



Sky-high demand for apartments

Developers are constantly upping the ante when it comes to luxury features, making apartments in prime positions a popular choice

FOR people just breaking into the property market, more affordable apartments are not pie in the sky – they represent a foot in the door.

At the other end of the scale, the top end of the market is discovering it can offer new levels of luxury.

The Gold Coast's residential unit and townhouse market has performed well in recent years, with healthy growth recorded in most areas.

Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ) chairman Peter McGrath said that the present time of historically low housing affordability, this type of dwelling provided the perfect affordability buffer.

"When you look at the median unit and townhouse prices there are some affordable properties still available that would suit first home buyers, couples or small families," he said.

"And in a lot of cases, units and townhouses are located in areas that are closer to all mod cons and an easier commute to the city."

Mr McGrath said on the Gold Coast, median unit and townhouse figures rose by 8.6 per cent to \$334,500 in the 12 months to the end of September, 2007.

"Units and townhouses located in the Gold Coast's prestige suburbs, as well as the more affordable suburbs, performed particularly well over the year with Eagleby, Hope Island, Mermaid Beach, Beenleigh and Eden's Landing all featuring in the list of the top 10 performing suburbs," he said.

For those with elevated expectations, this market sector is delivering too.

Million-dollar apartment sales are skyrocketing with research showing the number of seven-

figure transactions has jumped by 25 per cent in the past 12 months and a massive 762 per cent since 1997.

A report compiled by Lynda Campbell, of Colliers International's Gold Coast office, found 302 high-rise apartments traded hands for more than a million dollars last year, up from 242 the previous year and just 35 during the first year of the study in 1997.

Surfers Paradise emerged as the luxury-lover's hot spot, accounting for the highest volume of sales, with 525 apartments selling for more than a million dollars over the 11 years of the study.

Ms Campbell said the upward trend in the prestige market was set to continue, with an array of new apartment buildings to begin settling in the near future.

"Buildings such as Elysee, Kirra Surf, The Oracle and Reflection Tower Two have all had sales at well over one million, which will boost the number of seven-figure sales on the Gold Coast even further when settlements start to occur," she said.

The best performing building is the Q1 in Surfers Paradise, which recorded a total of 130 million-dollar-plus sales.

It was followed by Reflection on the Sea Tower I in Coolangatta (63 million-dollar-plus sales), Air on Broadbeach (51), Rivage Royale in Southport (48), Liberty Tower II in Main Beach (47), Verve in Broadbeach (44), The Wave in Broadbeach (39), Waterline in Broadbeach (39), La Sabia in Surfers Paradise (38) and Ultra in Broadbeach (36).

"In the past few years, there has been a trend towards boutique buildings aimed at owner-occupiers, which typically feature larger floor plans and prestige fixtures and fittings, and therefore command higher price tags," said Ms Campbell.

"Like houses, apartments that are close to the water, whether ocean, Broadwater or river, are also achieving strong values."

Miami recorded the strongest average capital growth on re-sales of million-dollar-plus apartments at 17.4 per cent and was followed by Burleigh Heads (15.7 per cent) and Tweed Heads (15.5 per cent).

"These three suburbs are the smallest of the million-dollar-plus markets and are typically tightly held, which has led to these strong capital growth figures," said Ms Campbell.

The rise in dominance of boutique, luxury, residential apartments as the pinnacle of beachside living has led to a shift away from the development of traditional holiday apartment towers in favour of exclusive residences that provide a home in the sky.

Total Project Marketing managing director Adrian Parsons said the Gold Coast was leading the way in what was set to become the ultimate in luxury living in densely populated areas.

"Prestige property buyers are strongly attracted to beachfront living, yet there is limited opportunity to own a boutique apartment without being part of a large impersonal complex of hundreds of units," said Mr Parsons.

"This has led to developers shifting away from the Gold Coast's traditional mixed-use residential and holiday tower towards prestige apartment options that provide the space and amenity of a home.

"These new boutique residential towers avoid the pitfalls of mixed-use buildings, such as management rights and limited car spaces."

An example of the trend is the recently launched \$53 residential-only tower, XXV Breaker Street at Main Beach.

Kirra Beach has also become



the focus for a number of boutique residential apartment developments, including the Pikos Group's three projects Kirra Pearl, Pure and Kirra Wave and the joint-venture Elysee Residences.

"The beauty of this new type of product is that the majority of apartments occupy one whole level, or at the most two per level,

providing floor space equivalent to a home with the advantage of elevated views, enhanced security and lowered maintenance requirements," said Mr Parsons.

"Demand is currently sky high for these apartments and there is little doubt they are replacing beachfront homes as the most desirable residential option on

the Gold Coast."

Rainbow Bay has become the latest location for boutique luxury residential apartments with the announcement of plans for two boutique luxury apartment buildings, putting a new focus on property in the picturesque peninsula.

Reflection Tower Two is set to boost the number of sales when some of its prime apartments settle

Q1 in Surfers Paradise

Ultra at Broadbeach has helped propel the suburb to the second-highest performer in the million-dollar-plus apartment market

Rivage Royale in Southport