



LUXURY HOUSING FINDS SPACE IN THANE

With a good ticket size, green surroundings and the arrival of big format retail players, Thane is all set to give a tough competition to other luxury locations of Mumbai, writes **RAVI SINHA**

FAST FACT
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QUICK BYTES
 ■ ANALYSTS BELIEVE THAT THESE EMERGING LOCATIONS OFFER MORE SPACE TO DEVELOPERS TO INNOVATE THAN THE ESTABLISHED LOCATIONS.
 ■ THERE HAS BEEN A RADICAL CHANGE IN THANE, WITH IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE AND MULTIPLE LUXURY PROJECTS BEING BUILT IN THE CITY.



"Luxury projects in Thane? You must be joking. Isn't the location meant for affordable living of working class?" Well, you may also have had the same reaction in the past if you weren't tracking the developments in and around Thane's property market. This region is on a fast-

forward mode of development and the growth has been both, horizontally and vertical. The fact is that Thane is changing and it is changing fast. Luxury projects which had a stronghold in South Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, have steadily made inroads into Thane and a couple of luxury projects in the vicinity are all set to change the urban landscape of the market known for affordable projects thus far.

It seems the Thane region is all set to give competition to the other luxury locations of Mumbai due to its ticket size and green surroundings. Who would have thought that Thane would emerge on the luxury landscape of Mumbai property? If the projects in the pipeline are any indication, already many of the leading developers have planned their luxury projects in Thane. They believe this is the time to change the 'affordable' perception which has more appreciation potential than the saturated luxury markets of Mumbai. As a result, the NRIs, HNIs and other big-ticket investors are closely monitoring the developments in this pocket.

Analysts tracking the market in this part of the world are not surprised either. They believe these emerging locations offer more space to developers to innovate than the established locations. Thane has, anytime, more potential for appreciation than the traditional pockets of luxury across Mumbai. Neeraj Bansal, partner, Real Estate & Construction with KPMG India, says in time to come, the investors would be more willing to look at these locations as a matter of investment strategy. "It is not just the return on investment (ROI) that is anytime higher than the established luxury markets but even the ticket size is quite attractive. An investor can have two to three projects, rather than one project when he decides to enter in such luxury projects, in a luxury market of this size. In these turbulent economic times, it makes a perfect business sense," explains Bansal.

A Kalpataru spokesperson maintains that Thane today, offers the widest choice of product offerings, suitable for all types of customer needs. There is a holistic city development that is happening which is ideal for any city to develop and prosper. Improved infrastructure has attracted well-known developers who envisioned Thane as a luxurious residential market. "Today, Thane has some well-known luxury projects to suit the needs of HNIs, NRIs, businessmen and film artists. These projects are located at prime locations and enjoy good connectivity," says Kalpataru spokesperson.

There has been a radical change in Thane, with

improved infrastructure and multiple luxury projects taking place in the city. For example, in July last year when one of the developers announced the opening of the second phase of their mall, the analysts and critics were wondering whether it makes sense for a 13-acre plot spread over an area of one million sq ft to be fully operational in Thane. However, the fact that inauguration of the mall had witnessed the opening of more than 60 brands including Shoppers Stop, Marks & Spencer, Lifestyle, Pantaloons, Home Centre, Splash and many more for the first time in Thane, made it a case study for serious researchers of the property market.

Within a year now, some of the other experienced players in the retail format are flocking to Thane, with a number of malls in the pipeline. Property analysts are wondering though whether there is a method in the madness. Will the conservative spending patterns of Thane actually transform into a mall culture? Will the retail chains that have opened their stores in the city through franchisees, make inroads?

Ashwin Sheth, MD, Sheth Developers & Realtors had said, "We are working towards creating an enriching shopping experience for our consumers."

Analysts maintain big ticket retail entry is just an indication of the emerging luxury quotient of Thane. The fact that the corporate sector is also increasingly making Thane its choice indicates that the demand for luxury housing will only increase in the region. This, in effect, will revitalise the economy of Thane. Luxury projects do have a market in Thane and it is only the initial phase of development. Quality retail and office spaces, added to the fact that the multi-national companies are also entering Thane, indicate that the luxury quotient of the region is set to grow.

Soon, Thane promises to make its presence felt as one of the top luxury destinations of India. It may be the initial phase of luxury launches in the region but if the initial trends are any indication, it seems there is enough appetite for luxury projects in the city. First movers are already smiling their way to the bank.

(The writer is CEO, Track2Realty)

