

SA homes market reflects racial and religious harmony



By [Ronald Ennik](#)

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South Africa is fortunate to be free of the high-intensity racial and religious intolerance and radicalism that earlier this month led to the death of 17 in the terrorist attack on the Paris satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, and to the massacre by Boko Haram of 2,000 people at Baga in northern Nigeria.



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While we may still be a far-from-perfect unfolding democracy, urban terrorism, fuelled by jihadist and other extremist ideology, does not figure in South Africa's DNA.

And this is clearly illustrated in the country's homes market.

The ongoing peaceful integration and co-existence of different races, cultures and religions in Johannesburg/Sandton suburbia has led to black home ownership in areas such as Bryanston rising to around 30 per cent in a relatively short time.

This has been one of the most heart-warming, and growth-generating, aspects of the post-democracy residential property market. And it is playing out - to a greater or lesser degree - across historically white-dominated suburbs throughout the country.

So much so that there are few, if any, race-specific enclaves left in suburbia.

Original (ill-founded) fears that ownership transition across racial lines would dilute home values, and create racial and religious intolerance and friction, are long gone. In fact, the opposite applies in many suburbs.

A prime example is Houghton.

A once predominantly Jewish suburb, it has two prominent mosques around which a large Muslim community has grown - adding a new dimension to the spectrum of long-standing shuls and other places of worship in or adjacent to the area.

This integration and peaceful co-existence of different religions in residential suburbs is an ongoing phenomenon in greater Johannesburg suburbia - and it is good for property values.

At a lower end of the price spectrum, Melville is another example. The suburb has developed a unique and popular appeal on the very wave of black buying that was once considered a threat to its future viability. It is a phenomenon that continues to unfurl across most Johannesburg suburbs in all price brackets.

Cosmopolitan and friendly, Johannesburg is now the prime destination of choice in Africa, according to a recent MasterCard survey - and this also bodes well for property market sentiment.

Unlike so many European cities which are variations of each other, Johannesburg is unique. The city's culturally diverse, yet fully integrated, residents radiate a rich and uniquely creative vibe that foreign visitors - and, increasingly, investors - find irresistible.

That is why the city continues to win awards - the most recent of which was The Good City Index, which named Johannesburg as the second-most inspiring city in the world after Hong Kong.

The overriding sentiment of Johannesburg is working because of the diversity of its residents.

For instance, the redevelopment, upliftment and integration of Braamfontein - an iconic success story - has shown that, where demand for residential property is spread across diversified and socially integrated communities, property prices rise.

ABOUT RONALD ENNIK

Ronald Ennik is the founder and CEO of Ennik Estates.

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