

1. Real cost of pylons and masts

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Nice house, but pity about the cellphone mast. People living near a cellphone mast and wishing to sell their houses may not get the prices they want. This is because prospective buyers believe that the masts and power lines are harmful.

A number of Joburg estate agents told *Saturday Star* of their battle to market properties situated near cellphone masts or power lines.

One family in Hurlingham Manor have been trying for five years to sell their R2,2-million house, but no one is interested because of the cellphone mast on the property next door.

The house is a prime property in Sandton and at one stage was advertised in *Millionaire's Club* magazine.

Herbie Ellison, estate agent with Seeff Properties and chairperson of Hurlingham Manor North Association, said the prospective buyers had expressed concern about the proximity of the cellular mast.

"I believe that the mast could cause surrounding properties to depreciate by about 35% to 50%," said Ellison.

Justin Sprong, estate agent for the past seven years with Wendy Machanik Properties in Hurlingham, said many people he took to the Hurlingham Manor property "did not even want to get out of the car once they had seen the mast.

"I have taken around 100 people to see that home: about 60% of them took one look and lost interest because of the mast."

Linda Timmers, manager of Top Realtors, agreed that a mast located near a house was bad for business.

"The mast reduces your clientele by 50%. Many prospective buyers see the mast and they are no longer interested. People do not want to live near a mast. Even those who buy property near a mast get the house for a bargain because the price is reduced."

Janks Property general manager Bernard Aronowitz said he also had experienced problems in selling houses near power pylons.

"We have never experienced a problem with properties near masts. But we have had difficulty in selling houses near pylons because some think it is dangerous to live in such close proximity to power lines."

International studies confirm that power lines and cellphone masts decrease the value of nearby properties.

The Northern Ireland Families Against Telecommunications found the masts could reduce property prices there by up to 30%.

In Germany, the monthly rental of a block of flats was forced down by 20% after a cellphone tower was installed on the building's roof.