

Your Listing Is the Showing

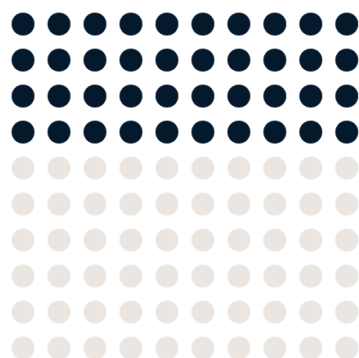
Four in ten renters say they'd lease sight unseen. What a Colorado listing needs to carry that decision.

By John Runkles, co-founder, Urban Forest Property Management · Updated October 6, 2026

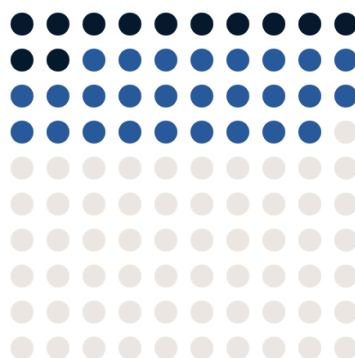


In a national Apartments.com survey fielded in late 2025, 40% of renters said they're likely to rent sight unseen, and 39% planned to move to a different city, 12% of them to a different state. For those renters the listing is the showing. It needs real photos and a walkthrough video of the actual unit, closets included, and a prompt reply to every inquiry.

One renter in the survey put it this way: "As long as there is a video, or pictures, I know what I'm getting into."



40 of 100 renters would rent sight unseen
likely to lease without visiting



39 of 100 are moving to a different city
including 12 moving to a different state (darker)

The renter who never sees the house. Source: Apartments.com, "Survey: How Today's Renters Choose a Place," February 2026 (fielded November to December 2025, more than 15,000 U.S. adults planning to rent).

RENTERS SURVEYED, LATE 2025	SHARE
Likely to rent sight unseen	40%
Moving to a different city	39%
of whom, moving to a different state	12%

Picture the renter. A job accepted in the North Denver suburbs or Northern Colorado, a start date five weeks out, a moving truck to arrange, and a place to rent from a thousand miles away. A trip out to walk through isn't practical. They open your listing on a phone in another state and decide from what they see.

Photos and video move listings

Most research on listing photos comes from home sales, so we can extrapolate from that for rental photography. In a study of 2013 Chicago-area sales, VHT Studios, a real estate photography company, found that homes it photographed spent 89 days on the market on average, against 123 days for all other single-family homes. Renters want the same thing: in the Apartments.com survey, 77% said they want to see photos of the specific unit, and 67% want its floor plan.



Check this. Look at your listing's first three photos on a phone, on Zillow or Apartments.com. Would they make you want to see more?

Show the actual unit

A 2020 Zumper and Matterport survey (industry-reported; the sample size wasn't published) found that 72% of renters would rent without seeing the property in person if a 3D virtual tour were offered, and that 82% of owners who had advertised with a 3D walkthrough rented entirely virtually. The Apartments.com survey is more specific: 35% of renters want a 3D tour of the specific unit.



Check this. Make sure your photos and video show the unit being rented, not a similar one.

Open the closets

Renters and buyers ask different questions. Guidance for rental video tours says to open closets on camera and hold steady on counters, appliances and storage, so viewers can trust what they see. In our experience, renters are asking whether their belongings will fit, while a sale video moves faster and sells the feel of the whole house, because a buyer is picturing a life there.

We saw this ourselves. A house that had a polished, sale-style video during an earlier listing was later marketed as a rental, and renters asked to see far more of it, every closet and storage space, than any buyer had asked about months before. It's a common request.

Check this. Reshoot or add a rental video that opens every closet and pauses on storage. Abrams Rent's guide is a good checklist for the shoot.

Relocating renters search in summer

Moving peaks in summer. Apartment List reports that rents peak in June and July, when more people move at the end of the school year, and local property managers put Colorado's peak rental season at May through August.

No source breaks out sight-unseen renting by month, so this is an inference: renters who can't visit are probably searching when competition for their attention is highest. That's a reason to keep the listing strong in peak season rather than counting on demand.

Check this. If your listing goes live between May and August, have the photos and video ready on day one, not in week two.

Answer within hours

Renters expect a reply sooner than many owners realize. In a 2024 AppFolio survey of 2,105 U.S. renters, 76% said they expect to hear back about a listing within 24 hours, and 27% within a few hours.

A widely cited 2007 study by InsideSales.com and an MIT researcher found the odds of reaching a lead were about 100 times higher when it was called within five minutes instead of thirty (based on sales leads at six companies rather than rentals). For rentals, the lesson is plain: the first owner to respond is often the first to get a showing.

Check this. Time your own average reply to a rental inquiry this week. AppFolio's survey shows what renters now expect.

Many renters are moving from another city or state, and a large share say they'd sign without walking through the door. A listing with weak photos and no video leaves out most of what they need to decide. Clear photos, a video that opens the closets, and prompt replies let them choose your property from a distance.

This article is part of a short series on why a rental sits vacant longer than expected. The hub, Why Your Rental Is Vacant, covers all four checks. Read next: How Long Is Too Long for an Empty Rental.

Wondering what your rental could rent for? We'll send you a rental analysis for your property. Call or text 720-964-1151.

This article is general information for rental owners in Colorado, not legal, tax or investment advice. Market figures are as of the dates cited in the sources; confirm current conditions for a specific property before acting.

Photographs created with Grok.

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