

Drones, a useful tool for the commercial real estate market

By [Leon Breytenbach](#)

6 Nov 2017

Drones, also known as remote piloted aircraft or RPAs, have become increasingly popular in recent years, both recreationally as well as commercially. They are used in many industries including the commercial real estate market. Drones have many applications, not least of which is producing marketing material to attract potential property buyers. Commercial property owners or managers may also find that a drone will simplify their property inspections.



© ken226 – [123RF.com](#)

Benefits to potential buyers

When purchasing undeveloped land, it helps to have a good look at the terrain so as to check for features which may affect the proposed development. Drones can cover greater areas than a survey, clearly showing nearby features, hard to access places such as streams or culverts, besides giving the potential buyer an overview of the surrounding land, adjacent structures or access routes.

The mapping software designed for drone technology can be used to calculate lengths, heights, areas or volumes without resorting to expensive ground surveys. Features which would otherwise be obscured by vegetation, including anomalies in the terrain, may be revealed by means of a drone equipped with a suitable camera. Depending on the property, this could only take an hour or so; far less time than a full ground survey, besides being more cost effective.

Benefits to sellers

In the past, property owners used aerial photography or video in order to display their properties with impact, although this has proven to be expensive. By using a drone, a property may be videoed from every angle, allowing owners to showcase their commercial listings in an impressive manner. Drones can offer a potential investor perspectives from a development not yet built, such as the view from the 10th floor of an upcoming office block.

Real estate advertisements show photographs of the interior and exterior of a building, but with the use of a drone they may show a fluid video of the interior and exterior, the full scope of an atrium for example, not to mention the immediate environment, property boundaries, access routes or other important features. The technology is such that high resolution

videos or photos are of superb clarity and accuracy.

Commercial property managers also benefit

The use of drones for the purpose of maintenance inspections, in particular roofs or high-rise buildings, will prove invaluable. Such an inspection can be a dangerous task, however, an autonomous drone may be programmed to record every nook and cranny requiring regular checking. Programming the same flight path for regular inspections will allow the manager to assess levels of deterioration, providing clear photographic evidence of the condition of the asset. Regular inspections can also record changes in the condition of the property, alerting the owner to possible latent problems which may then be dealt with before they constitute a major crisis.

Regular inspections using a thermal camera will show which areas of a building may be losing or gathering heat in the course of a day, potentially due to inadequate insulation. This allows the owner to install preventative measures to reduce the need for excess heating or cooling of the property.

Drones can work any hour of the day or night, practically irrespective of weather conditions. They are proving effective for security patrols over large commercial or industrial properties, securing the safety of the business as well as the staff.

Regulations

Regulations regarding the use of drones must be adhered to, which could complicate their use by private individuals or commercial entities. However, if you employ a reputable firm which is properly registered and fully aware of the legal implications, you should not experience a problem. Costs are reducing as drones become more popular, besides being more readily available for commercial purposes.

In conclusion, drones have multiple benefits for commercial real estate. Be it as a marketing tool, for surveying an undeveloped piece of land, or for the purpose of maintenance inspections, they will be invaluable in reducing the amount of manpower, time or costs required to carry out these processes.

ABOUT LEON BREYTENBACH

Leon Breytenbach is national manager of the Rawson Property Group's commercial division.

- These small upgrades could make your commercial property more desirable - 10 May 2019
- Staging your commercial property for a quicker sale - 20 Dec 2017
- Drones, a useful tool for the commercial real estate market - 6 Nov 2017

[View my profile and articles...](#)