

# The green, green grass of home

The impossible made possible

**IMAGINE** living in the lap of luxury, safely and securely, in a lush, private parkland of 168 acres overlooking a Jack Nicklaus signature golf course, yet in the heart of a world-class city with reputedly the best climate in the world and with all the amenities you could wish for right on your doorstep.

At the crack of dawn, or even after dark, you can cycle, jog or walk along 7km of secure and well-lit trails surrounded by clusters of stately trees and tranquil ponds. An impossible dream? Certainly not, thanks to the foresight and vision of a number of dedicated entrepreneurs who, despite the economic downturn, steadfastly pursued their dream by making the impossible possible at The Houghton, the epitome of luxury and secure living.

Just like their forebears of a century ago, they not only realised that Houghton was ideally located, but that it had an irreplaceable heritage that needed to be preserved for future generations. And precisely because of its excellent location, this exceptional estate may well be unrivalled by its peers anywhere in the world.

Before going on a ride and walk-about through the apartments on the estate, CEO Lawrie Kreeve suggests a quick visit to the roof deck of the elegant and modern Houghton clubhouse tucked away more or less in the centre of the golf course to get an appreciation for the splendour of the surrounding skyline and vistas, as well as the topography of this spectacular piece of land.

We then set off from the apartment sales centre located in the clubhouse by golf cart to tour some of the furnished and unfurnished units.

While every single unit in both The Houghton on the 7th and The Houghton on the 12th has a beautiful view of the golf course, even on the ground floor units of the latter, all the units boast unsurpassed views of the Sandton skyline, Kreeve points out.

En route, driving along and across the secure pathways criss-crossing the golf course, you get a taste of the freedom and security residents will enjoy every day while cycling or jogging along the pathways,



**Lawrie Kreeve** CEO of Seven and Twelve on Houghton

which are lit at night.

### Service at your beck and call

Once the estate is completed, residents will be given social membership of the golf club and access to a number of other five-star hotel services, including a dedicated concierge and an elegant maid service. In addition, the estate will boast a health spa, fully equipped gymnasium, business meeting rooms as well as reception and secretarial services.

"If you don't want to do your own laundry, a runner from the concierge service will collect it in the morning and return it in the afternoon. Similarly, you can arrange for a driver to collect you at the airport, or for domestic cleaning services during or after your stay. You can even have personal groceries stocked in your unit at prior request. This means that all the services that you were or are accustomed to in your

Houghton or Clifton home, are also available at your apartment, garden duplex or penthouse at The Houghton," says Kreeve.

Besides the 375 sq m garden duplexes with their own pools and gardens, the first phase on the 12th also boasts 450sq m simplexes higher up and a corner rooftop duplex penthouse of approximately 680sq m.

Reigniting the project in August last year after the economic slump, construction (which commenced in February this year), started simultaneously on both ends, being the first phases of The Houghton on the 7th and The Houghton on the 12th.

Every single unit has a beautiful view of the golf course without the cost of maintaining it

### The Houghton on the 12th

Offering breathtaking views of the picturesque 12th hole, with a view of the golf course as well as an uninterrupted panoramic outline of the Sandton skyline, the 12th is accessed via the security entrance



The Houghton on the 7th by night

on Second Avenue. From the entrance it's a short drive to the secure basement parking where residents will be transferred via a private lift from the basement directly to their live-in oasis.

Owners of units in The Houghton on the 7th started taking occupation of their new homes from the beginning of November. With most of the units in the First Phase of the 12th also sold, the owners, including Kreeve, will be able to move in by year end.

In Phase Two on the 12th, the smallest unit is 412sq m and the latest rooftop penthouses being built measure 1 248sq m, of which 836sq m are under roof, and 412sq m comprise a roof terrace with swimming pool. There are no corridors in the entire estate. Each unit is accessed via a semi-private elevator.

