

# Information on Open Houses for Buyers and Renters

If you are interested in buying or renting a home right now, you may be wondering how to safely view a property while minimizing your risks of exposure to COVID-19. Fortunately, there are many virtual options to help you assess properties, as well as protocols and recommendations to follow when showing or viewing properties. Following these recommendations can reduce the risks of transmitting COVID-19.

If you are working with a real estate professional, it is important to talk about your concerns at the outset of your relationship, to ensure that you are both comfortable with the plan to minimize any health and safety risks while looking for the property that is right for you.

Discuss any concerns you may have with your real estate professional before engaging their services. Some real estate professionals may have restrictions on services they are willing to provide in order to protect themselves and their families. By knowing what services you can expect, you can limit any surprises.

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

## How to reduce in-person contact during your property search

Recommended steps to consider include:

- Leveraging technology by asking listing agents for virtual tours of a property and copies of floor plans to determine if the property may be a good fit. Limit your in-person viewings to properties you are interested in making an offer on
- Speaking to your real estate professional by phone, video chat, email, or text instead of meeting in person
- Signing any service agreements and offers digitally

## Precautions to consider when viewing properties in person

- Drive yourself to any showings instead of carpooling with your real estate professional.
- Bring protective gear with you including a face mask.
- Sanitize your hands before entering the property.
- Avoid touching surfaces where possible including counters, door handles, drawer handles, etc.
- Limit the time you spend in the property.
- Observe physical distancing while viewing the property.
- For multi-unit properties such as strata complexes, follow any protocols set out by the building's strata council and limit contact with high-touch areas such as elevators and common areas.

### What to expect at open houses

Homeowners, landlords, and real estate professionals listing properties may have implemented recommended protocols to help ensure health and safety during open houses, including some or all of the following:

- Limiting in-person showings to pre-qualified buyers only, and/or to buyers or renters who have previously viewed the property virtually
- Asking open house attendees to pre-register and/or to schedule a time to view the property
- Asking open house attendees to sign in
- Asking open house attendees to wait outside until others viewing the property have exited
- Requiring attendees to wear a mask or other personal protective equipment while viewing the property
- Requiring attendees to follow signage and observe physical distancing while viewing the property

In some cases, for example where a vulnerable person resides in the home, you may be informed that in-person showings will only be possible when there is an offer made subject to a showing. Discuss this with your real estate professional to understand how making an offer subject to showing works and the risk you should consider.

While your real estate professional will be able to provide advice on viewing properties and offer negotiation with suggested safety precautions, ultimately it is your responsibility to decide whether attending in-person open houses and showings is the right choice for you at this time. Review the Provincial Health Office and BC Centre for Disease Control websites for updated recommendations and guidance on measures to reduce the risks of transmitting COVID-19.

If you are sick, have recently returned from outside the province, are subject to a quarantine order, or are immunocompromised, do not attend open houses or in-person showings. Taking advantage of virtual alternatives to in-person viewings can help you continue your real estate journey while keeping you and those around you safe.

### 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](mailto:advisor@recbc.ca) or phone at 604.683.9664, toll-free 1.877.683.9664. Find us online at [www.recbc.ca/consumers](http://www.recbc.ca/consumers).