



**ALWAYS AWAKE.
ALWAYS ON GUARD.**

LotGuard

Securing Vacant
Commercial Listings During
Marketing and Lease-Up

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Most commercial real estate deals aren't lost because of a bad listing; they're lost because of what happens to the property while it sits empty.

Unoccupied buildings are inherently vulnerable. With no one on-site to spot suspicious activity, the risk of theft, vandalism, and environmental damage is much higher. For brokers, agents, property management teams, and property owners overseeing sites during marketing and lease-up, vacancy is the period when issues such as loitering, water damage, copper theft, and squatting are most likely to occur.

When these risks are left unaddressed, they can affect market value, cause unnecessary expenses, delay lease-up, and put professional reputations on the line.



Securing vacant commercial property comes down to a proactive strategy that aligns with deal timelines. This guide to securing vacant commercial listings covers the risks that surface during vacancy, the statistics behind them, and lays out a practical framework built for temporary vacancy. With clear visibility across parking lots and perimeters, brokers can maintain control and reduce risk throughout the entire listing lifecycle.

USA Vacant Property Crime Statistics

- Property crime occurs in the United States approximately **every 4.6 seconds**, making it a common criminal offense nationwide.
- Empty properties are **3 to 5X more likely** to experience vandalism, illegal dumping, squatting, unauthorized access, and theft than inhabited sites.
- Vacant/abandoned sites are consistently **associated with higher crime rates**, including aggravated assaults and gun violence.
- Illegal dumping cleanup costs at a single vacant site can range from **\$500 to \$5,000+ per incident**, before accounting for any environmental liability.
- Empty properties marred by vandalism and graffiti often report value or income losses of **roughly 5-15%**, while retail spaces can experience **up to a 20% drop** in customer visits.



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The Risks of Unoccupied Buildings During Marketing and Lease-Up

When a commercial property is empty, it doesn't take long for anyone scouting the premises to notice. A site with no visible oversight reads low risk, and that perception is often enough to invite attention. This is why vacant commercial property can quickly become a target for trespassing, vandalism, theft, and arson when left unoccupied and unchecked.



Loitering and trespassing: Unauthorized persons on-site create both safety concerns during property tours and liability exposure for brokers and owners if someone is hurt on the property.



Graffiti and vandalism: Visible damage lowers curb appeal and signals that nobody is watching the site. Based on the “broken windows theory,” this can encourage repeat incidents that are difficult to stop.



Copper and fixture theft: HVAC units, copper, and plumbing fixtures are often stripped from vacant business premises with little on-site oversight, leading to unexpected repair bills and stalled deal momentum.



Squatting and encampments: Once squatters establish themselves on vacant sites, removal often becomes a slow and costly legal process. During marketing and lease-up, these situations can delay occupancy, deter potential tenants/buyers, and significantly impact asset value.

Main Risks Across Vacant Commercial Listing Lifecycles

Risks change as a commercial building moves from vacancy through marketing and lease-up to occupancy. Each phase of the listing lifecycle brings different exposure points, from unsecured access during early vacancy to increased foot traffic during active marketing periods.

Lifecycle Stage	Main Risks	Security Measures
Newly won listing (first 48-72 hours)	• Unsecured access points • No installed security measures • Fixtures still in place • Water leaks	• Exterior security solutions that deploy quickly and provide an immediate visible deterrent • Disconnect utilities where relevant
Extended marketing period	• More foot traffic • Predictable vacancy periods (weekends, between tours) • Reduced site supervision • Maintenance issues signal neglect	• Regular inspections • Modern mobile surveillance with 24/7 remote video monitoring
Activity property hours	• Loitering/trespassing that interrupts showings • Graffiti and vandalism • Reputational damage and lost owner trust	• Property tour preparation and ongoing maintenance • Monitored surveillance systems with cloud-based oversight and reporting
Lease-up	• Theft of new fixtures, valuable assets, and materials • Extended vacancy periods	• Update insurance policies • Surveillance coverage that scales with fast-moving listings

8-Step Playbook for Securing Empty Properties During Marketing and Lease-Up

No single security measure secures empty properties on its own. The most reliable approach to detecting and deterring potential risk is layered, working from the perimeter inward so each step "builds" on the last.