Currently, unit prices range from R3.75m for the classic 175sq m three-bedroomed (en suite). The modular nature of the building allows for units ranging in size from 150sq m up to 1248sq m - thus far. On average, these prices per square meter are at this date 33% lower than those in deluxe developments and 'brands' in Melrose and Sandton, which are not located in a remotely similar park-like setting.

"Educated consumers are our best clients, precisely because they realise the value for money they get at The Houghton compared with other lifestyle developments in Melrose and Sandton. Spacious penthouses have been sold from R5.9m all

Educated consumers are our best clients

## Unsurpassed living

**SIMILAR** to the Carlyle in New York, The Houghton will soon also boast a hotel aimed at ensuring a comfortable lifestyle in every regard – right in the heart of Johannesburg, says Lawrie Kreeve.

Besides hairdressers, restaurants, a R15m pool and a spa, residents will have access to doctors' and specialists' suites right behind the hotel.

The 180 luxuriously designed and fully-furnished hotel suites, will be positioned between The Houghton on Seventh and Twelfth, also overlooking the golf course and the Johannesburg and Sandton skylines.

the way up to R30m. With our flexibility in configuration, we can accommodate just about any size of apartment."

As Kreeve is a qualified CA, his meticulous attention to detail doesn't come as a surprise. From the finest fittings and features to the attentive professional staff and services, The Houghton is all about impeccable service and luxury living that embraces attention to detail across all areas.

And luxurious it is indeed, as we witness in his four-bedroom garden duplex of 375sq m on the

12th. Besides the pristine off-white tiles, light cream carpets and 3m high ceilings, which add to the sense of spaciousness, the unit is equipped with an integrated kitchen with state-of-the-art Siemens appliances – two fridges and two freezers, a microwave oven, a dishwasher, a washer/drier. All internal doors, imported from Italy, seal perfectly.

Each of the four bedrooms has its own en suite bathroom, while the huge main bedroom on the second floor has a walk-in cupboard with space for Africa.

Outside the huge sunny lounge is a tiled area and a wooden deck with a pool and garden beyond. Steel louvres above the wooden deck ensure that each unit is completely private.

"In fact, thanks to the abundance of space and complete privacy, you never feel that you're in an apartment. Instead, you experience it as your own private home – right on the golf course," Kreeve says.

### The Houghton on the 7th

On the opposite side, at Phase One on the 7th, we next visit two fully furnished show apartments: A two-bedroomed, 137sq m garden suite as well as a three-bedroomed penthouse of 257sq m, both overlooking the lush par 3, 7th hole of the golf course.

A small dam and fountain buffer the apartments in this phase from the golf

course with their generous extended views of the parkland layout of Houghton.

Access to the units on the 7th, which vary in size from 137sq m to 591sq m in Phase One and from 137sq m to 900sq m in Phase Two, is gained through a private entrance via Osborn Road. Like the units on the 12th, residents have the convenience of secure basement parking with lifts that offer direct private access to their respective apartments.

The landscaped gardens next to the electrified Clear-Vu fence on Osborn Road are brimming with plants, shrubs and trees that have specially been grown for this section of the development over the past year; and are swiftly taking shape.

Kreeve points out that no cladding is done, instead, to add a touch of the Houghton of yesteryear, rock from the area is cut on site and effectively used on some of the outer walls, emphasising the subtle earthy colour scheme.

Residents wishing to turn over a new leaf in terms of the interior of their units, can make use of The Houghton's 'fully furnished' option via selected interior designers like Head Interiors, Stephen Rich, or kim h who, along with other top designers, have been invited to put together a stylish and durable interior 'package' tailored to owners' and residents' tastes at the 7th.



Main bedroom of a penthouse in The Houghton on the 7th

All units in this phase have double-glazed windows. And, like on the 12th, all the units are completely private thanks to the suspended steel louvres over the patio and wooden decks.

## The Houghton

**Phase 1** 77 units in total sold out

**Phase 2** 70 units in total of which 50% are sold

**Total value of project** In excess of R2bn

About 50% of the units of Phase Two of the 7th have already been sold, with only a small number of units in Phase Two on the 12th still available. Phase Two on both the 7th and 12th will be ready for occupation by late 2012, early 2013.

