



SYDNEY RESIDENTIAL BUILDING SPECIALISTS

2026 HOMEOWNER COST GUIDE

Get the Sydney Knockdown Rebuild Cost Guide

A straight-talking breakdown of what it really costs to demolish and rebuild a home in Sydney in 2026 — every line item, the factors that move the price, three worked examples, and the costs most homeowners find out about too late.

Knowing the real number before you commit

Why "from \$X" pricing misleads homeowners, and what this guide does differently.



A typical pre-1990s Sydney block — the starting point for most knockdown rebuild projects.

If you own an older home on a good block in Sydney, a knockdown rebuild is usually the only way to get a brand-new house without paying inner-ring prices for vacant land. But almost every number you'll see advertised — "homes from \$2,400/m²", "rebuilt from \$480,000" — is a **base building price**, not the amount you'll actually spend to get from your current house to keys in hand.

The gap between the advertised price and the real project cost is where most budget blowouts happen. Demolition, asbestos, council contributions, site works, driveways, fencing, landscaping, connections and holding costs during construction are routinely left out of headline figures — not because builders are dishonest, but because every site is different and a genuine number can only be given once your site has been investigated.

This guide won't give you a false sense of precision either. What it gives you is every cost category that applies to a Sydney knockdown rebuild, current 2026 market ranges for each one, and three fully worked example budgets so you can see how the numbers actually add up — not just a headline figure with no explanation behind it.

How to use this guide: Every range in this document is a 2026 Sydney market guide based on published industry data, not a quote. Your actual cost depends on your site conditions, council, home size, and specification — confirmed only after site investigation, engineering and a firm quote. Where a number is genuinely uncertain for your project, we say so rather than guess.

What's inside

- Full cost breakdown — every category, not just construction
- The factors that actually move your price
- Indicative 2026 Sydney cost ranges
- Three worked example budgets
- Base building price vs. true all-in cost
- Costs homeowners commonly miss
- A pre-purchase / pre-start checklist
- Answers to the questions we're asked most

The full cost breakdown

Every category that sits between "existing house" and "keys in hand" — grouped the way a real project budget is built.



DEMOLITION TO FRAME STAGE — EVERY STEP IN THIS JOURNEY IS A PRICED LINE ITEM BELOW

1. Demolition & site clearance

Item	2026 guide range
House demolition — small home (up to ~150m ²)	\$15,000 – \$25,000
House demolition — medium home (~150–250m ²)	\$25,000 – \$40,000
House demolition — large home (250m ² +)	\$40,000 – \$55,000+
Asbestos survey & testing (required on virtually all pre-1990 homes)	\$300 – \$800
Asbestos removal — bonded, typical residential amounts	\$3,000 – \$8,000
Asbestos removal — friable / extensive contamination	\$8,000 – \$25,000+
Existing pool removal (where applicable)	\$3,000 – \$15,000
Tree removal (per tree, where council-approved)	\$500 – \$5,000
Shed / garage / outbuilding removal	\$1,000 – \$5,000
Existing service disconnections (power, water, gas, sewer)	\$3,000 – \$6,000

Most pre-1990 Sydney homes contain some form of asbestos, most commonly in eaves, fencing and bathroom sheeting. This is a survey finding, not a defect — but it must be tested for and priced before you can rely on a "from" figure.

2. Design, engineering & approvals

Item	2026 guide range
Architectural / building design	Bundled below
Geotechnical report, survey, BASIX assessment & structural design	\$8,000 – \$14,000
Complying Development Certificate (CDC) pathway — certifier & documentation	\$3,000 – \$9,000
Development Application (DA) pathway — council & consultant fees	\$5,000 – \$16,000
Council contributions (Section 7.11 / 7.12) — council-specific	\$15,000 – \$40,000+

CDC and DA are alternative pathways, not both — see "Key Factors" below for which applies to your site. Section 7.11/7.12 contributions vary significantly by council and are payable regardless of pathway.

