

FENCING TO ATTRACT MORE TENANTS

Tenants want to feel safe, secure and private in their homes, just like you do. A fenced property will attract more tenants and add street appeal and value to your investment writes **Carolyn Brooke**



Street appeal

FENCES HISTORICALLY WERE used to mark boundaries or ward off enemies. These days, especially with close proximity living, they are more about everyday life. From security to privacy to creating an outdoor area to blocking off a view to creating a safe space for kids, fences are constructed for many reasons.

Various fencing materials are available including timber, PVC, metal and stone, all with varying price tags. Investors most often opt for timber as the initial cost is less than alternatives but your choice of fencing will come down to function and look.

If it is full privacy you seek then perhaps a rail and post fence is best while for partial privacy and retaining some view out, a mix of timber and trellis could do the trick. Also, what look are you after? A clean, white picket style? Or does a more natural rough-sawn timber look fine?

Aside from the look, function and costs of fencing, other aspects to consider include obtaining consent from neighbours and ensuring your property is in keeping with the streetscape.

Fences have been at the root of many neighbourly disputes with parties unable to agree on materials, repairs and costs. You will need to obtain approval from your neighbours if sharing a fence or if in a crosslease or unit situation.



A long-time favourite is timber

IT PAYS TO GET A REGISTERED SURVEYOR TO CARRY OUT A SURVEY OF THE PROPERTY'S BOUNDARY TO ENSURE THE FENCE GOES EXACTLY WHERE IT IS SUPPOSED TO

- STAN SCOTT

It is also a good idea to keep your fence in line with the rest of the street. If no one else has a fence then you may want to rethink having one and vice versa if your property is the only one on the street without a fence.

FENCE IMPORTANT

Whether it is a new house, villa or unit, a fence out front screams well kept. Mark Trafford, of Maintain to Profit, says a nice looking fence is important to not only attract good tenants but to show them you value your property and want it to be looked after.

A fully fenced rental property is especially attractive to tenants with children or dogs.

"The property simply will look better and attract more value and more rent, it's that whole perception that it's safe and secure and therefore nice to rent," Trafford says.

"Gone are the days of kids playing on the road, people like knowing their children can play outside safely."

Note that if advertising your rental as dog friendly then the property must be fully fenced.

Stan Scott, of Mitre 10, recommends checking out the Fencing Act 1978 for your legal obligations around fencing, including what notice must be given to neighbours before beginning work.

LIGHT, EASY AND DURABLE ALTERNATIVE TO TIMBER

PVC or vinyl fencing is by no means new but it is catching on fast as a durable, low maintenance and cost effective fencing option. As a clip together product it is easy to install and it doesn't require painting, staining or any other ongoing maintenance. PVC won't crack, rot, warp or fade (it is treated with additives making it resistant to UV rays) and can be used in a range of situations. As a non-porous material, graffiti can simply be wiped off easily and it doesn't absorb water. Mildew or mould won't grow, either. The occasional wash with water or a mild detergent should prove the requisite maintenance. The initial cost of PVC is more than timber but the lack of ongoing costs and time should be factored in. Brady Wiseman of PVC Fencing

Solutions says even the most traditional of builders are seeing the value of it. "Some old-school builders are not interested in it at first but then they see a fence up and they think it's great," Wiseman says. "It's lighter, easier to move and easy to clip in." Installation time and labour costs with PVC fencing are likely to be less than timber. DIY is also an option. "Other fencing just doesn't look as good in a few years as PVC," Wiseman says. Vinyl fencing comes with a 25 year warranty. It is kid friendly with no nails, screws or sharp edges, but currently only comes in light colours like white and tan. PVC is available for all types of fencing from trellis to picket to full privacy to pool fences.

Always talk to neighbours first before repairing or replacing fencing as costs generally can be shared. Best to get everything in writing, too.

"Boundary issues with neighbours are one of the most common causes of neighbourly disputes," Scott says.

"It really does pay to get a registered surveyor to carry out a survey of the property's boundaries to ensure that the fence goes exactly where it is supposed to."

Fences under 1.8 metres high should not require council consent but it always pays to talk to your council first. Keep in mind that pool fences have specific requirements.

Considering the height and style of a fence is important. You want to give off the right impression about your property, and while you want privacy you don't want your place to look like a fortress. A high fence may keep out stray dogs but it can also isolate you from the community and

can encourage would-be burglars, as once they get over the fence they don't need to worry about being easily seen.

"One client I worked for had a 6 foot high boundary fence that had solid palings so no-one could see into the property. They had inadvertently closed themselves off completely from their neighbours and also had never made time to meet their neighbours," Scott says.

"When their house got broken into after burglars opened the gates, drove their car in and loaded it up, a neighbour washing his car across the street actually waved to the burglars as they drove off with all the owner's prized possessions."

LOW MAINTENANCE

When it comes to material for fences, timber is most popular among investors as it costs less than alternatives. Timber is fairly low maintenance but can require painting or staining.

Wooden picket fences are affordable, easy to install and can be painted any colour. While they look quaint they don't allow for much privacy or security.

Rough-sawn timber fences are great for a natural look. Radiata pine is the most commonly used timber for fences in New Zealand and can be stained or left to weather. Timber fences will likely need to be replaced within 15 years.

DIY is definitely an option with timber fences if you have the tools, knowhow and time. Think carefully first though as you don't want the end result looking like a home handyman job, let alone one gone wrong. In many circumstances it is better to pay someone else to do it.



Traditional picket

LARGE SHADOWS

Natural stone walls using cement are an attractive fencing option but aren't cheap. They are popular with owners of older homes or villas so only suited to higher-end rentals. All stone walls need to be built by stonemasons and this can be costly.

Concrete fences can create complete privacy, are very durable, are low maintenance and have great sound

proofing qualities but, like stone, won't be cheap. Also, like stone, concrete can create large shadows onto your property so you need to think them through carefully.

Another option is Hebel, a lightweight, environmentally friendly, aerated concrete product. Fences made from these panels can be quick to install and should price less than stone walls. Corrugated iron fences are also becoming more popular. ■