



New Zealand's Property Market Shifts: Developer James Clarke on Delivering Quality in a Changing Landscape

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As New Zealand's housing market recalibrates after years of volatility, developers are finding themselves in a new operating environment – one defined by demand for smarter density, regulatory alignment, and long-term value. For James Clarke, developer and director of James Clarke Property, this shift is less a hurdle and more an opportunity to showcase the next generation of quality developments across the country.

The numbers show a housing market that is evolving rather than stalling. Nationally, building consents highlight a growing share of townhouses, units, flats, and retirement dwellings compared to traditional standalone houses. This reflects a marked swing toward higher-density development, consistent with the government's policy push for growth around existing infrastructure. At the same time, house values have corrected from their pandemic peaks. Prices in many parts of the country remain down from late-2021 highs, according to QV, though the national median still holds at NZ\$761,000 (REINZ, August 2025). More recent sales data shows improving activity in several regions, with signs of cautious optimism as the market stabilises. "This isn't a boom-and-bust story," says James Clarke, Developer. "It's a recalibration."

Buyers are more selective, regulators are raising the bar, and affordability pressures mean we need to deliver homes that are efficient, sustainable, and genuinely add value. That's where developers who are prepared to adapt will stand out. Where Density Meets Demand Clarke notes that growth across New Zealand is increasingly tied to well-designed medium-density housing. Townhouses and small-scale developments are now central to housing supply, with buyers looking for affordability and convenience without sacrificing quality. "People still want lifestyle and liveability, even in denser housing," Clarke explains. "That means natural light, good layouts, outdoor space, and design that doesn't feel compromised. Developers who cut corners will struggle – the market is too savvy now." Rising construction costs and tighter lending conditions are also pushing developers toward smaller, phased projects rather than speculative large-scale builds. Clarke believes this is a healthy evolution, aligning development more closely with actual demand and long-term sustainability goals.

Clarke is currently delivering new homes in Queenstown, where four dwellings are under construction. The project highlights the same design principles he applies nationwide: thoughtful density, high-quality materials, and future-proofing for both lifestyle and investment value. Queenstown, with its unique mix of lifestyle buyers, investors, and local demand, continues to show resilience. QV data shows average property values in the district sitting around NZ\$1.85 million in recent quarters, supported by ongoing population growth and sustained interest from both domestic and international buyers. "The Queenstown project is an opportunity to demonstrate that our approach works across markets," Clarke says. "The fundamentals don't change: people want homes that are well built, well located, and designed for the long term. Whether it's Queenstown or elsewhere in New Zealand, that's what we're delivering."

Industry analysts point out that while price growth is unlikely to return to the levels seen during 2020-2021, population growth, net migration, and constrained land supply mean that housing demand will remain structurally high. The task for developers is to deliver that housing in a way that aligns with both market demand and regulatory frameworks.

"This market is teaching us that success isn't about scale – it's about precision," Clarke notes. "Developers who focus on delivering the right product, in the right place, at the right quality, will be the ones who come out stronger." The next 12-24 months are expected to bring continued recalibration in New Zealand's housing market. Analysts forecast moderate price growth, ongoing migration-driven demand, and rising expectations from buyers who are more cautious with their purchasing decisions. For developers like James Clarke, this presents a clear mandate: deliver homes that align with affordability pressures, sustainability targets, and lifestyle expectations.

As New Zealand leans further into density, and as regions like Queenstown continue to balance lifestyle appeal with local needs, the role of developers will be central in shaping the next chapter of housing. For Clarke, the message is straightforward:

“We can’t keep building the way we did 10 years ago. The market has changed, and expectations have changed. Our job is to deliver quality developments that reflect the reality of today while preparing for the needs of tomorrow.”

James Clarke Property is a New Zealand-based development company focused on delivering high-quality residential projects. Led by developer James Clarke, the firm emphasises sustainability, design excellence, and long-term value creation. James is an avid diver, hunter, fisherman and skydiver – spending most of his time on Great Barrier Island.

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James Clarke Property

James Clarke Property, builds homes and communities through residential intensification and urban regeneration, supporting New Zealand's evolving urban landscape with integrity.

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