3. Site costs

Item	2026 guide range
Reactive / problem soil — additional footing design & construction	\$10,000 – \$40,000
Sloping site — retaining walls & benching	\$30,000 – \$80,000

Rock excavation (where encountered)	\$15,000 – \$50,000
New service connections — power, water, sewer, stormwater, NBN	\$6,000 – \$14,000

These are the single biggest source of budget blowouts in Sydney rebuilds, because they can't be priced accurately without a geotechnical report and detailed survey. A flat, standard-soil, easy-access block may need none of these; a sloping block with rock or reactive clay can add well over \$100,000.

4. Construction (base build, per m² of new home)

Specification level	2026 guide rate (\$/m ²)
Medium spec — framed construction	\$2,270 – \$2,445
Medium spec — brick veneer	\$2,455 – \$2,650
Medium spec — full brick	\$2,565 – \$2,765
High spec — brick veneer	\$3,430 – \$3,700
High spec — full brick	\$3,520 – \$3,795
Prestige — full brick, premium finishes	\$4,530 – \$4,880

Applied to your new home's floor area (not the land size). This is the "base build" figure most advertised prices quote — see Section 5 for what it typically excludes.

5. Services, external works & optional inclusions

Item	2026 guide range
External works — driveway, landscaping & fencing (standard)	\$30,000 – \$80,000
External works — premium finishes	\$55,000 – \$90,000+
Pool (optional) — plunge, ~6m x 3m	\$48,000 – \$68,000
Pool (optional) — fibreglass, 7m x 3m standard	\$60,000 – \$80,000
Pool (optional) — concrete, 7m x 3m standard	\$69,000 – \$89,000
Pool fencing (glass, aluminium, steel or timber)	\$250 – \$700 / lm
Basement (optional) — unfinished shell	\$2,500 – \$5,500 / m ²
Basement (optional) — turnkey finished living space	\$5,500 – \$10,000+ / m ²
Basement — underpinning allowance (where required)	\$20,000 – \$50,000+

6. Finance & holding costs

Item	2026 guide range
Construction loan progress-draw / inspection fees (per stage, typically 5–6 stages)	\$250 – \$450
Alternative accommodation / rent during construction (9–14 month build)	Market rent — site & timeline dependent
Extra holding costs if approval is delayed and you're not yet living elsewhere	\$8,000 – \$16,000

Construction loans are interest-only during the build and drawn in stages, so you only pay interest on funds actually released — see the FAQ for how this works. Rates and lender fees are not quoted here as they move independently of building costs; confirm current rates with your broker or lender.

7. Contingency

Budget a minimum 10% contingency on your full project total. This is standard industry practice across Sydney rebuilds and is the single most important line item in this whole guide — it is what absorbs the site conditions, council requirements and selection upgrades that can't be known with certainty before construction starts.

The factors that actually change your price

Two blocks of the same size, in the same suburb, can cost \$150,000+ apart. Here's why.

Site & land

- **Slope.** A sloping block needs retaining, benching and often a stepped or split-level design — one of the largest single cost variables in this guide.
- **Soil class.** Reactive clay (Class M or H) needs a more robust, more expensive footing system than standard sand or rock. Only a geotechnical report confirms this.
- **Access.** A narrow lot, rear-of-block site, or no crane/truck access adds handling costs to demolition and construction alike.
- **Trees.** Significant or protected trees may require council permits, arborist reports, or root-protection zones that constrain your building footprint.

Design & specification

- **Basement.** Adds excavation, underpinning (if near boundaries or existing structures), waterproofing and — if the water table is high — dedicated drainage management.
- **Façade.** Full brick, render, cladding and stone/masonry feature façades each sit at a different price point; Hamptons and French provincial styles typically specify more masonry and detailing than a contemporary façade.
- **Ceiling heights.** Raised ceilings (2.7m+) increase wall area, glazing area and often roof complexity — a compounding cost, not a flat add-on.

Approvals

- **CDC vs. DA pathway.** CDC is faster and generally cheaper but is a rigid pass/fail against NSW housing code standards — one non-compliance (height, setback, landscaped area) sends you to DA. Heritage, flood, bushfire (BAL-40+/Flame Zone) and foreshore sites are automatically excluded from CDC.
- **Section 7.11/7.12 contributions.** Set by your local council and vary significantly — confirm your council's current schedule early.

