

To have views across the water to the Harbour Bridge or Opera House is about as good as it gets in Sydney. Yet for a good many buyers, even a tiny apartment with this aspect is out of reach, let alone the tens of millions needed for a waterfront mansion.

But according to the experts, most of us aspire to the best view from our homes that we can afford. And in the current buoyant market - with eager buyers everywhere - there are plethora of properties with views to choose from. Flick through Domain at the moment and you will find many houses and apartments with some type of aspect.

Chris Curtis, principal of buyers' agency Curtis Associates, says properties with views usually come with a mark-up of anywhere from 10 to 15 per cent, and up to 25 per cent for a particularly special or rare view.

In new developments, the differential between those that have views and those that don't can come to as much as 25 per cent, says Murray Wood, a director at agents CBRE.

"Every buyer would love a water view. But an open aspect is something we all want, particularly if we're in a medium or high-density area. No one likes to feel hemmed in, or to look at a wall or into a neighbour's place."

He says some of the new developments in Sydney's middle-ring are unveiling some views that few knew existed, which are on some of the city's highest points. There can be spectacular, and affordable, views from homes in Macquarie Park, Ryde, Epping, Beecroft, Pennant Hills, Lane Cove.

Brad Beer, managing director of quantity surveyors and tax depreciation specialists BMT, says the owners of new homes with views will often be able to claim higher depreciation payments. "When properties with views are built, the builder or developer will tend to have a more quality build, and put in better fittings and fixtures, or add more facilities, because the property will be more valuable," he says.

But being able to say you have a spectacular view is

Views are changing as new aspects emerge

Not everyone can afford a harbour vista, but buyers are discovering plenty of alternatives.

Words by
SUE WILLIAMS

SYDNEYSIDERS' MOST DESIRED VIEWS

- 1. The Harbour Bridge and Opera House** - "To have both in our view is what we most aspire to," says CBRE's Murray Wood. "Properties with this view consistently demand the highest dollar value. Every Sydneysider wants to look at both our icons; those who say they don't, can't afford it."
- 2. The Harbour Bridge** - If we have to choose between them, the bridge wins every time. "We get more value-added with the bridge in terms of the symmetry of it... and all the activity on, and below it," says Chris Curtis from Curtis Associates.
- 3. The Opera House** - Yes, but it's still very pretty!
- 4. The beach** - We particularly love to look out at activity, whether on the sand or the ocean, says valuer

- 5. The city skyline** - Some people adore a cityscape, buyers' agent Curtis says. "Others can find it disconcerting and too busy, and they want to get away from the hustle bustle and not be reminded of it."
- 6. Water** - If we can't get the inner harbour, Wood says many of us love the Parramatta River, the Georges River, the Cooks River, any kind of water view.
- 7. Vegetation** - Rolling hills and valleys and bushland views are always welcomed, says Wood. "We just want to look out on something and vegetation is relaxing."



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Murray Wood, CBRE director

not much good unless you can actually see it easily, says Egan National Valuers senior valuer Kris Cviker. "You should be able to enjoy the view from your favourite chair in the lounge, or from the place where you spend most of your time, and where you get the most enjoyment," he says. "Having a view only from the toilet window isn't much of a joy."

Similarly, Curtis says views only from balconies that are too windy to use much aren't useful. But new technology has helped change our ideas of views too, says Curtis Field, director of Colliers International.

"With advances in building technology and the qualities of glass and airconditioning and heating systems, people aren't as wary of southern aspects as they used to be," he says. "Some of the best views are to the south, from places like Milsons Point, across Lavender Bay and across the harbour, and views in those cases can make a difference of 15-30 per cent on the price."

Above all else, uninterrupted views, or those that can never be built out, are considered to be almost priceless. By the same token, buyers tend to be more nervous of those they see under threat.

"We sometimes find buyers more apprehensive of views in areas such as Victoria Park," says Cviker. "There, one day you might have a view, and the next, with a new building in front of you, it can simply disappear..."

CASE STUDY



'AFTER DUSK, THE VIEW BECOMES A SEA OF LIGHTS'

Love the look: Michael Kauter on the balcony of his apartment in Elizabeth Bay. Photo: Fiona Morris

After a week fighting in the political trenches of federal parliament in Canberra, Michael Kauter returns to his Sydney apartment building, steps out of the lift and opens his front door ... and suddenly feels completely at peace with the world. The reason? The stunning 270-degree view from the Elizabeth Bay apartment that stretches from Sydney Tower across the Opera House and bridge over Vaucluse to the heads and out to the open ocean. "I walk in after a busy week and immediately all the tension drains away when I'm hit by that incredible view of the world," says Kauter, 34, adviser to the Government in Canberra. "After dusk, the view becomes a sea of lights, and you feel completely removed from the environment below, almost as if you're in an aeroplane. And during the day,

you can see people in the parks and on the ferries, and it's all absolutely spectacular. "You'll never, ever tire of a great view." Kauter lives in a three-bedroom apartment on the 14th floor of Elizabeth Bay Gardens, with walls of glass framing the view in every direction, and a balcony from which he can enjoy the whole panorama. The apartment is now up for sale, however, with Laing Real Estate agent Simon Polito, phone 0432 16 88 05, while Kauter plans to move on when his family moves from his home town of Armidale to join him in Sydney. "Sometimes in the apartment I feel I'm almost watching an IMAX movie," he says. "But it does spoil you for views elsewhere. Travelling, I'm never interested in the view, with this one back here."



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