



How land brokers can use virtual viewing technology to sell any property - by Aaron Graham

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Buyers of residential homes and condominiums have been familiar with virtual tours for more than a decade. But for land brokers, applying that same technology outside of the living room to highlight rural real estate has taken much longer to gain traction, not to mention using 360-degree drone footage. That's been an even more recent evolution and one that many land brokers now finally seem to embrace.

As with residential real estate, virtual tours allow prospective land buyers to discover the ins and outs of a tract of land from the comfort of their own home or office. Buyers are offered an opportunity to move a full 360 degrees around a property and discover, in stunning detail, parts of it that would otherwise be hidden from view, such as a pond, a shed, or a creek. While it's still recommended that a buyer visits a property at least once, virtual tours are enabling buyers to limit the number of on-site visits and see far more online than in previous years, which is especially important during these unprecedented times we currently live in.

Although the process that accompanies the production of a virtual tour is not necessarily complex, it takes a well-planned approach to turn virtual tours into a success. Primarily, brokers will need to pick a smart vantage point, with "smart" in this context meaning selecting a point of view from which buyers will be able to oversee the entire property, including the boundary lines, with the most attractive features closest in view. A consultation of satellite images can help decide what that vantage point should be (thank you, Google Maps!). The vantage point selected has a latitude and longitude, but it also has a certain height, determined to a considerable extent by the sheer size of the property.

Next, land brokers will contract drone pilots to shoot a series of high-definition images on the selected location, which will then be woven together seamlessly. Those pilots will always have to be licensed if their footage is meant to be used for any commercial purpose, including real estate marketing. In some instances, there will even be a combination of shots from different heights to further boost the experience of the viewer.

Making available 360-degree images is one thing, but land brokers can and should aim higher (no pun intended). Making maximum use of the technology offered means adding a layer of clickable content to the images. Brokers can provide text to describe a landmark or embed 2D or 3D images of certain points of interest (for example, the interior of a house on the property). Adding video is yet another option.

Land brokers can also choose to build out their virtual tour with proprietary tools, many of which are available off the shelf. Matterport is an extremely popular cloud-based solution that converts 2D panoramic images into immersive 3D images. Other vendors (from an exceptionally lengthy list) are VPiX and iGuide.

At National Land Realty, both our brokers and buyers have been elated by the opportunities offered by our own Land Tour 360 virtual tour application. What buyers especially appreciate about it are the comfort and safety. What brokers love about the technology is that they see fewer buyers disappointed that something is larger or smaller than they had imagined when they visit the property in person for the first time.

With the right approach in place to make smart use of everything the technology has to offer and on the condition that vendors are selected thoughtfully, land brokers are poised to benefit from the new application of viewing technology.

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