

OPEN HOUSE GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19

March 22, 2020

NAR's goal is to keep members informed about the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on the real estate industry, and to provide guidance on the many difficult decisions members are tackling on a daily basis. Consider how you may continue providing first-class services to clients, while also exemplifying REALTORS® as community leaders by demonstrating care for the health and well-being of clients, colleagues and the greater public welfare in reducing the risk of exposure to, and spread of, COVID-19.

Q: May REALTORS® continue to hold open houses during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: First, members should consult with their brokers, and consider how federal, state and local authorities' recommendations and actions, such as "shelter in place" mandates, impact the advisability, and even permissibility of open houses. Where open houses are permissible, NAR strongly encourages members to consider the advisability of continuing to hold open houses at this time, especially in light of the guidance and actions of federal, state and local authorities, including ["The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America"](#) recommending that gatherings of ten or more persons be avoided.

Q: What if my client insists that I continue to hold open houses?

A: You are never required to put yourself at risk in servicing a client. Have an open and honest conversation with your client about your concerns with holding an open house at this time, including whether doing so would contradict current government recommendations or mandates, particularly in geographic areas with "shelter in place" mandates. If after discussing these issues, you and your client mutually agree to hold an open house, advise your client about necessary precautions to minimize exposure to, and the spread of, COVID-19.

Q: What precautions should be taken if an open house is held?

A: In accordance with [guidance from the Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) and the President](#), ensure that less than ten people are touring the home at any given time, and consider only allowing one buyer group to tour the home at a time. Be sure that guests maintain social distancing of six or more feet apart, and require potential buyers to wash their hands or to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately upon entry and to remove shoes/cover footwear with booties. Also, be sure to check with your client before using any cleaning products, and recommend that your client disinfect their home after the open house, especially commonly touched areas like doorknobs and faucet handles.

Q: May I ask individuals whether they are sick or have recently travelled before touring the home?

A: Yes, you are never required to put yourself at risk in servicing a client, and it is reasonable to ask whether they are currently sick or have recently travelled. To avoid fair housing concerns, be sure to direct such questions to all potential buyers on an equal basis.

Q: What are alternative ways to market a property?

A: Now is a great time to leverage the many available alternative marketing opportunities. Let your clients know that you will continue to service them and can continue to market their home using an incredible array of available technology. Offer your clients three-dimensional interactive property scans (via Matterport, Cupix, EyeSpy360); host a virtual tour or help your seller conduct a live tour using Skype or Facebook; and use virtual staging to showcase a property.

Companies like [Klearid](#) offer on demand open houses, [Immoviewer](#) offers video tours, and [BombBomb](#) offers video check-ins. If you use any of this technology in your MLS listings, make sure that you have secured the proper permissions for the scans or videos before uploading to the MLS. Some companies are making their technologies even more accessible, including these NAR REACH Companies:

- [Immoviewer](#) has removed tour limits for members of their Association/MLS partners, like BeachesMLS in Florida and SmartMLS in Connecticut. Their tour platform provides a “Live Tour” feature that allows agents to share tour links with potential clients and control movement through the tour, or to give tour control to the consumer to create a virtual showing.
- [FloorPlanOnline](#) helps you hold virtual showings anytime through an easy to use point & click FloorPlan Tour with an exclusive 3D space designer or a more robust 360 WalkThrough Tour in select markets. Visit FloorPlanOnline for special discounts.

Q: Are open houses continuing to be held across the country?

A: Yes, however, a recent NAR survey showed that a large percentage of REALTORS® have suspended holding open houses. In the “[2020 NAR Flash Survey: Economic Pulse](#)”, conducted March 16-17, 2020, 40% of members nationally reported they suspended holding open houses. In geographic areas experiencing a significant COVID-19 outbreak, that number increased to 45% of members. Members have reported temporarily ceasing open houses in order to restrict traffic into listed homes, to practice social distancing, and to ensure potential buyers are taking recommended precautions. Members also reported limiting home tours to serious buyers only, leveraging a variety of technology tools at their disposal to continue conducting business.

Q: Have MLSs taken any action related to open houses?

A: A number of MLSs are promoting the use of virtual tours in open house fields, while some have disabled the use of open house fields all together. [Northwest Multiple Listing Service](#) recently disabled a participant’s ability to add, search or view public or broker open houses, and others have added warning messages advising of governmental restrictions on public gatherings.