The playbook below combines physical security measures with smart monitoring to provide significant advantages during vacancy, marketing, and lease-up:

- 1 Do a Risk Assessment**
- 2 Reinforce Entry Points**
- 3 Invest in Exterior Security**
- 4 Upgrade Lighting**
- 5 Make the Property Look "Lived in"**
- 6 Use Smart Access Control Systems**
- 7 Consider Cloud-Based Security**
- 8 Update Vacant Property Insurance**

1

Do a Risk Assessment

Begin with a full site walkaround, paying close attention to boundaries, access points, and parking areas to identify blind spots and vulnerabilities. Side gates and unsecured perimeters are the most commonly exploited points at vacant commercial sites, particularly after dark.

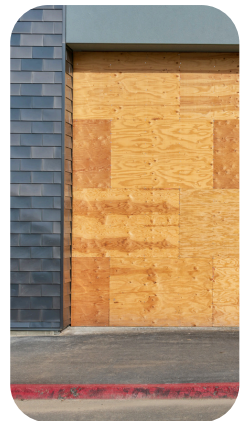
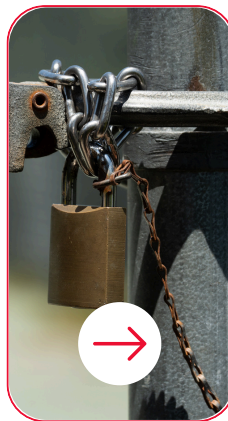


When these areas aren't secured, the risk of break-ins, vandalism, liability claims, tenant complaints, and insurance claims increases tenfold, creating problems that can derail marketing/lease-up efforts.

2

Reinforce Entry Points

Once the site inspection is complete, the next step is to prioritize which areas need immediate attention. This allows resources to be focused where they'll have the greatest impact in protecting your real estate asset. High-risk access points should be reinforced with proactive measures such as steel doors, burglar bars, biometric keypads, heavy-duty locks, and boarding of any broken windows. Apart from deterring trespassers and criminals, these upgrades also improve the perception of safety during property tours.

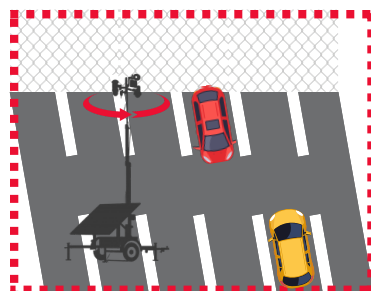


3

Invest in Exterior Security

Once entry points are secured, exterior security (with active monitoring) becomes the next logical step. Open parking spaces and large commercial layouts give unwanted visitors room to move undetected, particularly after hours.

Deploying wide-area PTZ (Pan-Tilt-Zoom) surveillance cameras across perimeters and lots is one of the most effective ways to secure vacant properties during marketing and lease-up. These systems work reliably in low-light and adverse weather conditions, providing continuous visibility and real-time response.

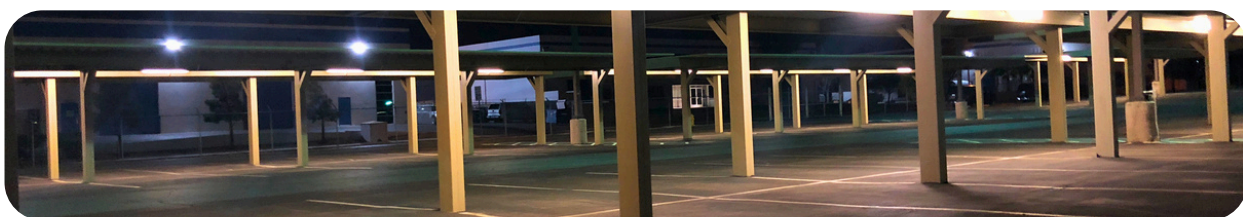


While on-site security personnel and security patrols can supplement this coverage, they're costly to sustain for extended periods, making mobile security a more scalable and cost-effective solution.

4

Upgrade Lighting

With exterior surveillance in place, proper lighting becomes the next line of defense. Visibility is crucial to deterring trespassers and unwanted activity. Poor exterior lighting attracts suspicious activity, especially around side entrances and lots. Motion-triggered and solar-powered lights strategically placed in these areas remove the cover of darkness criminals rely on and work reliably even where utilities are disconnected.