Says Kreeve: "Whatever we've learnt from residents in Phase One, we applied in Phase Two; for instance, we've taken to heart their suggestions for bigger patios or more glass in the front of the units, so it's an evolving process. With the ultimate objective of providing exactly what residents want, we cater for all tastes in the modular format, provided people decide on what they want before the builder's cut-off date."

Units are on show every day. "With the packaging, marketing and selling of the units all done in-house, there's a strong focus on the project, so every day everybody is completely up to date and can give prospective buyers the latest information," Kreeve concludes. ■

## Lawrie Kreeve's early beginnings

**THE HOUGHTON** is Kreeve's 20th development, the first 15 being developments in Canada, an industry he entered by accident. After bidding Deloitte's farewell in 1978, he managed to turn the old Breslau Hotel near Toronto around within three years and sold it.

Upon returning to Toronto, Kreeve, who is South African born and bred, happened to move into the same building as owners of the established real estate company Mastercraft. He later joined the company as a consultant in the Eighties.

After returning to South Africa in 1990 because of his mother's illness, he helped friends to establish The Peninsula All-Suite Hotel in Cape Town, after which he was asked by Investec to undertake the redevelopment of some 964 apartments in Bedford Gardens in Bedfordview.

Another stint abroad followed from 2009, when he briefly reconnected with an old colleague working on a property fund in the Bahamas. Invited back to South Africa to attend a wedding, he bumped into the owners of The Houghton and they invited him to become involved. So he joined the fray at the end of January 2010.

What prompted his decision to become involved in the development of The Houghton? "Mainly three reasons: I've got shareholders of considerable financial substance behind me, so I can do what needs to be done. Secondly, a site like this you'll never get again. It's not a golf estate, the development just happens to be on the edge of a golf course, without the concomitant costs of maintaining the course. The way in which the estate was conceptualised and developed, also really appealed to me. It wasn't a block of flats, it is individual, private, sky and garden apartments.

"On top of that I grew up in Orange Grove, two kilometres from here and now I live in Saxonwold, two kilometres to the other side of the estate, so I know the area - and local knowledge of the site is irreplaceable. Besides, The Houghton is such a unique, not-to-be missed opportunity, that I'm privileged to do it - and to come and live here." ■



The Houghton clubhouse

## The vision behind The Houghton

**WHEN**, in 1996, Dublin-born David Nagle arrived in post-apartheid South Africa, he immediately fell in love with the country of opportunity and the city of gold.

"Johannesburg boasts the biggest man-made forest in the world, as well as the most amazing climate. Yet, most people only experience the lushness of the city from behind the windows of their cars," he notes.

So, when in 2004 Nagle heard that a hole on the Houghton Golf Course may be sold off – which he'd been familiar with from childhood because of the famous tournaments like the Alfred Dunhill Championship that had regularly taken place there – he immediately recognised the potential.

His vision was to develop something totally unique in the form of luxury apartments where residents could enjoy a royal lifestyle, living in a 168 acre park filled with century-old trees in a secluded environment in the heart of the city, with spectacular views of the Johannesburg and Sandton skylines.

"After all, it's not often that you find a place where you have the opportunity to live in a Central Park in a city the size of Johannesburg," he quips.

"We went along to visit the site where we learnt that they planned to sell off the 16th hole over on the far side. The problem I had with that was that you could perhaps build only about 20 houses and it was in the wrong place. So I went to the golf club, made an alternative proposal to the guys

and said: 'I think we can create something special here...'"

That was the beginning of a long process: Realising his vision was two and a half years in the making, trying to get the necessary permission, Nagle recalls.

"We designed and redesigned The Houghton and came up with the solution of a lifestyle choice that people thus far hadn't had. Sure, there were luxury developments around Johannesburg and Sandton... if you're hooked on shopping."

