

Forbes

In Reversal Of History, Waterfront A New Focus Of NYC Homebuyers



This Sutton Tower great room south view showcases the visual appeal of a condo along the East River

By Jeffrey Steele
February 21, 2025

As any classic film fan can attest, 1954 Best Picture Oscar winner *On The Waterfront* is one gritty black-and-white potboiler. Heroic lead character and longshoreman Terry Malloy stands up to rackets boss Johnny Friendly, gets beaten bloody, and in the final reel leads his fellow longshoremen back into the brutal purgatory of the big city docks.

The world Malloy and Friendly inhabited had no appeal for high-end denizens of New York City. So the much-coveted Manhattan neighborhoods were those far removed from the squalid waterfront. But 70 years on, that orientation has been altered. Today, sales figures offer all the proof needed that the riverside is a *highly prized* locale.

Data from Corcoran Sunshine show condo prices along Manhattan's waterfront have climbed steadily since Covid. That's true along both the Hudson and East Rivers. In a sea change from the 15 to 20% discount seen one decade earlier, condo prices on the waterfront have crept to within 1% of Manhattan's new development average.

More conducive

There's little mystery among real estate watchers why this is happening. The pandemic fueled a desire to move to less cramped quarters, which the rivers' edge offered. On top of that, New York City has exerted every effort to make the waterfront more conducive to bikers, hikers and water lovers. The Economic Development Corporation recently unveiled a much-anticipated stretch of the East River Esplanade from East 53rd to East 61st Streets. Plans are for the loop to be closed near the U.N. and in Harlem this year.

Corcoran Sunshine reports 86 waterfront condo deals of more than \$3,000 per square foot took place in 2024. They included 22 at One High Line in West Chelsea, 5 at Sutton Tower on the Upper East Side, and more than 5 at The Henry on the Upper West Side.

"The city has created real lifestyle destinations along both the East and West Side waterfronts, with new parks, public art installations, strolling and running paths and hospitality offerings," says Kelly Mack, president of Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group. "Luxury buyers are finding the draw of these areas irresistible. And because highly serviced luxury towers with exceptional views and amenities are in short supply, and with precious few coming to market in coming years, developments like One High Line and Sutton Tower have become rare and compelling opportunities."

Loftiest, largest

More than 50 deals of more than \$2,500 per square foot have been inked east of Second Avenue along the East Side riverfront during the past 10 years. Of those, Sutton Tower accounted for 20 percent, and tallied that percentage in 2024 alone. Sutton Tower offers access to the Upper East Side, five amenities floors, head-turning vistas and sophisticated architecture. In the fall, the building listed the loftiest, largest and most expensive new development condo on the East Side, a \$65 million duplex penthouse that wouldn't have existed east of First Avenue a few years earlier.

Featuring a pair of twisting travertine towers, One High Line covers a full city block in its West Chelsea enclave. Its 236 residences range from one- to five-bedroom floor plans.

Panoramas from its collection of high-priced penthouses sweep across the New York City skyline and Hudson River. Five-star Faena Hotel, New York will make One High Line's East Tower its home when it opens at 500 West 18th Street this spring.

A Robert A.M. Stern Architects condo building developed by Naftali Group, The Henry ascends 209 feet and 18 stories within the heart of the Upper West Side. The ground-up tower delivers a boutique assortment of 45 elegant three- to six-bedroom residences, among them half-floor and full-floor homes as well as penthouses and townhouses.