How developers are raising the bar in Dubai’s luxury housing segment

High-net-worth spending shifts from physical to more experiential features

Published: May 21, 2019 16:56
Claire Malcolm Special to Property Weekly

The Royal Atlantis Residences is a visual stunner
Image Credit: Supplied
Dubai’s love affair with luxury real estate is hardly headline news and differentiation in this competitive residential class often boils down to the finer design details, but the backing of a well-known international name adds extra investor kudos. In its 2019 Branded Residence Report, Knight Frank estimated that there are currently over 400 branded residences globally, with the majority linked to luxury hotel groups. “We have also seen an increase in brand loyalty with guests seeking familiar luxury hotel brands when they travel or when they are considering buying homes,” says David Rychlowski, vice-president of US-based SB Architects, which also has a presence in the UAE, on Dubai’s thirst for luxury. “Typically part of larger mixed-use developments, branded residences satisfy the consumer desire for exclusive communities with rich amenities and services. Owning a luxury branded residence bears a greater assurance that residences will have quality services.”

Rychlowski also reports a shift in luxury spend from physical to more experiential features. He believes more brands will experiment with luxury offerings to differentiate themselves from the competition.

**New projects**

One of the upcoming luxury developments is Royal Atlantis Residences on Palm Jumeirah, a mind-boggling 43-storey architectural concept that is an immediate visual hook. Reminiscent of a deconstructed Rubik’s cube dismantled horizontally to reveal a series of unique apertures, the cantilevered structure houses a collection of 251 two- to five-bedroom residences. The Kohn Pederson Fox-designed concept was several years in the making, explains Maria Morris, partner and head of residential at Knight Frank Middle East. “With the Royal Atlantis Residences, it’s not just the amazing architecture or interiors; our high-net-worth clients now expect equally amazing amenities and experiences,” says Morris. “With credit to the likes of Bvlgari and W Residences Dubai – The Palm, which have also raised the bar, there wasn’t a plethora of other projects that we could truly term as luxury.”

The Al Sharq Investment-owned W Residences Dubai – The Palm is also targeting the super-luxury market across its eight mansions and 104 residences. The fact that there are just two customisable units per floor, each of which comes with floor-to-ceiling windows and vast private terraces, plus the expected line-up of luxury leisure facilities as befits upscale resort-style living, is proving to be a major draw according to Al Sharq Investment board member Mohammed Ali Al Shehri.

“W Residences Dubai brings an international brand with the highest global standards and in terms of location and aspect alone, it is already a forerunner in the options that luxury buyers are looking for,” says Al Shehri.

This extends from access to W’s 24/7 Whatever/Whenever® Service
through to timber flooring in engineered oak by Listone Giordano, Poliform wardrobes, mother of pearl finished walls, Breccia Grey Marble counters and Bulthaup kitchen cabinets.

Says Al Shehri: “There’s a clear style emerging from Dubai in luxury design and therefore, somewhat inevitably, what works so well in Dubai undoubtedly influences and inspires others that are keen to emulate that sense of luxury and innovative design.”

**Luxury in evolution**

From a global design perspective, Knight Frank’s Morris notes that Dubai is still relatively very much in its infancy.

“There are still significant opportunities as regards what we can do at the top end of the market and a lot has already been achieved in the last five years,” says Morris. “I think we will still continue to aspire to bring different architectural forms to the market, and also advance in terms of location and building communities. With this evolution comes a level of maturity. We want this level of iconic projects to be timeless and to remain attractive for the long term.”

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