

# FITNESS FIRST

With heat-control glass, noise-reducing windows and Vitamin C-infused showers, wellness homes are the newest USP on the city's realty map

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If you thought Leonardo DiCaprio had exclusive access to Vitamin C-infused showers, think again. In addition to noise-cancelling windows, organic farms and controlled lighting to enhance mood and appetite, developers are offering a host of 'wellness' amenities in Mumbai homes.

With unsold inventory, developers are using health benefits to differentiate their projects. Experts say this is a step ahead from housing trends seen until now — themed residences, smart facilities and green homes that come equipped with alternative energy solutions.

"Given the slump in demand for real estate, inventory has piled up. Buyers are spoilt for choice and are looking for projects with a fuller lifestyle

experience and premium positioning, but without increasing their budget significantly," says Deep Kantawala, group chief finance officer and head at realty consultancy ICS Real Estate Partners Private Limited.

The rising pollution levels are fuelling demand for residences that focus on healthy living, many of which offer more open space, outdoor fitness facilities and a connection with nature.

The wellness homes concept has seen success in Europe and the US, says Ashwinder Raj Singh, CEO - residential services at realty consultancy JLL India. "In India, developers will need to ensure that the wellness features are not merely gimmicks, and have a long-term perspective."

"So far, NRIs have shown more interest for global genres of homes such as smart,

green and themed projects," says Singh, adding that new genres have to prove their endurance, attractiveness and marketability.

## WHAT'S ON OFFER

Experimenting within the wellness space are developers such as Tata Housing and Godrej Properties. At Tata's Thane project, Serein, homes are equipped with air purifiers, heat-controlling glass windows and EMF shields that ward off electric radiation from appliances. They cost upwards of Rs 1.65 crore, and Tata claims to have received 150 bookings so far.

To curb skin problems, they offer Vitamin C-infused showers, which also neutralise chlorine and enhance water with an essential antioxidant that leaves guests with healthier hair, skin and nails. Tata is now looking to expand their portfolio of wellness homes to Delhi and Bengaluru.

"In future projects, we plan to introduce a synthetic flooring material that supports and enhances your body posture," says Rajeeb Dash, head of marketing at Tata Housing.

At The Trees in Vikhroli, Godrej Properties offers residents an urban farm with fresh, organic produce. The prototype farm encourages residents to participate in the farming process too. It holds fruit trees such as pomegranate, chickoo and lemon, and is divided into three sections — seasonal vegetables; leafy and root vegetables; and a tea and herb garden.

"On weekends, we typically set up a tea cart with fresh

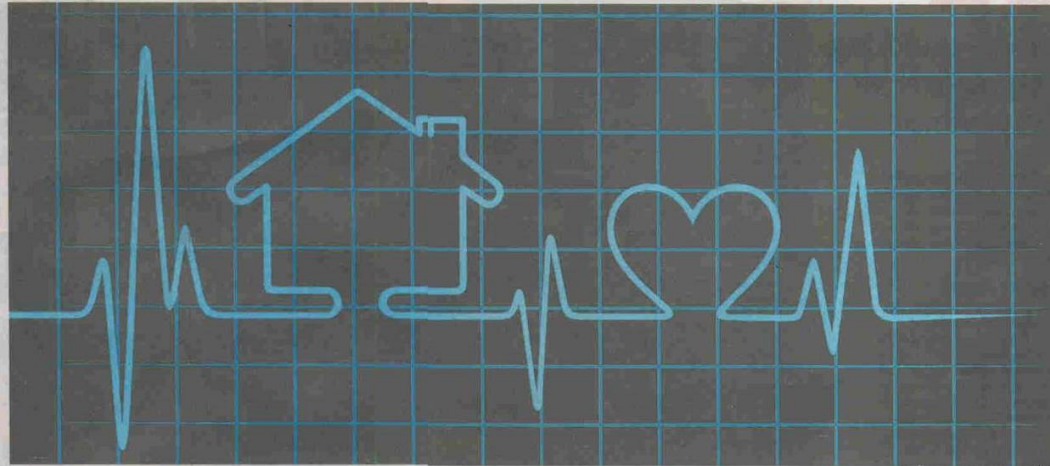


In addition to making sure the project has its basic approvals in place, buyers must check the durability of the wellness amenities, the cost of maintenance and that they are part of the approved building plan.

DEEP KANTAWALA, group chief finance officer and head, ICS Real Estate Partners, a realty consultancy

infusions of rosella and blue pea flowers, with basil and mint," says Anubhav Gupta, chief design officer and head of corporate social responsibility and sustainability at Godrej Properties. "The intent behind the urban farm is to connect with nature, have people participate in the planting of the seeds and harvest cycles, to work with soil and land and to bridge the gap between growing and consuming."

At Borivli's Ananda Residency by Paradigm Realty, residents can indulge at a yoga reflexology zone; Casa Rare's homes by the Geopreneur Group in Borivli are dust and sound proof. While all of these projects are still under-construction, they claim to have many takers



in Mumbai in the pre-launch phases too.

Ananda Residency also features intelligent lighting — a concept borrowed from hotels in countries abroad — which positively regulates body processes such as hormonal balance, appetite, sleep and energy level. A 2BHK here starts at Rs. 1.3 cr and about 30% of flats here have been sold.

"We are committed to using global techniques to improve the quality of life here," says Parth Mehta, managing director of Paradigm Realty.

Casa Rare will house 18 select families, and features a vertical garden and green rooftop lounge. "For an urban resident constantly exposed to dust and sound pollution, disconnected from the environment, wellness homes are the need of hour," says Ajay Agarwal, partner at the Geopreneur Design Studio.

Shradha Agarwal, a 39-year-old homemaker is confused between buying a home close to her 10-year-old son's school in Kandivli or a wellness home on the outskirts of the

city. "The Kandivli project is located right on the highway, with no respite from the noise even in the night. It will have borewell water in the washroom and no green spaces for children to play in," says Agarwal. "I've gone through the brochure of an upcoming wellness project, which promises to purify water and air. I think it's the closest we can get to healthy living."

With a Rs 3.7 lakh difference and the added daily commute, Agarwal says that though it is more practical to invest in the Kandivli project, in all likelihood she will go for the wellness home.

## TRICK OR TREAT?

In addition to the usual check points of making sure a project has financial closure and basic approvals in place, buyers must ensure that these facilities are part of the approved building plan, says Kantawala of ICS. "Also consider the durability of these amenities, and more importantly, consider the cost of maintenance and upkeep

water is absolutely bad for your skin; it's the dose that matters. Having a vitamin-C infused shower is not a bad idea but there are healthier ways to spend money," says Ahluwalia.

Similarly, glazed windows could make the home warmer, diffuse sunlight or lead to even lesser exposure of the body to sunlight, he adds.

With amenities such as noise-cancelling windows, home buyers should check whether they are actually necessary to them — are the projects close to the highway or main road? If not, they might not need them at all.

Buyers must check that other green features have been certified by agencies such as the TERI-IGBC, says Sunil Mishra, chief business officer for primary sales at realty consultancy Proptiger. "Before buying into such projects, ensure that you check similarly executed projects, even by other developers, to see if these amenities really work. If it is a builder's first themed project, check the quality of work in previous projects, consider the execution and how well the developer meets deadlines," he adds.

before taking a final call," he adds.

The efficiency of such amenities can only be tested once the project is ready, says dermatologist Dr Jaydeep Ahluwalia. "There is no evidence that chlorine in



At The Trees in Vikhroli, residents can get fresh, organic produce from the complex's own gardens.