

Zoning questions potential buyers should ask

Buyers should be aware of what might happen to buildings around them before they sign an offer to purchase, particularly if they are buying a property because of its views or lack of higher storey buildings surrounding it, says Shan Hulbert, sales manager at Knight Frank Residential SA.



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The zoning rules that came into effect in 2015 in Cape Town encourages densification where possible, and have largely benefited many who decided to subdivide their properties or have redeveloped their land.

The latest zoning and development rules have streamlined the standardisation of types of development and plots, and certain areas will have more plots with rights to subdivide or develop upwards whereas in the past it would have been more restrictive. It has to be remembered that there is no legal right to a view, so if there is a chance that the view will be obstructed later, the buyer should ask whether there is a possibility of the owners of the surrounding properties carrying out any renovation or rebuilding anytime soon, said Hulbert.

The various types of zoning on properties, said Hulbert, vary from single residential (SR) to general residential (GR) zones, but there are others within certain areas which will have mixed use rights.

Single residential zones

Single residential zones range from SR1, which allows for one dwelling per property unless consent has been applied for additional uses, such as a second dwelling, a house shop, guest house, place of instruction and the like. The maximum height of SR1 buildings should be from 10m to 11m to the top of the roof, depending on the size of its plot.

SR2 is listed as incremental housing, and this can include additional uses such as group housing, boarding houses, places of worship, clinics, or places of entertainment, to name a few.

On SR1 properties, there is the risk (on properties of 200m² to 650m²) that a neighbour can build right up to the adjoining wall, whereas the previous regulations allowed for 1m between the house and boundary wall.

It is in GR listed zones that the maximum height of the buildings could be as high as 50m to the top of the roof (depending on whether zoned GR1 to GR6), which could impinge on a view or enjoyment of a property should this be erected right next door.

There are some suburbs which seem single residential zones but have plots listed as general residential “in its mix”, so it is advisable to find out as much information about the surrounding properties before deciding to purchase, said Hulbert.

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