

Information on Open Houses for Sellers and Landlords

Like many other activities, selling a home or renting a property has some important differences these days as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are new considerations and new risks that you should be aware of.

It is important to talk about these issues with your real estate professional at the outset of your relationship, to ensure that you have a good understanding of how your property will be marketed, and are comfortable with the plan to minimize any health and safety risks.

Clear and open communication with your real estate professional is important – especially when it comes to deciding whether to hold an open house, and how to handle any in-person showings. Take steps to make sure you understand your responsibilities, as well as the precautions your real estate professional will use to minimize the risks of exposure for yourself, your loved ones, and others.

Discuss any health and safety concerns you may have with your real estate professional and review the Schedule A in your listing agreement, to understand the services you can expect. Some real estate professionals may have restrictions on services they are willing to provide in order to protect themselves and the public. By knowing what to expect, you can limit any surprises.

Some of the questions that you may want to discuss with your real estate professional include:

How will you limit in-person interactions during the sale or rental of the property?

Options that you and your real estate professional can consider include:

- Communicating by phone, video chat, email, or text instead of meeting in person
- Making information about your listing available online for potential buyers/renters. Ask your real estate professional about digital alternatives to in-person showings, such as 3D renderings and virtual tours
- Requiring deposits to be sent electronically instead of by cheque or money order
- Signing service agreements and offers electronically

What are steps to take to ensure any in-person showings are done safely?

Some of the steps that you and your real estate professional can take to minimize risks include:

- Limiting in-person showings to potential buyers/renters who have been pre-qualified
- Limiting in-person showings to potential buyers/renters who have already viewed the property virtually, and are interested in making an offer
- Limiting the number of individuals who can view the property at one time. Ask your real estate professional about how they will communicate this to consumers to ensure they wait until they are invited to enter the property

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In multi-unit properties such as strata complexes, ensure that strata council guidelines are followed. Discuss the steps your real estate professional will take to minimize exposure to other residents in the unit and in common areas.

Is holding an in-person open house the right choice?

Talk to your real estate professional about the digital alternatives to open houses that are available – such as virtual tours.

If you decide to proceed with holding an open house, make sure that you're satisfied with the safety precautions and protocols that will be followed. Recommended practices include:

- Cleaning and sanitizing the property thoroughly before and after the open house
- Making hand sanitizer available for attendees upon entry
- Asking that everyone who enters the home wear a mask
- Providing property information digitally where possible
- Opening all interior doors and turning on lights on to limit the surfaces that attendees touch
- Using signage to guide attendees through the property to limit contact with others
- For multi-unit properties such as strata complexes, following any strata council guidelines and discussing extra steps to minimize exposure for other residents and in common areas
- If the property is currently tenanted, discussing with the tenant any specific requests or concerns that they may have. For example, the tenant may be a front-line worker, be self-isolating after travelling, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have an immune-deficiency and are deemed to be an at-risk person

While your real estate professional can advise you about the measures to take to safely navigate holding a showing or open house, ultimately it is your responsibility to decide whether it is the right choice for you. Review the Provincial Health Office and BC Centre for Disease Control websites for updated recommendations and guidance.

If you are sick, have recently returned from outside the province, are subject to a quarantine order, are immunocompromised or have others in the property who are, you should not allow consumers or real estate professionals to enter the home.

About the Real Estate Council of BC

RECBC is a regulatory agency established by the provincial government. Its mandate is to protect the public by enforcing the licensing and licensee conduct requirements of the *Real Estate Services Act*.

Members of the public who have questions or concerns about real estate services and transactions can contact RECBC's Professional Standards Advisors for free, confidential information and resources.

Get in touch by email at advisor@recbc.ca or phone at 604.683.9664, toll-free 1.877.683.9664. Find us online at www.recbc.ca/consumers.