Selections

- **Windows & glazing.** Larger openings, feature/oversized windows and higher-performance glazing (for BASIX compliance on west/north-facing glass) all move the price.
- **Joinery.** Custom cabinetry, stone benchtops and built-in wardrobes sit well above a standard fixed allowance.
- **Appliances.** European/premium appliance packages versus a standard inclusion allowance is one of the most common places clients choose to upgrade after signing.



SELECTIONS & JOINERY — WHERE SPECIFICATION DECISIONS MOVE THE PRICE MOST

In practice: the specification bands in Section 1 (medium → high → prestige) already capture most of the façade, ceiling height, window and joinery variation above. Moving up one specification band is usually a bigger cost driver than any single selection upgrade within a band.

Three example project budgets

Fully worked, line-by-line, using the 2026 guide rates from Section 1 — so you can see exactly how each total is built, not just the headline number.



A COMPLETED SYDNEY KNOCKDOWN REBUILD — THE OUTCOME THESE THREE BUDGETS ARE BUILT TOWARD





Standard two-storey family home

~250m² new build · medium-spec brick veneer · CDC pathway · flat, standard-soil block

Covers a full demolition-to-keys rebuild of a mid-size family home on an easy, flat block. Assumes standard soil conditions, CDC approval (no heritage, flood or bushfire overlay), and a standard driveway/landscaping allowance — no basement, pool or rock excavation included.

Line item	Low	High
Demolition (existing medium-sized home)	\$25,000	\$40,000
Asbestos survey & removal allowance	\$5,000	\$15,000
Design, engineering & CDC approval	\$11,000	\$23,000
Council contributions	\$15,000	\$22,000
Site costs & connections (standard conditions)	\$10,000	\$20,000
Construction — 250m ² @ \$2,455–\$2,650/m ²	\$613,750	\$662,500
External works — driveway, landscaping, fencing	\$30,000	\$50,000
Subtotal	\$709,750	\$832,500
Contingency (10%)	\$70,975	\$83,250
Indicative all-in project cost	~\$781,000	~\$916,000



Premium Hamptons / French provincial home

~300m² new build · high-spec full brick · DA pathway (custom façade) · mild site constraints

Covers a larger, high-spec home with a custom Hamptons/French provincial façade, requiring DA approval because the design sits outside the standard housing code. Assumes mild site constraints (partial retaining, standard service connections) and premium external finishes — no basement or pool included.

Line item	Low	High
Demolition (existing large home)	\$35,000	\$50,000
Asbestos survey & removal allowance	\$8,000	\$20,000
Design, engineering & DA approval	\$18,000	\$32,000
Council contributions	\$20,000	\$35,000
Site costs — partial retaining, services connection	\$28,000	\$59,000
Construction — 300m ² @ \$3,520–\$3,795/m ²	\$1,056,000	\$1,138,500
External works — premium finishes	\$55,000	\$90,000
Subtotal	\$1,220,000	\$1,424,500
Contingency (10%)	\$122,000	\$142,450
Indicative all-in project cost	~\$1.34M	~\$1.57M

Luxury home with basement

~350m² new build + 80m² turnkey basement · prestige full brick · DA pathway

Covers a large, prestige-spec home with a fully finished 80m² basement level, requiring DA approval and provision for underpinning and waterproofing. Assumes standard (non-rock, non-reactive) site conditions and premium external finishes — does not assume heritage, flood, bushfire or high water-table overlays, which would add further cost.

