



Landlord Challenges Related to COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY TENANT CAN'T PAY RENT?

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing both health and economic impacts for many in our community. In these challenging times we know that many tenants might be unable to pay rent due to lost work. We urge landlords to offer your tenants whatever leniency you are able to.

To prevent renters from losing their homes during this crisis, a moratorium is in place on evictions of Franklin County residents who are unable to pay rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time evictions may still be filed, but there will not be any eviction hearings set until May 11, 2020. City Council is currently working with the City Attorney's office and our Municipal Court Judges to further evaluate the process for evictions during this time. For more information and the most up-to-date news please visit this Link.

COLUMBUS CITY COUNCIL URGES PROPERTY OWNERS TO CONSIDER TAKING THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

- Halt all civil eviction filings on renters affected by COVID-19, absent circumstances that endanger tenants or neighbors.
- Waive late fees for residents who pay rent after the rent due date because they have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and related closure of non-essential businesses.
- Offer flexible payment plans for residents who cannot pay rent by the due date.
- Direct renters to available resources to assist with food, health, and financial assistance.
- Communicate with residents proactively that you are available to assist them and want to work with them to ensure they remain housed.
- Pledge to not issue any rent increases for all residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT RESOURCES DO I AS THE TENANT HAVE IF I CAN'T PAY RENT?

In the event that you are unable to pay all or some of your monthly rent, some potential options are below:

1. If tenants are unable to pay now due to financial hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic, offer them a forbearance agreement. For instance, one missed monthly payment may be paid over the following three months with their next rent payments.
2. Accept a partial payment, or a "pay-and-stay" with an agreed-upon payment plan for the remainder of the rent due with a similar payment plan to the example above.
3. Offer to reduce the rental rate for one month or a predetermined number of months.
4. Waive the rent entirely. If you are in the position to be able to offer this option, the short-term loss may allow tenants to recover and pay future months in full.

HOW CAN I WORK WITH MY MORTGAGE COMPANY TO POSTPONE PAYMENTS?

Many mortgage companies are aware of the crisis that has been caused by COVID-19. Most mortgages in the U.S. are backed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac and the pandemic has triggered both institutions to offer forbearance help that applies to both single- and multi-family properties.

The Fannie Mae website includes a mortgage lookup tool to see if your loan is owned by Fannie Mae, and lists the following mortgage options for their customers:

- Payment relief through a forbearance plan offers a reduction or suspension of your mortgage payments for up to 12 months, offered in increments of up to six months
- Late fee relief during your forbearance plan period
- Repayment options following your forbearance, including a repayment plan to catch up gradually or a permanent loan modification that aims to maintain or reduce your monthly payment

The Freddie Mac website includes a mortgage lookup tool to see if your loan is owned by Freddie Mac, and lists the following mortgage options for their customers:

- Providing mortgage forbearance for up to 12 months
- Waiving assessments of penalties and late fees
- Halting all foreclosure sales and evictions of borrowers living in Freddie Mac-owned homes until at least May 17, 2020
- Suspending reporting to credit bureaus of delinquency related to forbearance
- Offering loan modification options that lower payments or keep payments the same after the forbearance period

Freddie Mac, in particular, has explicitly specified that landlords who agree to not evict for nonpayment during this time will be eligible for assistance.

If your ability to pay the mortgage on your rental property is affected by your tenants' inability to pay due to COVID-19, City Council strongly recommends reaching out to your loan servicer (the company listed on your monthly statement) to request help.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- National Apartment Association
- Columbus Apartment Association
- IMPACT Community Action
- Legal Aid Society of Columbus
- Franklin County Emergency Assistance (PRC)
- Community Mediation Services
- Broad Street Presbyterian Church (COMPASS)