiritual literature by Kirill Turovsky, Frantsisk Skorina, Stefan Zbarazhski, Symon Budny, Lev Sapega and Simeon Polotsky, among others.

“Many of these texts are being published for the first time — such as the ambassadors’ diaries and Ipatiy Potiy’s descriptions of the

council in Brest (Berestie). They’re interesting not only as monuments of literature and examples of written language but as historical sources,” emphasises Prof. Ivan Saverchenko, who heads the Department for Belarusian Literary History at the Centre for Belarusian Culture, Language and Literary Research (National Academy of Sciences of Belarus). The doctor of philological sciences is also the co-author of the book, which presents major genres of ancient Belarusian literature: Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Enlightenment (tales, legends, chronicles, military and mystical stories, memoirs, sermons, Catechisms, polemical essays, ambassadorial diaries, satirical works and spiritual and secular poetry). Each chapter is accompanied by illustrations and scientific commentary.

Monuments of 10th-18th Century Belarusian Literature is released to coincide with World Book and Copyright Day, founded in 1996. This aims to attract attention to printed works as a source of knowledge, stressing the role of books and the importance of copyright in developing world culture. It also promotes tolerance and international dialogue.

Symbol of faith and spiritual unity

By Sergey Gomanov

Five metre bronze monument to Patriarch of Moscow and all-Russia Alexey II installed in Vitebsk, near Holy Dormition Cathedral

On the Feast of the Annunciation, the monument was solemnly unveiled and consecrated. Alongside numerous believers, church clerks and heads of the region and the city attended the ceremony. There were many guests from Russia, including patron Anastasia Ositis, who financed the monument. The sculpture stands beside Holy Dormition Cathedral, which stands high on the bank of the Zapadnaya Dvina River. It is considered to be one of Belarus’ most beautiful churches, designed by Iosif Fontan in the late 18th century. Thought to be inspired by



Monument to Patriarch Alexey II installed in Vitebsk

Anorio Longi’s church, in Rome, it was sadly reduced to rubble in 1936, during the years of ‘militant atheism’. However, restoration works began sixty years later. In 1998, Patriarch Alexey II visited Vitebsk and laid a capsule (containing a letter) in the church’s foundations, as well as consecrating the first stone of its restoration. He visited again in 2000, giving his blessing for its speedy completion and, in September 2011, the new Holy Dormition Cathedral was consecrated.

The monument was jointly created by famous Belarusian sculptor Vladimir Slobodchikov, by Prof. Igor Morozov and by Igor Voyush. Addressing the parishioners and expressing gratitude to those who took part in creating the monument, the Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk Filaret, the Patriarchal Exarch of Belarus, noted, “The

unveiling of the monument testifies to the faith of our people while also showing the spiritual unity of all Orthodox nations, who love each other and the whole world.”

The Chairman of the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee, Alexander Kosinets, underlined that Belarus is keen to encourage the spiritual and moral education of the nation. Close collaboration between civil and spiritual powers brings only benefits. Such interaction, as promoted by Alexey II, has already reaped tangible results.

Church members are promoting spiritual ties between ordinary believers, business people and patrons of art, such as Anastasia Ositis, who financed the monument to Alexey II in Vitebsk. Her next plans include the foundation of a monastery in the Gorodok District.