



# Safe haven

From master planning entire communities to interior design, Covid-19 is reshaping the way developers, architects and designers are looking at our homes and the environments around them. *The Wealth Report* talks to leading exponents to uncover the latest trends

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## Place-making

Location, location, location is the war cry of estate agents and property developers the world over, but David Hutton, Singapore-based Managing Director of Development at Lendlease, one of the world's biggest developers, thinks the Covid-19 pandemic may have shifted the dial.

"In many respects, the old mantra is starting to change, to focus on three new elements – connectivity, amenity and place. The role of the places where people spend their work time, their leisure time and indeed their home life is increasingly important. I think the pandemic will strengthen the desire for quality places."

One expression of this that has grown in prominence during the past 12 months is the concept of the 15-minute city. Hutton agrees that there will be more focus on such ideas, at least to an extent.

"The 15-minute city, or the 15-minute community, is really about access to amenity and connectivity. But I don't think the pandemic means we will only ever want to venture within 15 minutes of our homes.

"I think once it's safe to do so, you will still see a real desire among people to travel and mix. That said, I do think the pandemic has increased the desire for greater amenity and that we will see more and more mixed-use development. There will be more district centres, and more emphasis on place and the quality of ground plans."

Space is probably the one amenity most missed by urban dwellers during lockdowns, leading many to look for a new home in the countryside, but Hutton isn't convinced people will move out of cities en masse as a result of the pandemic.

"In terms of sustainability, transport and climate change, we cannot really afford to move people back into the countryside, and economically I think the world has proven

that doesn't work either. Personally, I believe that the role of the city will in fact become more important.

"What I do think we will see though is a lot more of the natural environment coming into cities and I believe proactive governments and proactive developers will really seek to bring green into the cities to ensure there is ample open space.

"To quote one simple fact, today most of our cities are made up of around 25% roads. Given where the world is going in terms of technology and autonomous transport, a fantastic opportunity exists to replace a lot of hardscape, black top and quite harsh environments with more landscaped areas and green space for people to enjoy.

"Very few people buy or lease space based on just the building alone. I think the environment and the ground plan and the public realm and the amenities that





**Head online to see the full interview with Lendlease's David Hutton, including his views on the changing role of the workplace**

come with that are critically important. So, for example, at Elephant Park in London we're now in the final stages of a major new park that's going to be at the centre of that community. I think in a post-Covid world that will be more valued than ever. Even if you live in a higher density community, you will still have access to green space."

## Sanctuaries

Noeyy Hyun Park, Vice President of WONYANG Architects & Engineers, who is currently working on the eagerly anticipated mixed-use Gallery832 project in Gangnam, Seoul, says Covid-19 has had a profound impact on his approach to design. "The most fundamental purpose of architecture is to enrich human life and to protect it from possible outside dangers."

At the most basic level, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of hygiene and safety, points out Park. "As the possibility of infection grows, so does the desire for more touchless technology. Gallery832's facial recognition technology reflects this, and originates from the experience of Covid-19."

Lower-tech solutions are also being applied. "Covid-19 has certainly made people think more about parts of their home that don't usually get too much design attention," explains Charu Gandhi, founder of interior design studio Eliycon.

"Service or second entrances in London homes are generally ignored, but now clients want a zone which is separate from the rest of the house where they can store incoming produce, wash their hands or change their clothes. They are also using more materials thought to have anti-viral properties, such as copper and brass."

Lockdowns have also created new challenges for families. "The pandemic has clearly taught us that there should be more consideration for the needs of privacy and

mutual communication between residents from the very beginning of the residential design process," says Park.

Sound-proofing is top of the list for many clients, agrees Gandhi. "A lot of my clients are usually on the move so much they hadn't realised how noisy family life can be when everybody is at home for so much more of the time."

"Covid-19 has forced individuals to recognise home as a space where personal life and business are blended," adds Park. "Now, a prime residence in the centre of the city needs to satisfy not just those spending their after-work hours on the living room couch, but also those spending the majority of their time there and using the entire house."

Absence makes the heart grow fonder, says Mia Kitsinis of boutique interior designer Accouter, who is seeing more demand for biophilic designs from her clients. "Last year, we spent a substantial amount of time indoors and we probably will in 2021 too. Clients have missed spending time outside, so the main focus in interiors has been on bringing the outside into our living spaces, making sure the air we breathe is fresh and full of oxygen."

This craving for an oasis in the city and for a greater connection to the outside world has also inspired Park. "By incorporating a terrace design into every unit, we've successfully realised more open space, while keeping the privacy in the centre of Gangnam, which is truly ground-breaking in Seoul."

Space and privacy are two things that clients of Aman Resorts have come to take for granted, says a spokesperson for the luxury hotel and spa group, which is currently working on its first branded urban residences project at Manhattan's iconic Crown Building. "We can talk a lot about design and amenities, but trust is also a very important concept. The majority of buyers for Aman Residences New York have come from our own network so they are already familiar with the ethos of the brand."

By mirroring the feel of its resorts to create an oasis connecting owners with nature, even in the middle of a city, Aman is encouraging people to keep faith with urban areas. "When we open later in the spring, we hope it will coincide with the beginning of a new chapter for New York, the start of the city's rejuvenation from the pandemic."



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## URBAN OASES

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