

Why Your Rental Is Vacant

Four checks, in order: price, vacancy, calendar, marketing.

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



When a rental sits empty longer than expected, the question is, what's wrong. It's usually one of four things, and each can be checked today: price, vacancy, calendar, marketing. Work through them in that order. The first two are the quickest and cost nothing.

Price: compare your rent with listings like yours, right now

Rent set from the wrong comparison is the first thing to rule out. Last year's rent, a neighbor's rent, or a citywide figure from a headline won't tell you what your house, with your bedroom count, in your area, of your city, rents for this month.

Rents don't even move together across five nearby cities: over the past year, RentCafe's average rent rose 3.5% in Windsor and fell 1.3% in Westminster, with Fort Collins, Arvada and Broomfield all moving at different rates somewhere in between. The only comparison that counts is current

listings that match yours.

Check this. Pull current listings for your exact bedroom count, city and property type on Zillow, Apartments.com or Facebook Marketplace. Then compare those listings with the report you get when you enter the address in Rentometer to see where your rent falls in a range. Treat any citywide average, or HUD's Fair Market Rent, as background rather than a direct comparison.

See also: [Pricing Your Colorado Rental](#)

Vacancy: find the rate for your kind of property, not the metro headline

Denver-metro apartment vacancy reached 7.6% at the end of 2025, a 16-year high. That's an apartment number. Single-family rentals are estimated closer to 4%. The owner of a house and the owner of an apartment can read the same headline and be in two different markets.

Check this. Find the vacancy figure for your property type: the Apartment Association of Metro Denver for Denver-metro apartments, and the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority survey for Fort Collins and other markets outside the Denver/Boulder metro. If your type isn't tracked, look at how long similar listings have been on the market, or at your own leasing history.

See also: [Which Vacancy Rate Is Yours](#)

Calendar: judge the vacancy against the right month

Nationally, Apartment List estimates that renters searching in summer face 20% to 30% more competition than renters searching in winter. Three weeks empty in July and three weeks empty in December are different signals.

The calendar also differs by renter. Families moving before school usually search in the few weeks before move-in. Colorado State University students are advised to sign a lease between January and April, and many of their leases begin in August.

We saw this with an older five-bedroom house in Fort Collins near campus. Five bedrooms close to the university is a student house, so it was on the student calendar: it sat from February to May, through a price reduction, and then leased quickly once students were signing for fall. A three-bedroom out by the interstate, the kind a professional relocating from another state might rent, would have been on a different calendar entirely.

Check this. Confirm whether you're in peak season or the slower season for your kind of rental, by comparing vacancy rate for your type and location or property with the same month last year rather than an annual city-wide number.

See also: [How Long Is Too Long for an Empty Rental](#)

Marketing: show the whole unit, and answer fast

In a late-2025 Apartments.com survey, 40% of renters said they'd be likely to rent sight unseen, and 39% planned to move to a different city for their next lease. For a renter relocating from out of state, the photos and video are most of what there is to go on, so they carry much of the decision.

Check this. Look at your listing the way an out-of-state renter would. Does it include professional photos and a walkthrough video of the actual unit, including closets and storage? How quickly do you answer inquiries? Renters often contact several landlords at once, so a slow reply can cost you the showing.

See also: [Your Listing Is the Showing](#)

The checklist, in order

1. **Price:** Compare your rent with current listings that match your bedroom count, city and property type, not a citywide or HUD figure.
2. **Vacancy:** Find the vacancy rate for your kind of property, not the metro headline.
3. **Calendar:** Ask whether this is a slow month for your kind of rental, or only feels like one.
4. **Marketing:** Make sure the photos and video show the actual unit, and answer every inquiry promptly.

None of these replaces judgment about the specific property. But they turn a general worry into a short list, and one or two of the four often explain what's happening. If the checks point back to price, you can lower the rent knowing that's the actual problem.

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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