

Selling Tenant-Occupied Properties During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Selling a tenant-occupied property is always more complicated than selling an owner-occupied property. Selling a tenant-occupied property during a global pandemic adds another layer of complexity. As a REALTOR®, you have an important role to play in helping to ensure the health and safety of those involved – clients, tenants, members of the public and other real estate professionals.

In addition to following the guidance provided by public health authorities, BC Real Estate Association (BCREA), the Real Estate Council of BC (RECBC) and the Office of the Superintendent of Real Estate (OSRE), WorkSafeBC and your brokerage, please consider the following guidance when selling a tenant-occupied property during the pandemic.

Talk to the seller

- Before listing the tenant-occupied property, talk to the seller and ask them to consider if this is the best time to sell. Discuss the potential impacts on the seller and tenant(s), such as the added stress and potential health and safety concerns of selling during the pandemic. However, be cognisant that personal and financial circumstances may force owners to sell their rental property while the home is still occupied.
- If the seller decides to proceed with the sale, advise them to talk to their tenants before listing the property. The seller's property is the tenant's home, and it's best that the seller gives their tenants advance notice of the listing and tries to work with the tenants to make arrangements that suit everyone's needs.
- Talk to the seller about virtual options available for marketing and showing the property to reduce the number of in-person showings.
- Discuss what measures need to be in place to ensure safe showings, and who will be responsible for these measures. Document your recommendations and what was agreed to, particularly when it comes to sanitizing and ventilating a property between showings.
- Discuss with the seller who will be responsible for communicating with the tenant regarding showings.

- Plan for dealing with any concerns raised by the tenant under the [Residential Tenancy Act](#) and/or any government announcements that may affect the tenancy. Review the current [guidance](#) provided by the Residential Tenancy Branch to understand tenant rights and obligations.
- In rare circumstances where owners and tenants can't reach an agreement, inform owners of resources such as the [low-cost mediation services](#) available through Mediate BC. Depending on the nature of the conflict, it may also require legal advice, and/or arbitration at the Residential Tenancy Branch.

Talk to the tenant(s)

- Discuss any concerns the tenant(s) may have with respect to showings and do what you can to ease these concerns. Let them know what safety protocols you have in place to reduce risks during showings (see below) and how you've adapted your practices to follow public health orders, guidelines and recommendations.
- Let the tenant(s) know that [proper notice for showing](#) will be served to enable access, as per the [Residential Tenancy Act](#), and determine their preference for notifications around showings.
- Stress that if a showing is scheduled and any of the occupants are exhibiting [COVID-19 symptoms](#), have been exposed to COVID-19 or have travelled outside of the country within the last 14 days, to contact you immediately so you can reschedule the viewing.
- Discuss expectations for cleaning and disinfecting the home before a viewing, including door handles, counters, light switches and any other high-touch surfaces. Have the tenant(s) consider leaving lights on and interior doors open (including closets) so all areas prospective buyers may wish to see are accessible. It's also important to consider proper ventilation by reducing air recirculation and increasing the outdoor air intake as much as possible, as [recommended by WorkSafeBC](#).

Follow suggested safety protocols

Below you will find a list of suggested safety protocols for showing tenant-occupied properties during COVID-19. This list is not exhaustive, and we advise you to follow all guidance provided by public health authorities, BCREA, RECBC and OSRE (including the [safer showings](#)

[guidelines](#)), WorkSafeBC, and your brokerage. Once you have discussed and agreed to safety protocols with the seller, consider including a link to these safety protocols on the MLS® listing. When working with a buyer's real estate professional, ask them to confirm that the buyer understands and agrees to all safety protocols you have in place, including any brokerage- or property-specific protocols.

- Follow all public health orders to ensure the health and safety of those involved in the showing, including clients, consumers, tenants and other real estate professionals.
- Allow no more than six people to attend a viewing, including other real estate professionals and occupants, and only if the required physical distancing can be maintained. This limit applies to inside and outside the home, meaning consumers cannot wait on the property if another showing is already underway.
- Ensure viewings are scheduled at appropriate intervals to allow for sufficient time to clean, sanitize, and ventilate the property between viewings.
- Do not allow anyone to attend a showing if they have COVID-19 symptoms, have been exposed to COVID-19 or have travelled outside of the country within the last 14 days.
- Obtain contact information for those attending the showing, where they have provided informed consent to the collection, use and disclosure of their information for the purpose of contact tracing.
- We strongly recommend masks be worn by all individuals present at a showing, both inside the property and in all common areas for multi-tenanted properties.
- Require those attending a viewing to use hand sanitizer/disinfectant as they enter and exit the property.
- Minimize risks for landlords and tenants, review the guidance provided by the [Residential Tenancy Branch](#) to understand tenant and landlord rights and obligations.
- When a rental unit is being shown to prospective buyers, the landlord or the landlord's agent must be present.
- Limit showings to serious buyers only and ensure prospective buyers are pre-qualified and, in a position, to purchase before requesting a showing.
- Ask that prospective buyers familiarize themselves with the information available on the property, including photos, videos, and 3D floorplans, and have driven past the property before requesting a showing.

- Advise those attending a viewing to avoid touching surfaces in the home unless absolutely necessary, and to avoid using the bathrooms in the home.
- Advise on how showings will be concluded, for example, leaving lights on and windows and interior doors as found to minimize touchpoints in the home.
- Disinfect keys and lockboxes on exiting the home.

Resources

To ensure you have the most current information, please see the following resources:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [Office of the Provincial Health Officer](#)
- [Real estate: Protocols for returning to operation \(WorkSafeBC\)](#)
- [COVID-19 and tenancies \(Residential Tenancy Branch\)](#)
- [Safer Showings During the COVID-19 pandemic \(BCREA, RECBC, OSRE\)](#)
- [Quarantine Conflict Resolution Service \(Mediate BC\)](#)
- [Landlord BC](#)