

The big squeeze Sydney's land shortage

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End of urban sprawl in sight: 100,000 homes short and space running out



Kate Burke, Jennifer Duke

Sydney's great urban sprawl will soon come to an end, with new data showing the Sydney basin is nearing capacity.

There are 340,000 potential housing lots left throughout the Greater Sydney basin, less than half the number needed to house the city's bulging population over the next two decades.

By 2036, Sydney's forecasted 6.42 million population will require 726,000 new dwellings. Planners say Sydneysiders must soon embrace higher-density living.

Charter Keck Cramer strategic re-

search principal Toby Adams, who conducted the analysis, said Sydney was already undersupplied by about 100,000 houses.

"Demand is extremely strong for both [houses and apartments], as quickly as the lots are being put to market they're pretty much being snapped up," said.

The analysis of available land includes the Illawarra and Lower Hunter but not the Central Coast.

Much of that land is held within fragmented ownership with a fraction available for development soon due to need for rezoning and new infrastructure.



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With such strong demand, many homes will need to be built by redeveloping the middle and inner rings, Tract Consultants senior town planner Georgia Sedgmen said.

"We need to move forward with greenfield development but we also need brownfield development and densification."

Already, 72 per cent of Sydney's new development has been occurring within the existing urban footprint - the highest of any major Australian city, said demographer Glenn Capuano.

This is largely because of the geographical constraints of the city.

"If you go south-west past Liverpool and Campbelltown there are greenfield areas that can be developed, there's a huge amount of land, but it's a long way from Sydney," Mr Capuano said.

"It's a minimum of 50 kilometres, some are 60 and 70 kilometres away from the CBD. It's a uniquely Sydney problem. The geography of the city centre is on the eastern edge and the greenfield areas are just too far out."

As a result, secondary cities like Parramatta have begun to emerge for the first time in Australia's history and the way Sydneysiders live is set to fundamentally change.



There will be far more of these new centres across transport hubs in Greater Sydney.

Liverpool and Penrith also on the cards to become secondary central business districts, property developer lobby Urban Taskforce chief executive Chris Johnson said.

"We'll have the equivalent of Chatswood, tall towers up to 30 or 40 storeys, around 30 or 40 centres in Sydney is what's going to be required," Mr Johnson said.

But the more appropriate way to develop might resemble Potts Point with commercial and residential blended to-

Growing, growing: This series of photos shows the development of Kellyville, 36 kilometres northwest of the CBD, from 2011 to 2016. Photos: Nearmap

gether, The Committee for Sydney chief executive Tim Williams said.

While much of Sydney made "perfect sense" when it was designed, now the trend is moving away from detached houses and towards higher density, where transport connections are especially critical.

"[We can] choose to continue to head towards sprawl, stretching low-density communities without access to transport, services or jobs, or we can embrace density done well, providing amenity to new and existing residents in our communities," he said.

Increasing the density of the city will

also require shifting focus from housing to jobs, services and transport, Western Sydney University urban studies lecturer Dallas Rogers said.

"Philosophically there's no limit to how many people are housed in a city. But there are practical limitations and we're already feeling these," Dr Rogers said. Signs of these limitations include schools with no room for more students and congestion on the roads.

"The dilemma with cities is that you're not starting from a clean slate, they come with a whole set of characteristics you have to work with. [Sydney] was built over 200 years and it's hard to

retrofit it with a modern metropolis," he said.

Those who continue to live in detached houses are also unlikely to avoid a lifestyle change.

Already, an increasing number of people are starting to live under one roof - reversing an Australian trend to have larger homes with fewer residents, University of Sydney chair of urban and regional planning and policy Peter Phibbs said.

"We'll have more creative ways to cut a house into two, putting homes in backyards and having several generations in one home," he said.