The difference about The Houghton is its exclusivity and prime location. "When you say it's private, it's private! It's not geared for the people on the outside rolling in; it's geared up for people who decide to move in because of the lifestyle," Nagle says, confident that it will prove to be a development that people will aspire to come and live in.

Besides the fact that The Houghton offers people a unique lifestyle choice, the real growth and job creation emanating from property developments like these, clearly turn him on. "It's proper growth that brings money to the exchequer and gets people working and employed. As far as possible, we've also tried to support local manufacturers and suppliers."

The fact that the project ground to a halt due to the economic downturn a few years ago, turned out to be a blessing rather than a setback. "Sure, it was severe, it caught a lot of people unawares, but because of the shareholders behind The Houghton, we were able to sustain, support and control it so that, unlike other people all over the

world who lost everything, we could re-enter the market successfully.

"At the same time, it gave us enough time to take stock and revisit every aspect of the development because we understood that it would be a different world when we returned to the market and that the value proposition had to be better. So we redesigned a number of the apartments

and made them much more efficient, taking very much a European design philosophy of utilising every centimetre of space. So every square metre that residents pay for is utilised.

"Take, for instance, the penthouse units with their exquisite rooftop gardens to optimise Johannesburg's weather, where residents can have braais, laze in heated pools warmed by reverse heat from air-conditioners, or just enjoy the panoramic view, indeed offering an excellent value proposition," Nagle reckons.

We designed and redesigned The Houghton and came up with the solution of a lifestyle choice that people thus far hadn't had

Moreover, as golf clubs normally are the first to feel the crunch in difficult economic times, through the development of The Houghton, "168 acres of green land in the middle of the city, which these days are all too often taken away from us, have been secured".

Looking at the property downturn, places around the world such as Knightsbridge didn't devalue, Nagle argues. "Real estate at the top end of the market will always maintain its value because it's done correctly, with the necessary professionalism. This is exactly the case with The Houghton. Besides excellent design, buyers also get very good value for money, again because we've taken the European philosophy where we run clerk of works on the job to spot the problem before it occurs. It may cost money, but you can see the difference in the quality of the finishes – and that's precisely what the discerning buyer wants."

In addition, the buildings were made as "green" as possible. Instead of geysers in every unit, the water is heated centrally to make it as efficient as possible. In some parts of the building, double glazing was also used for efficient cooling and heating.

At the same time, The Houghton's technology is cutting edge, with built-in DSTV and LAN (Local Area Network) "as part of everyday life. If anybody wants shopping delivered to them, they can use the online shopping facility."

And with safety and security being major issues for South Africans, residents will have complete peace of mind, thanks to watertight security measures ranging from fingerprint access, a myriad of strategically placed



The view from the back windows of The Houghton on the 12th

security cameras and a central surveillance centre, to the regular changing of the guards, "triple check" monitoring of visitors and well-lit pathways.

Similarly, the personalised reception of new residents is something quite different and unique, as the 30-odd families who recently moved in, discovered. Instead of leaving them to themselves, The Houghton's team personalised the process, ensuring that every household received a pack with important information pertaining to their units.

They were also assisted with the booking of elevators to facilitate their moving in, thereby introducing the concierge-type service at the core of The Houghton, which they will soon become accustomed to. "This

is not a case of build and leave, this is a continuum," Nagle stresses.

The fact that a number of service suppliers to The Houghton have actually bought units, is telling. "Normally in a development of this size, you've got some six, seven special units, with the rest pigeon-holed. Instead, here buyers decide on the size of their particular unit so that the apartments can be designed around their lifestyles. As a result, many of the units in this development are special and unique. All of the subcontractors working on The Houghton understand that it's an iconic development.

As Nagle rightly points out, The Houghton most definitely is not just same old, same old... ■



The Houghton 18th hole

# Signature golf course, sterling clubhouse

**WHILE** The Houghton is everything but a golf course development – the elegant apartments just happen to be strategically situated on the south-east corner of the course, overlooking the greens, ponds and pathways – the redevelopment of the golf course, as well as a new clubhouse, did form part of developer David Nagle's vision, so that all the elements comprising the estate could be integrated more meaningfully.

