

Doncaster Hill developments take advantage of panoramic views

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Doncaster Hill is rising to new heights as a beacon for downsizers from the neighbouring eastern suburbs increasingly closed off to high-rise developers under new planning restrictions.

Apartment sales in Doncaster have also benefited from a perceived oversupply of CBD apartments that are often criticised for being too small, which has lured investors to pursue suburban options, where demand outstrips supply and apartments are considerably larger.

Driven by the Manningham City Council's strategy to create 5000 apartments over the next 15 years, developments on the elevation of Doncaster Hill take advantage of panoramic views of the city and the proximity to the shopping mecca of Westfield Doncaster.

Domain Group senior economist Andrew Wilson said eastern suburbs downsizers from Hawthorn, Camberwell and Balwyn were more inclined to move further out east than to the north or south. "I think Doncaster has been particularly popular because it is betwixt and between the higher-priced inner east and the more moderately priced outer east," Dr Wilson said. "That's the beauty of Doncaster as there just aren't a lot of properties in those inner-eastern suburbs for downsizers." "There are more restrictions now from Boroondara and Stonnington on medium-density development, so that's going to make it even more of a task to find property, which I think will push more growth into Manningham and particularly into Doncaster," he said.

The median price for units in Doncaster is \$498,000, while the house median has climbed to \$860,000, according to the Domain Group.

Once dominated by fruit orchards up until the 1970s, Doncaster first attracted a strong Italian and Greek population and now has a large Chinese population, with 40 per cent of residents born overseas.

"If you understand feng shui, Doncaster is the highest suburban point in Melbourne and it's viewed by the Chinese as a good luck spot," said Paul Kounnas, the director of Hudson Bond Real Estate in Doncaster.

With around 750 apartments already constructed on the hill, there are currently 16 planning permits for another 2350 apartments. The local Eastern Golf Course alongside Westfield will soon be teeing off on a new site in Yering, making way for a \$1 billion Mirvac master-planned community on the 47-hectare site consisting of up to 800 houses and apartments.

"The apartment market in Doncaster has strengthened over the past year with greater community acceptance towards this style of living and there is also a trend towards larger two and three-bedroom apartments," Manningham council chief executive Leigh Harrison said.

"Council is working with developers to encourage innovative design and the inclusion of features such as green roofs and walls, shared entertainment areas for residents that include gardens and barbecue facilities, etcetera," he said.

One development that fits that bill is the new Magnolia development by developer Stanleyfield, in Hepburn Road, which is set to become the suburb's tallest building at 14 levels and features larger two- and three-bedroom apartments, skipping the one-bedroom size altogether.

Director of project marketing for Marshall White, Leonard Teplin, who is marketing the Magnolia project, said demand from downsizers from the eastern suburbs would continue to drive prosperity in Doncaster.

"When you start looking at all the new-car dealerships that are popping up there and all the new homes that are being built and the fact you are now seeing people spend \$3 million to \$5 million on family homes in Doncaster, it shows you that it has certainly become a very established suburb," he said.

What Doncaster has to offer

- Downsizers looking for larger two- and three-bedroom apartments get much more space for their money at Doncaster than the CBD or inner city.
- Many of the new developments are springing up within walking distance of the massive Westfield Doncaster Shopping Centre.
- At a height of 120 metres, Doncaster Hill has spectacular panoramic views over the inner-eastern suburbs to the city skyline.
- Ruffey Lake Park at Doncaster was a former orchard that is now a green oasis with native bushland around the Ruffey Creek and some remaining fruit trees from its orchard heritage.
- Fourteen kilometres from the CBD, Doncaster has easy access to the Eastern Freeway, although public transport is limited with no trains or trams. There is a Park and Ride bus service from Doncaster Road.
- Under the traditional Chinese principles of feng shui, Doncaster Hill's elevation is considered to be lucky.

Living large on Doncaster Hill

The developer of what will become Doncaster's tallest building believes that size matters when it comes to apartments and has opted not to include any one-bedroom apartments in the project.

The 179-apartment Magnolia development by Stanleyfield at 20-24 Hepburn Road, Doncaster, was designed by CHT Architects with landscaping by renowned Melbourne garden designer Jack Merlo.

Perched on a residential street on Doncaster Hill with spectacular views of the city, the project, over 14 levels, will have 102 two-bedroom apartments, 76 three-bedroom apartments and one four-bedroom penthouse.

The two-bedroom apartments, sized from 60 to 85 square metres, are selling for between \$476,000 and \$645,000, including a car park and storage.

Larger three-bedroom apartments, sized from 90 to 328 square metres, are selling for \$749,000 to \$1.18 million, with two car spaces and storage, while the four-bedroom penthouse is priced at \$3.68 million. There are 96 apartments remaining.

Marshall White director of project marketing Leonard Teplin said the kitchens rivalled those found in bigger family homes, and the fixtures and fittings of luxury Toorak homes had been used as a template.

"The developer has seen what the top end of town put in their homes and apartments and has basically taken that out to Doncaster, where it's almost unheard of," he said.

Many of the early buyers were choosing the spacious apartments on Doncaster Hill as a backlash against small apartments in the CBD, he said.

Magnolia's communal facilities include a stone lobby with fireplace, a rooftop garden and a second outdoor retreat on another level.

Magnolia

20-24 Hepburn Road, Doncaster

Price guide: \$476,000-\$3.68 million

The Magnolia display suite on site is open Thurs 5pm-7pm and Sat-Sun 11am-3pm.

Suburban growth a stronger prospect



Concern about an oversupply of apartments in the CBD prompted Effie Zhang to look further afield for an apartment in a suburb with strong growth.

Ms Zhang, an accountant, and her partner decided on a three-bedroom apartment to live in at the Magnolia development on Doncaster Hill and she's confident it will prove to be a strong investment for the future.

"I have some friends and relatives who bought apartments in the city and the potential increase of price is terrible so I was worried about that, which is why I chose this area," she said.

"In this building, there are not many one-bedrooms and you've got three bedrooms, which is good news because not all the occupiers are investors and I want to live with owners, not tenants."

The spaciousness of the apartments and the opulence of the lobby convinced her to sign on the dotted line.

"I chose this apartment because there is a big open area in the kitchen and a large benchtop for when I cook, and the living room is big enough for a dining table for six or eight," she said.

"The building entrance is like the Crown Casino design and not cheap like other apartments so if I bring my friends here, they are like 'oh wow'."

Or try these



Doncaster

101 Tram Road

Price \$298,000-\$1 Million

Those who shop till they drop will only need to stumble home across the street from Westfield Doncaster to the Panorama development. Designed by Peddle Thorp architects, the 210-apartment building over 12 levels has one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments on offer, with 70 per cent already sold. Agent Hudson Bond Real Estate, 9840 7700



Doncaster

5 Sovereign Point Court

Price \$499,000-\$3.5 million

Another project opposite Westfield Doncaster is the Imperial, designed by architects Buchan Group, consisting of 96 apartments over 10 levels. All apartments come with integrated technology that allows residents to control the lighting and entertainment from an iPad. There are eight two-bedroom apartments and one three-bedroom apartment left for sale. Agent ASX Property, 8680 4888.



Doncaster

8 Hepburn Road

Price \$414,000-\$999,000

Half of the 67 apartments in one- to three-bedroom sizes are still on the market in this five-level development designed by Artisan Architects. Perched on Doncaster Hill surrounded by houses, 8 Hepburn Road offers magnificent views of the city across the eastern suburbs and is walking distance from Westfield Doncaster. Agent Knight Frank Marketing, 0413 508 866.