

Commercial Real Estate Outlook 2024

FEBRUARY 2024



COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE OUTLOOK 2024

The state of real estate

2023 proved to be a difficult year for real estate. The global economy experienced a period of rising interest rates and elevated inflation. As a result, commercial real estate (CRE)¹ transaction volumes fell by 50% compared to pre-2022 levels.²

While inflation had a direct impact on the property sector through higher costs for building materials and energy, these pressures eased later in the year. However, the property sector's woes have been exacerbated by higher interest rates which have increased financing costs for property projects and reduced overall returns. Investors' return expectations have risen in tandem due to higher bond and equity yields.

Where are we in the global commercial real estate cycle?

Central banks spent 2023 raising interest rates to fight inflation. Annualised inflation has slowed around the world and this trend is likely to continue. Our base case is that the global economy has a soft landing, though we remain vigilant to the risks surrounding this.³ Against this backdrop, we believe interest rates are likely to fall in 2024 though the extent of declines will depend heavily on the incoming growth and inflation data.

Yields in the commercial property market have increased by 50-150bps since mid-2002, depending on the geographical, sectoral and location-related factors. With current higher yields across the property market, following a double-digit decline in global commercial property prices, it is possible that we are approaching the bottom of the market before the expected recovery takes its course.⁴ Market participants are generally confident that the property investment landscape is improving. Property values are predicted to reach their lowest point in 2024, based on surveys conducted among investors and managers.⁵

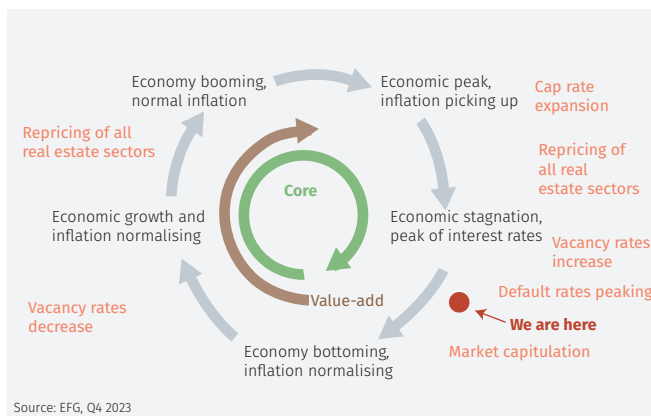
The length of the market decline is difficult to predict. We are currently close to the length of the last CRE decline during the global financial crisis (see Figure 2). In comparison to this, lower debt levels, longer debt maturities and a higher proportion of fixed-rate debt, the likelihood of a decline of the same magnitude is less likely in our view.

2. Real estate correction and recovery (Direct Property Index, US)

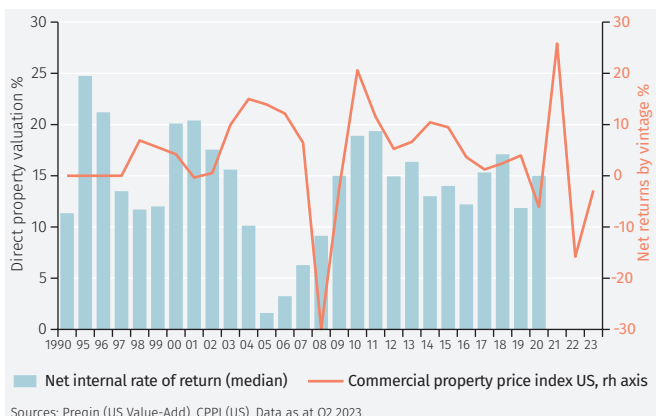


Investing in post-corrections has historically led to outperformance and we believe this opportunity is likely to be repeated in 2024 and 2025. Ongoing refinancing pressures, slowing economic growth and key industry megatrends, including sustainability concerns, should continue to drive mispricing in property markets. In our view, active real estate investing, unlike passive investing over the past decade, should benefit from value creation opportunities over the remainder of the decade. Historically, property investors have benefited from outsized returns following market declines (see Figure 3).

1. Real estate cycle and suitable real estate strategy



3. Value-add strategies – performance by a vintage year



¹ Commercial Real Estate Sector (CRE) includes all real estate generating revenue from rents/leases. It includes residential real estate, classified under multifamily, single-family, lodging, manuf. home. Commercial real estate excludes non-commercial property, i.e., owner occupied or generating any income.
² CBRE Q3 2023 Q2 Global Real Estate Investment Buffeted by Monetary Tightening.
³ We attach a 65% probability to a soft-landing scenario, a 25% probability to a hard landing scenario and a 10% probability to a scenario in which growth re-accelerates.
⁴ According to the research by the BIS, 2017(BIS Working Papers, No. 665, Interest rates and house prices in the United States and around the world, by Gregory D Sutton, Dubravko Mihaljek and Agne Subelyte), past changes in interest rates on average do affect real house price changes in the expected direction.
⁵ CBRE, Savills, JLL, and Knight Frank predict an improvement in the commercial real estate landscape for 2024.

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Using industry data, Figure 3 shows the net returns by vintage of "value-add" private real estate funds in the US, compared to direct deal pricing (as measured by the commercial property price index, CPPI). A vintage year represents the year in which the private funds began making investments with the average period for a private closed-end fund investment being four years.

There is a clear pattern of outperformance for vintages that invested in the aftermath of the global financial crisis or recessions.⁶ While the chart focuses on value-add portfolios, a similar pattern is evident when looking at core real estate funds.