Explains Nagle: "As golf courses go, quite a lot of them are just flat. But what's beautiful about this place, is the topography. It is spectacular, with a 30m drop between the highest and lowest points on the site, providing beautiful views from every apartment.

To stay abreast of developments in the game, the decision was taken to appoint the Jack Nicklaus Group to redesign the course and endorse it with his signature. This proved to be another smart move as the course is now right at the top, on a par with other signature courses around the world.

The newly designed course at Houghton is not brutally long, especially given the rarefied air on the Highveld. Nicklaus explained at a press conference at the official opening of the course earlier this year that in order to defend the golf course against the longer hitters, strategically positioned bunkers have been used extensively to catch the wayward drive, making good club selection essential. In addition, the new greens have been contoured with rolling undulations and subtle slopes to protect the integrity of the course.

"For most people, golf courses are difficult because they are too long. However, it's very difficult to challenge good golfers with length these days. You have to challenge them on the greens. The greens are supposed to be part of the challenge of a course," he added.

Elevation was another design feature Nicklaus carefully considered when redesigning the course layout, a feature that's very much prevalent in the new course.

"My philosophy in creating a course is that golf is more fun when played downhill. What I like doing is taking the elevation



**David Nagle** *Just because it hasn't been done, doesn't mean it can't be done*

between green and tee into consideration. I like to make a course so that golfers have to play containment golf rather than reactive golf," he noted at the time, celebrating the grand opening by playing nine holes with his son, Gary.

## Clubhouse

Originally, the clubhouse would have been in the main development. But after careful consideration, along with Nicklaus, it was decided to build a new clubhouse and move it to its current location further down, optimising every single centimetre of space.

"Initially, there was some resistance to it,

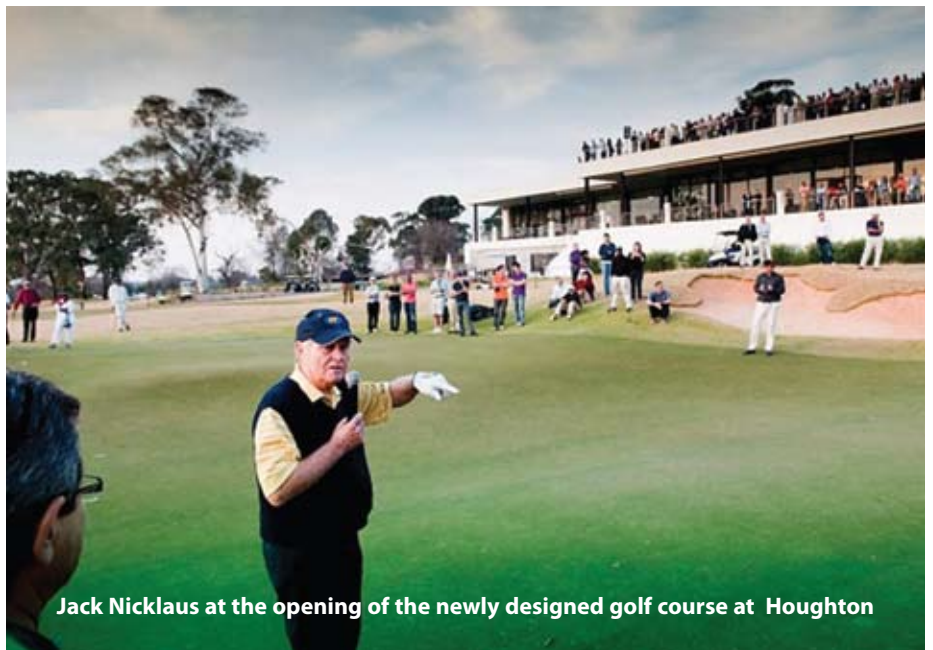
but as soon as Nicklaus supported the idea, we got the go-ahead as it was really the ideal location for the clubhouse. Instead of offering a view over only the 9th and 18th holes – as most clubhouses do – you can now see no fewer than five greens and five ponds from the clubhouse.