Line item	Low	High
Demolition (existing large home)	\$40,000	\$55,000
Asbestos survey & removal allowance	\$10,000	\$25,000
Design, engineering, DA & basement approvals	\$27,000	\$46,000
Council contributions	\$25,000	\$40,000
Site costs & connections	\$10,000	\$20,000
Construction (above ground) — 350m ² @ \$4,530–\$4,880/m ²	\$1,585,500	\$1,708,000
Basement — 80m ² turnkey, incl. underpinning & waterproofing allowance	\$465,000	\$860,000
External works — premium finishes	\$60,000	\$100,000
Subtotal	\$2,222,500	\$2,854,000
Contingency (10%)	\$222,250	\$285,400
Indicative all-in project cost	~\$2.45M	~\$3.14M

These are modelled examples, not quotes. They use published 2026 Sydney market rate ranges applied to a hypothetical, typical project of each type. Water table management, rock, and out-of-the-ordinary heritage or bushfire requirements are not included and can add further cost — a firm figure for your site requires site investigation, engineering and final selections.

Base building price vs. the true all-in cost

Why the number in the advertisement and the number on your final invoice are rarely the same — and what's driving the gap.



THE "BASE BUILD" STAGE



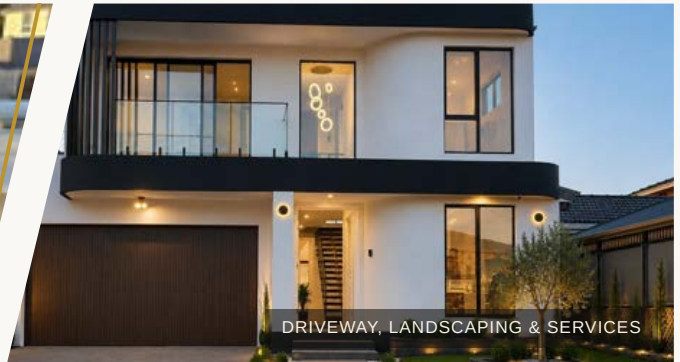
THE TRUE ALL-IN RESULT

Typically included in the "base building price"	Typically <i>not</i> included — and where it shows up in this guide
Structure, frame, roof and cladding to standard design Standard fixed-price kitchen & bathroom inclusions Standard floor coverings allowance Standard electrical & plumbing points Footings to standard/assumed soil conditions	Demolition of the existing home (Section 1.1) Asbestos survey and removal (Section 1.1) Design, engineering and council approval (Section 1.2) Site costs beyond a standard allowance — slope, rock, reactive soil (Section 1.3) Driveway, fencing and landscaping (Section 1.5) Service connections (Section 1.3) Council contributions (Section 1.2) Contingency (Section 1.7)

The pattern to watch for: in our worked examples, the base construction line alone (Section 1, item 4) typically sits within or just above the advertised headline range — while the fully worked, all-in total runs meaningfully higher once every category above is added. Neither number is wrong; they're answering different questions. Always ask a builder whether a quoted figure is base build or all-in before comparing it to anything else you've been quoted.

Common costs homeowners miss

These rarely appear in a first budget — and rarely add up to less than \$30,000–\$60,000 combined.



- **Extent of asbestos** — until testing is done, you're working with a range, not a number.
- **Section 7.11/7.12 council contributions** — easy to overlook because they're a council fee, not a builder cost.
- **Rock and reactive soil** — invisible until a geotechnical report is done.
- **Stormwater detention systems** — increasingly required by Sydney councils on infill sites.
- **Driveway crossover & footpath restoration** — a council-mandated cost, separate from your own driveway.
- **Temporary site fencing, power, water and toilet** for the construction period.
- **Home warranty insurance & builder's insurance** — mandatory in NSW on projects over \$20,000.
- **Window furnishings** — blinds and curtains are almost never in a base build.
- **Letterbox, clothesline, final clean** — small individually, real in aggregate.
- **Rent or alternative accommodation** during the 9–14 month construction period.
- **Council footpath/kerb bond** — refundable, but ties up cash during the build.
- **Rates and land tax** continuing through the holding period, on top of your mortgage or construction loan repayments.

The single biggest miss we see: homeowners budget for the build but not for where they'll live during it. A 9–14 month construction period is a real, ongoing cost if you don't already have alternative accommodation arranged.

Before you buy or start a knockdown rebuild

Work through this before you sign a contract of sale, a building contract, or hand over a deposit.



Get the site investigation done before you commit — not after.