Conviction investment drivers: 2024-2025

We believe the listed property market is likely to recover first, closing some of the valuation gaps and current 30-40% losses from the peak since 2022. As private funds have historically lagged the listed market by 6-18 months, they are likely to struggle for longer.







For now, EFG remains cautious on the commercial property sector as a whole. However, once the property market has bottomed out, we may lift our overall stance but note that there should still be selectivity within sub-sectors.

At EFG, while we think in terms of six broad sub-sectors – residential, industrial, retail, hotels, offices and niche⁷ – we also look at how assets are positioned within smaller niches. In the industrial sector, for example, there is a significant difference in return prospects between big box, cold storage or last mile logistics. In other words, the details matter. So do different geographical aspects. We would favour residential, industrial and niche sub-sectors over office or retail.

Going forward, asset-specific returns will be driven by each asset's location, age, ability to grow net operating income and tenant quality, and will be strongly influenced by secular trends.

We have identified key trends that we believe will shape property investment in the short and medium term (see Figure 5 overleaf). In our view, the four key drivers are: value creation through market dislocation, demographic change and urbanisation, ESG requirements and technological change.

4. Real estate sector outlook 2024⁷

Asset Class	Sector	Comments
Equity Commercial Real Estate	 Residential	Gateway cities or commutable locations with solid demographic parameters. Undersupply and ESG capex factors key. Selective approach within non-regulated locations.
	 Office	Major uncertainty. Secularly challenged sector with a low growth, WFH, employment and high capex. Only prime Central Business District office with good access and high ESG standards will thrive. Underweight in general in the US. Selective in Europe and Asia.
	 Retail	Consumer staples anchor tenants mitigate sector threads. Structural challenges through E-commerce. Corrected the most in 2020 and 2021, since then losses were limited. Generally still underweight, with a selective approach.
	 Hotels	Leisure hospitality better suited than business sector. Revenues driven by economic activity.
	 Industrial	E-commerce secular driver, last mile to large cities, business centers attractive, selective approach globally.
	 Niche	Senior and student housing, medical office, self storage, workforce and mobile housing, camping, farmland and zoning land.
Debt	Senior	Senior or whole loans, max 50% LV, floating rates, 400-700bps over LIBOR/EONIA. End of rate hike cycle to watch. Junior debt at risk of equity-like valuation corrections.

Source: EFG, Q4 2023.









These views are purely macro driven views and do not reflect individual unique parameters of any individual property, characterised by the above sector.

⁶ An example for 1995 and 1996, vintages that followed a correction in commercial property prices, parallel to the recession in the US that lasted from 1989 to 1991. Example, the vintage year 2005, i.e. funds which invested from 2005 until 2008 realized lower returns due to the property price correction in 2007-2008, CPPI (LHS). On the other hand, vintage year 2008, which deployed capital from 2008 until 2011, i.e. after the price correction, had better results than vintages 2005, 2006 and 2007. Vintages 2010-2011 realized extremely good performance, due to deploying capital through the years 2010-2015, at price levels below the global financial crisis, but also characterised by the Federal Reserve's zero-interest rate policy and hence cheap property financing, and yet at a solid property price growth, CPPI (LHS).

⁷ Niche sub-sectors e.g., senior living, student housing, affordable living, medical office or storage.

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5. Secular trends in commercial real estate⁸

Sector	Events and trends		ESG aspects
	Big cities	Gateway cities and commutable locations	
	Demographic changes	Migration, Urbanisation, Aging Population	
	Lack of new supply	Growth of construction costs > Inflation; Supply chains disruptions	
	E-commerce, digitalisation	Different geographic market penetrations levels	
	Supply chain resilience	Last mile logistics	
	Production moving onshore	Strategic infrastructure related logistic networks with access to population and labour	
	ESG expenditures	Obsolete peripheral office will need substantial capex	
	Work from home / flexible office	Newer more flexible assets, hybrid work accommodative	
	Prime locations	Periphery / low quality office to disappear or reprice down	
	E-commerce challenged, defensive consumer staples retail to prevail	(+) Drive-through, medical wellness, quick service restaurants, essentials	
	Leisure aspects in city centres in decline	(-) Non-essentials: footwear, apparel, theatres, electronics	

Sources: EFG, European Commission report on Macroeconomic and Other Benefits of Energy Efficiency, Deloitte, MSCI, UBS, BREEAM, Knight Frank, CBRE, September 2023.

Key takeaways:

- EFG maintains a cautious view on commercial real estate. Our most likely macroeconomic forecast base case, of a soft landing and falling interest rates, means that the end of the decline in commercial property valuations is likely to come in 2024.
- Publicly traded REITs are likely to recover first, leaving the private property market several months behind in terms of price recovery.
- Value-add strategies have historically benefited the most from the post-correction recovery.
- Industrial, residential and some niche sub-sectors are more likely to recover overall than retail or office sub-sectors.
- However, specific individual property parameters are more likely to determine the recovery in property values than a pure sector classification.
- Key secular trends will determine the recovery trajectory of individual properties, sub-sectors and geographies.
- While ESG trends and certification are an important global imperative, some sub-sectors are more capital intensive to become ESG compliant than others. In general, ESG certified and compliant properties or funds tend to have better performance characteristics than non-compliant vehicles.

⁸ The ESG aspects column highlights an importance of ESG factors for each sub-sector. While in general ESG is one of the key factors impacting the entire real estate sector, the ESG related capital expenditures are expected to be higher within an office sector, relative to a residential sector. At the same time the rental/lease elasticity per capital expenditure is higher for office and industrial sectors, rather than for residential, hence three ESG icons, compared to a single one of the residential sector.

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