"With most of the parking underground, space inside is optimised, while solar panels on the roof ensure the efficient flow of hot water to the change and locker rooms," Nagle notes.

The new clubhouse is indeed thoroughly modern and elegant with spacious and stylish lounge and dining room areas, plasma TVs at

every turn, a funky bistro/café, among other things. In addition, the building houses the sales office for The Houghton, and on one of the walls, a cabinet boasting about 17 championship trophies proudly manifests the long history and heritage of a club dating back to 1926.

The clubhouse also caters for private functions, including spitbraais on the rooftop, where guests can enjoy the spectacular 360° view over the course in the heart of a parkland dotted with ponds and dams, beautiful trees and flowering shrubs and a paradise for birds, including Egyptian geese, guinea fowl, dikkops, plovers and a variety of waterfowl. ■



**Jack Nicklaus at the opening of the newly designed golf course at Houghton**

# Passing the acid test

**AS A** unique lifestyle estate, The Houghton has no peers. More importantly, its location can never be replicated. It's the *one* and *only*. So it stands to reason that people will aspire to living on the estate.

"Clearly the shareholders took cognisance of what's happening in the world and realised that they've never seen something like The Houghton anywhere in the world. As it wasn't just another 'propped-up' building, but something unique that's destined to become a landmark in the country. They bought into the vision and came in with equity capital," explains The Houghton financial director Arnold Forman.

Indeed, to build a project of this scope and size was ambitious and required a lot of capital, much of which is actually under the ground, "so, quite naturally, when the economic downturn hit the world in 2008-2009, a project as big as this didn't escape it. In fact, not only did it affect this development, the entire financial and stock market collapsed," says director and financier Mark Barnes.

Adds Forman: "When you have financial downturns, everything compounds. You have a reduction in consumer spend and an increase in consumer debt. This is compounded by the reluctance of banks to finance projects. With these overlapping, you get a standstill and you have to bring in shareholder risk capital and this is what happened with property developments. However, it was self-evident to shareholders that The Houghton remained one of the most attractive investment opportunities – given its uniqueness. And in global real terms, it represented a bargain."

The acid test is when the banks re-enter the market, stresses Barnes. "There's the vision and there's the capital to take you through times when exogenous variables influence you. But then, at some point in time, when you come out in the sun, you need to be validated by external partners who have made a dispassionate, objective analysis of

We now have banking partners, who have objectively assessed the project and have come to the conclusion that this is a bankable project



**Mark Barnes** *We're past the tipping point*

the economics of the development per se.

"We now have banking partners, who have objectively assessed the project and have come to the conclusion that this is a bankable project. That's the turning point for the people out there, who look to well-established household brand names in banking; they know this place has been checked out thoroughly and that it's an economically justifiable development.

"Forget about the 150-year-old trees and all the beautiful stuff: they've got a spread sheet and they believe it works. That's when you reach the tipping point of the development – and we're past that now. That's given us, as well as buyers, great confidence."

Sure, they could develop The Houghton themselves as has been the case until now, but building and maintaining the momentum on a project of this magnitude are all about confidence and certainty. Therefore third-party bank endorsement at some

point in time is a critical part of the success of the roll-out.

Barnes continues: "But that's in our distant past. Now markets have started improving, and supply and demand has come into play. The population and the demand for space are growing. If you have depth of financial capital, as we have here, you can make your way through these financial cycles."

The addition of a "mid-stay" hotel with 180 generously-sized suites, which will soon be erected between the second phases of the 7th and the 12th, has huge potential to unlock considerably more value, reckon Barnes and Forman.

All the foundations as well as the plant and generator rooms are already in place, having been built before the residents started moving in to keep noise to a minimum.

In addition to the residents' club – for the exclusive use by people living on the estate – the hotel will, among other things, boast both an indoor and outdoor pool, a spa, two restaurants, a 50-seat cinema, and a hairdresser.