Site investigation

- ☐ Contour survey and detailed site survey completed
- ☐ Geotechnical / soil report completed (soil class confirmed)
- ☐ Tree survey done, including any Tree Preservation Order or significant tree register check
- ☐ Flood mapping and bushfire (BAL) rating checked with council
- ☐ Heritage listing or heritage conservation area status confirmed
- ☐ Easements, covenants and any restrictions on title identified
- ☐ Location of existing services (power, water, sewer, stormwater) confirmed

Planning & budget

- ☐ Zoning, FSR, height limit, setbacks and landscaped area requirements checked against your intended design
- ☐ CDC eligibility confirmed — or DA pathway budgeted for if not eligible
- ☐ Finance pre-approval in place, including for a construction loan if required
- ☐ Full budget built using all-in costs (Section 1), not base build price alone
- ☐ 10% contingency allocated on top of your all-in estimate

If buying an existing home to demolish

- ☐ Pre-purchase asbestos and demolition assessment obtained where possible
- ☐ Any existing structures (pool, shed, outbuildings) identified and removal costed

Choosing your builder & contract

- ☐ Builder holds a current NSW licence and is a member of an industry body (HIA / Master Builders)
- ☐ Home warranty insurance and public liability confirmed
- ☐ Past work inspected or referee clients spoken to
- ☐ Contract type understood — fixed price vs. cost-plus, and what's a provisional/prime cost item
- ☐ Accommodation plan confirmed for the construction period

Frequently asked questions



How long does a Sydney knockdown rebuild take?

Typically 12–18 months from decision to keys, depending on approval pathway and build size. As a rough guide: demolition takes 1–3 weeks; design and documentation through to a construction-ready approval runs around 10–12 months via the CDC pathway or 13–15 months via DA (add roughly a month more for heritage-affected sites); construction itself then runs a further 9–14 months, much of which overlaps with the later stages of approval. Confirm a project-specific program with your builder before committing to a moving date.

Can I stay in my existing house during the planning stage?

Generally yes — you can live in the existing home through design, engineering and the approval process. You'll need to have moved out and arranged alternative accommodation before demolition begins, for the duration of construction.

Is a CDC or DA cheaper and faster?

Where your site and design are eligible, CDC is both faster and cheaper — it has a 20-statutory-day determination compared with an average 67–98 days for a DA across major Sydney councils, and lower certifier/consultant fees. The trade-off is flexibility: CDC is a rigid pass/fail against the NSW Housing Code, and failing any single standard (height, setback, landscaped area) means you must go to DA. Heritage-listed, high bushfire risk (BAL-40+/Flame Zone), flood-prone or foreshore sites are automatically excluded from CDC regardless of design. A DA is the right (and only) pathway for a custom or constrained design.

Do I need a construction loan?

Most homeowners who aren't paying cash use a construction loan rather than a standard home loan. It's interest-only during the build and drawn down in stages (typically 5–6) as work is completed and inspected, so you only pay interest on funds actually released — not the full loan amount from day one. There's no fixed NSW-mandated percentage split between stages; this is set by your lender and building contract, so confirm it with your broker before signing.

What happens if site costs increase once work starts?

Site costs (footings, rock, retaining, services) are usually a provisional or prime-cost allowance in a fixed-price contract until your geotechnical report and survey are complete. If actual conditions exceed the allowance, the difference is charged as a variation. This is exactly why a proper site investigation before you sign, and a minimum 10% contingency on top of your budget, matter more for a knockdown rebuild than almost any other line item in this guide.



Request Your Complimentary Knockdown Rebuild Feasibility Review

Now that you know what actually goes into a Sydney knockdown rebuild, the next step is finding out what it looks like on your site. Our feasibility review gives you a realistic, site-specific cost range and pathway recommendation — before you commit to a design, a contract, or a purchase.

To get started, tell us:

1. Your property address (or the address you're considering purchasing)
2. Land dimensions or a copy of your survey, if you have one
3. Your preferred home style (e.g. contemporary, Hamptons/French provincial, luxury)
4. Your approximate budget
5. Whether you already own the site, or are still looking to buy

[Request Your Feasibility Review →](#)

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