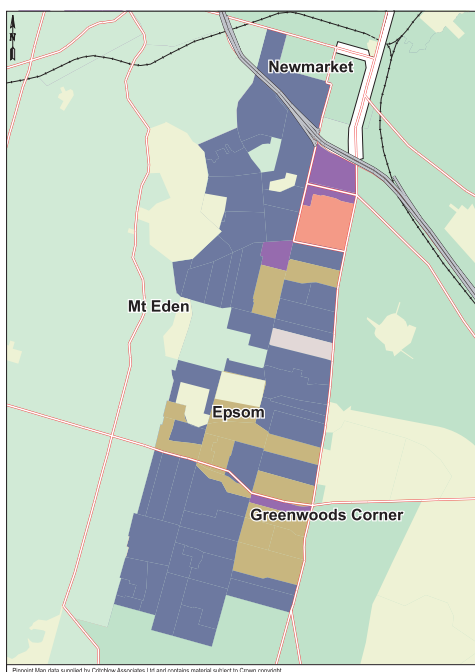




If Remuera is Auckland's best-known, richest suburb, Epsom is its august, elder neighbour. Its elegant old houses recline in dignified splendour behind stone walls and beneath mature trees. It appears almost charmed. This is where lawns seem to manicure themselves and dead leaves fly elsewhere to drop. Even the presence of some major arterial routes running through it towards the city can't dent the overriding feeling of peace and gentility. Epsom has some famous residences and, of course, the country's most highly regarded public boys school, Auckland Grammar. Its zoning restrictions lead many ordinarily upstanding parents to sneaky and creative address-fixing, and drives local real estate prices on a steady curve upwards. The southern reaches of the suburb may still be known as Epsom but have more of an affinity with the more lower middle class Royal Oak.



For colour key, see page 230

Population Profile

Population	10,533
% Aged Under 15 Years	20.54
% Aged Over 65 Years	9.17
% European	47.94
% Maori	2.42
% Pacific Peoples	1.22
% Asian	42.44

Who Lives There?

Well-heeled school age families are the backbone of Epsom, buying houses at premium prices to make sure their children are in-zone for Auckland Grammar and the equally well-thought-of Epsom Girls Grammar. Many of these have been "education aware" Asian immigrants, whose off-spring tend to be true to studious form and make up the majority of the top streamed classes. More recently the number of Asian migrants here has dropped off. Now it's the English and South African families moving in, as much for the traditional character of the area as for the schooling.

So close are the schools that some children will even walk to school – a phenomenon virtually unheard of in recent years as we cotton-wool our kids. Families are moving into Epsom's school zones from as little as 5-10km away, rather than choosing to live further out and pay big private school fees. They used to view Epsom as too staid and conservative, but now it stands for great, and free, education.

The suburb is definitely upper middle class in its outlook – and the impact of school zoning places even greater pressures on those wishing to buy. Some of Epsom's old family names, finding the upkeep of their grounds costly and time consuming, have moved on. Rightly or wrongly, many of their homesteads have been flattened and replaced with modern townhouses.

Typical Homes

Epsom was settled mainly around the turn of the century, so there are many villas of 1900-1920s vintage as well as 1930s bungalows. Most are large and beautifully renovated on substantial tree-studded sections. Infill housing constructed during the past decade means there are now also many large townhouses in the area built on sites where the original home was removed and, most likely, trucked out to rural Coatesville (or

similar) for a peaceful retirement. There are a number of small units and, famously, there is The Pines, a 10-storey luxury apartment building constructed in 1969 by special arrangement with the council. The developer had spent decades landscaping his 2.8ha site and saw an apartment building as the best way to protect the entire site, and its trees, in perpetuity.

Amenities

Schools ★★★★★

Schooling in Epsom is excellent. This high decile area is home to at least two private and three public primary schools, including popular Epsom Normal Primary School. Auckland Normal Intermediate in Mt Eden is the 'local' intermediate. The secondary schools in Epsom are some of the most sought after in Auckland, which is reflected in the inflated house prices for properties in-zone. Auckland Grammar School (boys) and Epsom Girls Grammar consistently produce both scholars and world class athletes. Auckland Grammar has produced 25 Rhodes scholars and 52 All Blacks since it first opened its gates in 1868. Catholic St Peter's College and Marcellin College are also in the neighbourhood. For a full list of schools, see page 270.



Central – Epsom

Shops ★★★★★

Greenwoods Corner has its cute precinct of shops, including a patisserie, antique shops and fashion boutiques – Epsom itself is not big on retail. But with Newmarket down the road, and the city and the improved St Lukes mall close by, Epsom residents want for nothing when it comes to retail therapy. Also nearby are the charming villages of Mt Eden and Remuera.

Leisure ★★★★★

Epsom has plenty of sports clubs covering hockey, football, bowling, croquet, tennis and netball as well as the Auckland Trotting Club. There is also the refurbished Lido Cinema, the Epsom library and Epsom Community Centre. There's a wide choice of international cuisine available locally, including Indian, Italian, Chinese and Japanese.

Real Estate

Trends

With its stately homes, large established gardens and wide tree-lined streets, Epsom would be a premium location even if it wasn't home to two of the country's most desirable public schools. This quirk of fate means a lot of ambitious parents who can't afford private

school fees, or would rather use them to invest in a property that will hopefully increase in value, want to get into this area, and that keeps real estate values high. One- and two-bedroom units are the cheapest way to own a piece of Epsom. Investors like the one-bedders for the higher returns and less wear-and-tear from their professional couple or single tenants, and they're paying in the high \$300,000s for them. Two-bedroom units fetch in the low \$400,000s. Bigger units and older townhouses are in demand from families chasing housing in school zones but without the price tag of a standalone house. Older mid 1980s 3-bedroom townhouses sit in the mid \$600,000s and bigger mid-1990s townhouses in the \$900,000s.

Homes less than five years old fetch \$1.3million for four bedrooms and \$1.7million for five bedrooms. Being in-zone for Auckland Grammar puts an estimated premium of up to 25% on a property – and with Epsom prices, that's a considerable amount of money!

Best Streets

Any of the tree-studded streets off the busy arterials rate highly and Mountain Rd is considered to be top shelf. Also Shipherds Ave, Coronation Rd, Gardner Rd, Brightside Ave, Almorah Rd and Omana Ave.





Look Out 

With all the inner-city schools about to burst at the seams, it seems inevitable that another public high school will eventually be opened. The house values in this suburb are so heavily influenced by school zones that the effect of a new school on property values will always be an unknown.

At a Glance...


House Prices

Units

Bedroom 
Price \$450,000 - \$580,000+

Bedrooms 
Price \$600,000 - \$750,000

House outside grammar zone, (half-site)

Bedrooms 
Price \$850,000 - \$1,200,000

Large quality house in-zone

Bedrooms 
Price \$1,500,000 - \$2,700,000+

Average Rents

Unit

Bedroom 
Price \$350/wk

House

Bedrooms 
Price \$650/wk

Bedrooms 
Price \$800 - \$900+/wk

Schooling also drives a frantic demand for rentals.

Travel Times

CBD peak 25 min
off-peak 10 min

North-western motorway 10 min

Southern motorway 1 - 5 min

Airport 20 min

Royal Oak shops 5 min

Newmarket 5 min

Stagecoach Auckland has a regular bus service to Epsom, many traveling along the major roads of Gillies Ave and Manukau Rd. The major arterial of Gillies Ave is both a blessing and curse for local commuters; getting on at peak time is a tedious exercise but once on, you're well connected.