An impressive piazza has a spectacular

view of the Sandton skyline. A design feature of the site is the openness of the generous piazza that spills out from the hotel on to the lush gardens.

A special feature of the hotel is that a stone's throw away there will be doctors' and specialists' offices. In addition, the concierge services, transport and other estate amenities will also be at the disposal of hotel guests, to make life as luxurious as possible."

Forman says residents who have moved into the apartments are already enquiring about accommodation at the hotel. "We've had numerous enquiries for short and long term accommodation from local and

international prospective residents, for their visiting corporate executives, friends and family, because of the tranquillity of The Houghton – yet being in the heart of the city – its security, incorporated services and unrivalled amenities."

"Long-term hotel accommodation at attractive rates will allow residents to follow the sun. Should residents wish to go overseas for longer periods of say three months or more we can assist them in storing their belongings – a dehumidified storage area has been designed in the estate. The objective is to provide a home from home.

"This is exactly the level of service people

living in the apartments and the hotel would want... and when they return from abroad, their clothes will already be back in the cupboards, the furniture in the lounge and paintings on the wall," Barnes adds.

Anticipating consistent demand for accommodation in the hotel, Forman concludes: "People would want to live here because it gives them freedom. Owners in this world class residence will not only enjoy an immediate improvement in their lifestyle and living standards, they can also look forward to a significant capital appreciation in the value of their home. This is about living for today while investing for tomorrow." ■

## An elegant solution

**AT A TIME** when most financiers are staying well clear of funding golf course developments, Rand Merchant Bank's (RMB) Real Estate Investment Banking division was able to structure a debt package that catered for the client's requirements both in terms of providing an adequate level of liquidity and appropriately sharing the various risks associated with the development of The Houghton.

A difficult macro-economic environment and certain legacy-funding issues on the development led Ronnie Lubner, the man behind The Houghton, to RMB. The Lubner family and FirstRand Bank have enjoyed a long-standing relationship for decades and this, coupled with RMB's willingness to spend a significant amount of time understanding the client's requirements and the complexities of the specific situation, ultimately resulted in a funding solution being found. "The Houghton is a good example of how a strong relationship benefited both RMB and the client," says Simon Fifield, head of RMB Real Estate Investment Banking. "The scenario we were faced with was not a simple one, and I think that the final package ultimately provided



Simon Fifield

quite an elegant solution."

RMB's loan facility was utilised to complete Phase 1 of the development and will be settled in early 2012 from the proceeds of the sale of the 76 units making up the first phase.

In addition, the parties are in the process of concluding the funding package for Phase 2, which will see the development of a further 70 units, and is scheduled for completion in late 2012, early 2013.

"We pride ourselves on our structuring expertise and our ability to deal with complexity," Fifield says. "The application of an investment banking mindset to the property asset class has served both our clients and ourselves well over the years." With a focus on commercial, retail and industrial property, but ever alert to any interesting opportunities that are underpinned by the asset class, RMB's Real Estate Investment Banking team combines a keen understanding of property fundamentals with investment banking expertise to offer clients holistic, bespoke solutions.

The ability to draw on areas of expertise ranging from M&A and Debt Capital Markets to Interest Rate Solutions from across RMB is viewed as critical in being able to address all the requirements of their client base. "We like to believe that by employing talented people from a variety of backgrounds, we are able to bring a different approach to property finance," Fifield says. ■

## Rapid redevelopment

**CENTRALLY** located and very convenient to all main arterial routes and freeways in Johannesburg, Houghton is undergoing rapid redevelopment, luring both corporate and private buyers and residents in increasing numbers.

According to property doyenne Zareen

Kara of Zareena Kara Properties, who has been an estate agent active in the area for the past 19 years, Houghton has arguably one of the finest locations in Gauteng.

"It has of the best private schools – St John's for boys, with its stately Sir Herbert Baker buildings, and Roedene for girls – it's

close to the major banking institutions in downtown Johannesburg, the Constitutional Court in Parktown, as well as the hub of the business district in Rosebank, Killarney, Melrose Arch as well as Sandton.