5

Make the Property Look “Lived in”

After lighting has been addressed, attention turns to ongoing property maintenance. A building that appears neglected tells criminals nobody's paying attention. Even small details, like piles of trash and overgrown landscaping, can suggest vacancy for an extended period.

Regular inspections (including checking for vermin) and upkeep, clear signage, quick graffiti removal, and visible "Trespassers will be prosecuted" notices all help reinforce active oversight.



TRESPASSERS
WILL BE
PROSECUTED

6

Use Smart Access Control Systems

Once a property looks actively maintained, the next priority is controlling who can enter and exit the site. As mentioned, unsecured access points make unauthorized access easy. Smart control systems (e.g., License Plate Recognition (LPR) cameras, automated gates) provide an additional layer of control that limits access and creates accountability.

Add-on LPR systems, specifically, automatically monitor all vehicles passing through entry/exit points across your listing, complementing on-site surveillance for full situational awareness. They capture details (make, color, model) at speeds of up to 130 mph, timestamp each incident for trend analysis (e.g., repeat visits), and provide visual evidence for law enforcement investigations and insurance claims.



7

Consider Cloud-Based Security

Now that access points are controlled, what do you do when managing security across multiple listings? This is where cloud-based monitoring platforms add value, providing 24/7 oversight of all active listings from a single, centralized dashboard.

24/7 Monitoring



All-in-one

By consolidating all video surveillance footage, AI detection alerts, and vehicle data in one place, brokers and property management teams can stay informed about everything that happens on-site, without being physically present at each location. This level of open communication also makes it easier to share reports with property/business owners, building trust during marketing and lease-up.

8

Update Vacant Property Insurance

With all of the above in place, the final step is ensuring your insurance coverage is in line with the realities of your vacant listing.

Standard property insurance often limits or excludes coverage for theft, vandalism, and incidents like water damage once a site has been vacant for more than 30-60 consecutive days. During extended marketing/ lease-up periods (when the building may sit empty for weeks or months at a time), it's best to confirm policy terms and conditions with your insurer. This helps keep coverage valid and sidesteps costly out-of-pocket expenses if something happens.



Mobile Surveillance vs Traditional Monitoring for Vacant Property

Real estate brokers already know they need to secure unoccupied buildings, but they may not know how mobile surveillance and traditional security (guards, fixed cameras) compare.

Feature	Mobile Surveillance	Traditional Monitoring
Visible Deterrent	✓	✓
Coverage	Near-360°	Limited to fixed points/patrol routes
Rapid Deployment	✓	✗
Active Deterrence	✓	Record-only
Infrastructure Needed	No (solar, 4G/5G)	Yes (fixed systems require mains power and internet)
Crime Reduction	Up to 87%	Varies
Cost	Flexible, short-term rentals	Expensive: \$30-\$70+/hr per guard; high upfront costs for fixed systems

Security personnel provide a visible presence but cannot monitor every access point at once. At \$30-\$70+ per hour, 24/7 coverage is rarely viable for a property not yet generating income.

Fixed camera systems address some visibility gaps, but most only record and offer little live deterrence. Their reliance on permanent power, internet and cabling makes them costly and impractical for vacant sites.

Mobile surveillance solutions, such as the LotGuard PRO, combine near-360° coverage, AI analytics and ISOC monitoring for real-time threat detection without fixed infrastructure.

5 Benefits of Proactive Security during Vacancy for Real Estate Brokers

Below, we discuss the advantages of proactive security when securing vacant commercial listings:

1

Faster deal velocity: A secure, well-maintained site moves through marketing without the delays a theft or break-in brings, keeping deals on schedule.

2

Preserved valuation: Stopping crime and vandalism before it escalates protects asset value and avoids the kind of damage that pushes capitalization (cap) rates up.

3

Improved tour conversion rates: A property that looks and feels safe boosts a prospect's confidence through showings, a crucial time when first impressions (and deals) are won or lost.

4

Stronger owner trust: Clear security reporting builds owner confidence and protects the broker's reputation during marketing and lease-up.

5

Lower liability exposure: Proactive monitoring helps prevent issues like illegal dumping, theft, fires, and slip-and-fall claims, reducing legal risk and costly claims later on.

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