



TAKING TO THE STREETS

As city living continues to grow in desirability, trends are emerging that will have an impact on property development and investment in the next few years

TEXT Cayleigh Bright **PHOTOGRAPHS** Christine le Roux, supplied



The Amdec Group's new Harbour Arch development in Cape Town is modelled on Johannesburg's Melrose Arch.

OPPOSITE Strand Beach Sea Point is close to outdoor attractions as well as urban convenience.

In cities around the world, it's becoming clear that centralised living is here to stay: rather than heading out to live in the suburbs or work in remote office parks, buyers are convinced that rejuvenated urban areas are the place to be. If you're among them, here's how to think smart about design, location, amenities and more.

GETTING OUTSIDE

Having a friend or two over for drinks with a view is part of the city-dwelling dream, but hosting a big brunch or dinner party in a small space isn't part of its reality. Instead, those buying property in the city are looking for proximity to the places where they like to socialise and communal areas within easy reach. "Buyers' choices are being driven by convenience and lifestyle, and we've noticed a marked increase in demand for full-service apartment living that offers top-notch security, concierge services, and lifestyle amenities such as a communal pool deck and entertainment area," says Natasha Christensen of Berman Brothers. Gardens and rooftop areas allow for recreation and relaxation, and a park or promenade nearby for walking and playing with other people's pets can be a plus for lifestyle-focused investment, too.

BUYING, AND BUILDING, TO LIVE...

In South Africa, sunny summer happens as European investors and casual holidaymakers alike escape the bleak midwinter, so a market for rentals is ensured. However, more developers are prioritising year-round residents. "Avalon has been predominantly aimed at accommodating the full-time or seasonal occupier," says Swish Properties' Craig Getz, discussing the group's development in Gardens, Cape Town. "We've been careful not to sterilise the area. By focusing on the ground floor and first floor's retail, leisure and commercial activities, we've ensured the offerings at Avalon are self-sustained: this alone will help us to withstand cyclical market downtrends."



ABOVE Apartments at The Yacht Club, a new mixed-use development in Cape Town's Roggebaai precinct, offer community and convenience. **BELOW** The Estate in Sea Point comprises two apartment blocks connected by communal facilities.





DESIGNING TO RENT

Interior design for the purpose of creating a covetable showpiece that stands out on Airbnb, Booking.com or longer-term rental sites is the secret weapon of investors who'd like to make the most of a property's potential. This means that the days of a cold feel and generic-looking furniture are gone, to be replaced by attention to detail and an eye for inviting decor.

"Photos sell spaces – especially on online booking platforms," says architect and interior designer Ivan McCarthy Peens. "The success of such a space lies in the balance of being not too personal and at the same time not too generic." To find that delicate balance, he amplifies texture, layers natural pieces, and ensures an emphasis on a few key design elements rather than piling on the trends.

Experience in designing spaces for various industries has left him with the conviction that a space should be personal, no matter its intended purpose: "I like to create space for the individual needs of the client and develop the most appropriate visual output for these needs. Through all these design disciplines, I think comfort is a common thread. Being able to feel comfortable in a space – residential, commercial or retail – establishes a trust relationship between users."

Beautifully furnished spaces will continue to be big business over the next few years, says Riaan le Roux, business development consultant at Weylandts SPACES. "High-end interiors definitely add to the success of the rental, as it remains a visual experience."

Professional attention can give a property the edge over other homes for rent – besides the convenience of having someone else take care of the finer details of getting your space fit for guests, he says. Whether the client is willing to provide a budget and give the decorators carte blanche, or whether they have a clear idea of how they'd like their space to look when finished, the Weylandts SPACES team saves them all manner of hassles.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Weylandts Spaces furnishes properties for owners to settle into or to rent out. | Exec at Home and Student at Home apartments are compact, modern spaces with urban living convenience. | The Estate's cosy interiors – as appealing as the city-to-sea views.

SMARTER CITIES

“Features such as license-plate recognition, control rooms and 24-hour on-demand call centres for security, medical assistance and a range of other emergencies are becoming the norm in modern developments,” says Nicholas Stopforth, managing director of Amdec Property Development and a former resident of Melrose Arch. The increased safety ensured by a smarter city can also help to facilitate the walk-everywhere lifestyle preferred by many millennials. A number of smart features are soon to be present at the Amdec Group’s Harbour Arch in Cape Town and One on Whiteley in Melrose Arch, Johannesburg. Think electric-car charging stations, waste recycling, water-saving facilities, rainwater harvesting, low-energy LED lighting and, of course, fibre connectivity.

Clever use of technology could bring homes closer to attaining “the sustainable trifecta”. That’s the name given to the standard for a building of the future: producing all the electricity it needs with solar panels or another alternative, supplying the residents’ water needs with rainwater tanks, and ensuring that 90% of a building’s waste has been separated and redirected for re-use, composting or recycling.

For Brandon Robertson, director and architect at MTA Bloc Architects, technology informs many of the ways in which his firm’s buildings are planned with the environment in mind. “We design our residential buildings to open up via shutters, sliding screens and operable walls so they’re climatically adaptable,” he says. Equally exciting as the eco-friendly new developments is the regeneration of existing buildings. “We find delight in repurposing buildings and achieving better efficiency,” says Brandon.

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Brandon Robertson, director at
MTA Bloc Architects

MICRO LIVING

This is not a new trend, but one that continues to grow as more people moving to the city opt for smaller spaces to get a piece of the urban action. Happily, smaller living spaces are increasingly well planned to allow for clever storage solutions and functionality that doesn’t diminish a home’s good looks. One local example of this is the refurbished Adderley Street block that now houses Exec At Home apartments, compact spaces in a central location for newcomers to the city.



ABOVE Ivan McCarthy Peens designs interiors that combine adaptability and warmth to allow owners and guests alike to feel at home. **BELOW** Sweeping sea views and a walkable neighbourhood are just two of the things that give The Estate in Sea Point its appeal.