"The area boasts two golf courses, Houghton and Killarney. On top of this, the

elegant The Houghton apartment development is attracting an increasing number of affluent buyers.

**Security and demographics**

“Security, one of the big advantages of living in an apartment development, without compromising on luxury living, is certainly also a major drawcard,” Kara notes.

Over time, the demographics of the area have changed dramatically. With the end of the Group Areas Act, the area has attracted all race groups in the upper income groups, thereby increasing demand. Moreover, the area has attracted many well-known people like the former State President, Nelson Mandela, the chief justice, deputy chief justice, a number of parliamentarians and ministers, as well as consuls to South Africa.”

Indeed, the modern-day Houghton is completely different from the suburb of 19 years ago when she started there as an estate agent, Kara muses.

“At the time of our first democratic elections we were marketing properties for R700 000 to R800 000, but there were no takers. As people of all cultural groups and denominations started flocking to Houghton over time, it has firmly established itself as one of the most sought-after suburbs in the country.

**History**

More than a century ago, Houghton played an integral part in the development of Johannesburg; its forests supplying timber to the mines upon which eGoli was built.

The suburb of Houghton started being developed around 1880. Later it was divided into two parts, Lower Houghton and Upper Houghton, with the latter being



Houghton viewed from Munro Drive

declared a National Heritage site.

“The Randlords settled in Upper Houghton on the ridge and built mansions. The view sites on St Patrick and Rose roads, are still the most expensive and sought-after properties. The natural growth of Houghton expanded to below the ridge (down Munro Drive into Houghton Drive and carried on till Glenhove Road). This area came to be known as Lower Houghton. In the Deeds Office, both areas are known as Houghton estate,” Kara explains.

“The Upper and Lower Houghton Residents’ Association and the Houghton Heritage Trust have been keeping close tabs on developments in the area. All properties over 60 years old are declared Heritage and require permission to be demolished or restored.”

**The Houghton – up, close and ideally situated**

- Houghton Primary School – 2 minutes
- Highway access – 2 minutes
- Old Ed’s Sports Club – 2 minutes
- Killarney Mall – 5 minutes
- Melrose Arch – 8 minutes
- Gautrain – 8 minutes
- Rosebank Mall – 9 minutes
- Rosebank Clinic – 9 minutes
- King Edward School (KES) – 10 minutes
- Roedean School – 11 minutes
- St John’s College – 11 minutes
- WITS – 14 minutes
- Milpark Hospital – 14 minutes
- Johannesburg CBD – 14 minutes
- Sandton City – 14 minutes
- Hyde Park – 19 minutes
- OR Tambo Int Airport – 23 minutes

**Cosmopolitan, vibrant, unique**

**IN THE** books of Johannesburg commercial and property lawyer, Emraan Dasoo, there’s no place like Houghton.

Having lived in the suburb for 13 years, he has witnessed Houghton constantly evolving, becoming increasingly cosmopolitan and reflecting the demographics of a democratic South Africa.

Moreover, through the Community Active Protection (CAP) initiative where the Houghton community has joined forces to combat crime, the suburb has become a far safer haven for all of its residents, Dasoo points out.

And as a long-time member of the

Houghton Golf Club, he’s thrilled with the development of the prestigious The Houghton estate, which has injected new life into the golf course with its dwindling and ageing membership.

“The estate has not only played a significant role in improving the status of the Houghton Golf Course by attracting younger members, it’s a valuable asset for the entire Houghton suburb and community,” he stresses.

“On top of that, Houghton is extremely accessible and centrally located, with access to some of the finest schools in Johannesburg.

As the suburb grew, exclusive sports facilities were developed, including The Houghton Golf Club and later The Killarney Country Club, which houses the Golf Club and the Transvaal Automobile Club (TAC). Then followed the Old Edwardians Club, with cricket and rugby fields and tennis courts. Today it houses the Virgin Active Health Club as well. ■

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