

# Why water-saving investments are worth it for your property - with or without Day Zero

There are at least six very good reasons for Cape Town property owners to become less dependent on municipal water, even if the dreaded Day Zero never materialises, says Crispin Inglis, CEO of online property company PropertyFox.



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He says in the short-, medium- and long-term, it makes sense for property owners to ensure they are using water as economically as possible on their property. “You will feel the benefits financially, ecologically and practically if you invest in making your property water-wise.”

Here are Inglis’ top six reasons to invest in water efficiency on a property.

## The WWF statistics and the growing population

While the current drought is extreme, it is not a surprise. South Africa is the 30th driest country in the world, according to WWF statistics, and it has been widely publicised that the writing has been on the wall for decades. The dryness of our country, high rates of urbanisation and steep population growth are all very good reasons for property owners to prepare their homes to weather likely future water shortages as effectively as possible.

## The monthly savings

It is no secret that water has been an excessively cheap resource in South Africa to date and prices are almost certain to spike. Adjusting the price of water will be necessary to help fund the expensive water security projects that are currently underway, and it will also help permanently change water consumption habits. So you will soon pay more for municipal water. For this reason, cutting your dependency on ‘the grid’ by 20% to 30% over the long-term will have direct financial benefits.

This means that a relatively inexpensive investment in a rain tank, or higher one in a grey water reticulation system, will bear direct financial fruit as water prices hike. You are likely to recover your investment in just a few months or years.

## The possibility of securing a higher price if you sell

The slashing of monthly water bills as well as the relief of not being solely dependent on municipal water is likely to add to the value of any property. Moving into a property which is at least partly off-the-grid will give the new owners peace of mind knowing the hard work and investment needed to cut water use and tap into alternative supplies has already been done. This will mean your home is an attractive investment which should sell quickly and fetch an attractive price. In the short-term, if the property prices in the Western Cape take a knock, having a borehole, water tanks and a reticulation system could help your property's value remain more resilient.

## The ability to use pool water flexibly

If your property has a pool, consider changing its filtration system to freshwater so that the water can be used for other purposes. This means the pool will work in a similar way to a raintank with water being able to be used for flushing toilets or running washing machines in times of drought. In this case, draining roof water directly into your freshwater pool is a very good idea too. There are also pool systems on the market now that don't require backwashing, a major waster of water.



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## The changing bylaws

It seems certain that grey water reticulation systems and rain tanks will soon become a compulsory addition to all newly built properties. Insurers are already in talks with banks to see how they can entrench sustainability into their policies and approvals processes – and this means that, in the very near future, having a low water-use house may in fact make it easier to get a bond.

## The potential for more rental income

Tenants are also looking to save money on utilities or to do their bit for the environment. So if you have a fully water-wise income property, you may well be able to charge slightly more in rental. It will also make your property more attractive so you should have no problem finding good tenants that care for your property.

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