



Breathe deeply, quietly

Clearer, cleaner air is a growing priority, whether that entails protecting residents from city smog, natural allergens such as pollen, or the vapours given off by buildings themselves.

Modern ventilation systems can change the air inside a home up to 12 times a day, while extracting increasingly fine particulates. Mr Malin even installs special vents to extract air from spaces such as the backs of cupboards where odours might develop.

Hi-tech paints can absorb and neutralise pollution, and developers like Mr Malin are increasingly shunning materials and finishes containing toxic “Red List” chemicals that can leach into the air and cause health issues, even in tiny amounts.

Services to monitor air quality, especially in larger and private rented developments, are also on the rise. “People want to know more about the air they are breathing,” says Olga Turner Baker, who has founded a new company, AirRated, that measures and benchmarks air quality.

For Charu Gandhi of interior design company Elicyon, air quality is integral to the atmosphere of a home. “We incorporate air purifiers and humidifiers into the joinery, sometimes connected to complex air quality monitoring systems. We also aim to minimise noise through insulation within the walls, acoustic materials and high specification glazing and doors to create near pin drop silence.”



Inside The Bryanston, Hyde Park by Almacantar

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Public realm

Purchasers are increasingly seeking developments that work with the environment and communities around them as well as offering high levels of internal design and services, says Abigail Heyworth of Knight Frank’s Residential Development Consultancy team.

“It’s uplifting if you can enjoy the walk home from your train or bus after a long day at work,” she says. “Our research shows people like a mix of street widths to recreate the feel of a traditional city centre, while thinking carefully about the shops and leisure facilities around the development also helps to attract buyers.”

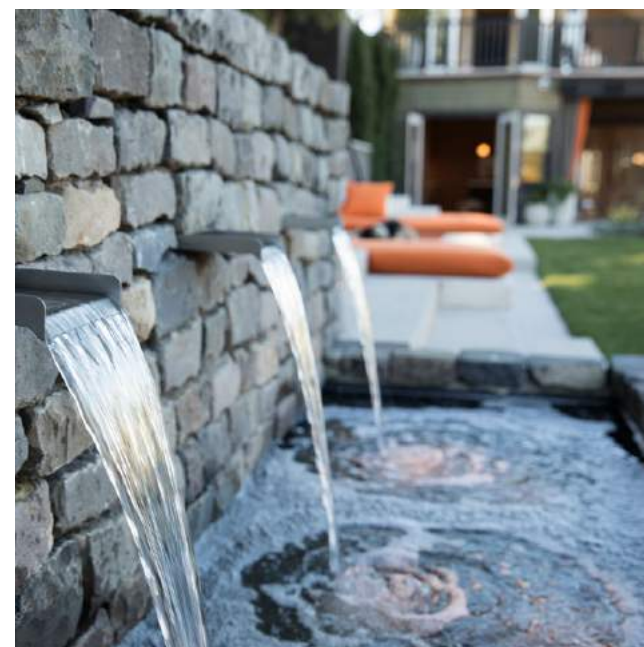
Todd Nisbet of Crown Residences, part of Sydney’s One Barangaroo regeneration scheme, agrees. The iconic harbour front scheme has been designed so that all four sides are public facing. “Usually one side of a building is devoted to things like air conditioning and deliveries, but we’ve put those underground,” he says.

As well as enabling residents to move easily between the different stages of their daily routines – relaxing, exercising and working – this also helps prevent the development being perceived as an exclusive enclave.

“Over half of the development is open space,” says Mr Nisbet. “Sydney residents rightly feel the harbour-side belongs to them, so we’ve tried to give something back by creating new parks and access to the ocean, as well as art installations. These spaces help to nurture different types of wellbeing, whether through exercise, social activities or just quiet contemplation.”



Large areas of public space have been created as part of One Barangaroo



Water creates a sense of calm at Residence 950



Aqua vitae

Private boreholes are increasingly on the wish list for clients for whom drinking straight tap water is a no-no, says James Carter-Brown of Knight Frank’s Building Consultancy team, who manages renovations of large luxury homes for international clients.

“With growing environmental awareness about the use of single-use plastic, clients are frequently enquiring about alternatives to using plastic bottles of water,” he explains.

Gregory Malin, meanwhile, says the sophisticated water filtration systems he installs in his projects now not only take out impurities, but can also add back in beneficial minerals and elements.

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Green space around The Bryanston, Hyde Park by Almacantar



Peace of mind

The role of developers in creating healthy places to live can go even further by helping to tackle social issues such as loneliness. This is a major issue: a recent report found that 8% of Londoners are often or always lonely, and 27% feel socially isolated.

Better design and urban planning can help, agrees Paul King, Managing Director for Sustainability at developer Lendlease, which co-created the Loneliness Lab project to find ways to tackle loneliness through the built environment. “At home, for example, many Londoners live in flats without windows facing into communal areas,” he says. “These provide few opportunities for interaction.”

However, says Olga Turner Baker, potential solutions may go beyond the built environment itself. “We are increasingly helping our clients to create social or online programmes that increase the sense of community in their developments,” she says.