



Shrinking flats find buyers

Small is beautiful to young inner-city apartment hunters, not least because they are more affordable, writes **Ellen-Maree Elliot**

SAVVY developers in Brisbane's CBD are shrinking apartment sizes and reaping the rewards as Generation Y seizes the chance to jump on the property ladder.

One of the most extreme examples of this trend is the Urban Nest student accommodation in South Bank, where apartments start as small as 13.2sq m.

Cox Rayner Architects designed the apartments and principal Michael Rayner says the 730 apartments proved very popular with their target demographic.

"We're finding (Generation Y) are wanting to live in the city with all it offers, given there are now better transport options to link them to the university or different destinations."

He believes young people are moving away from the idea of shared living, where bathroom, laundry, kitchen and lounge areas were all communal spaces.

With their own self-contained unit, they can choose when they want to socialise and when they want to be in the privacy of their own apartment.

"That's extremely appealing," he

says. "But then comes the issue that cost tends to rise close to the inner-city where they want to be, and that's driving apartment sizes down.

"The quid pro quo is that we're having to become much more efficient in how we plan the smaller apartment than was traditionally the case."

Rayner says the key to making the space liveable is flexibility.

"You're now finding prefabricated cupboard units that are adaptable in that a study can also become a dining

space, for example," he said.

"And the exploration of the vertical dimension of the apartments, maximising what you can put in from floor to ceiling."

But it's not just students who are happy with smaller living spaces. Demand is emerging from other groups.

"Even the more conventional developments are trending towards the types of apartments I've just described," Rayner says.

"The unit sizes in those have come down from 60sq m to around 45sq m."

One-bedroom apartments have shrunk about 15 per cent in the past decade and two bedroom-one bathroom apartments are coming back in vogue.

Colliers International director of residential in Brisbane Andrew Roubicek says price is driving the downsize trend.

A traditional one-bedroom apartment in the CBD is around 50sq m and costs around \$350,000 but often young singles and couples cannot afford such a big investment.

"But they still have a desire to live in an inner-city apartment, with access to all the amenities that

Brisbane has on offer," he says.

Roubicek says this showed a gap in the market that smart developers and investors could take advantage of.

"If market forces are working and there is a demand by particularly Gen Y to purchase an apartment and their finance capability only allows them to borrow and purchase something in the mid to high twos then that product should be available.

"There is a demand in the market for apartments smaller than 50sq m, Gen Y are looking for a more affordable option, are happy to compromise size to get into the property market."

Colliers is marketing a new development at 127 Charlotte St called the Midtown which is one of the latest projects to showcase smaller apartments.

Where as 10 years ago a standard

one-bedroom apartment was 65sq m, at Midtown the largest is 54sq m.

Roubicek says the idea has paid off with the smallest apartments in Yinjian's Midtown project proving the most popular.

"We have in that project several studio apartments and they were priced from about \$250,000 for 30sq m and they were first to sell, they're all sold."

He believes these apartments will see a return for investors of more than 6 per cent.

"The buyers at the Midtown are looking to spend their leisure time outside their apartment - in the coffee shops, the botanic gardens or at the pool in the complex, so the size of the apartment itself is not so important to them."

Other developers to embrace the smaller is better philosophy include Metro Property Group's Brooklyn on Brookes in Fortitude Valley and Lend Lease's first residential project in the redevelopment of the RNA, The Green, also has smaller two bed and one bathroom options.



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SCALING DOWN: An artist's impression of a one-bedroom unit in the Midtown in Charlotte St.

