

PCS Landlord Quick-Start Guide

You got orders, and now you're deciding what to do with the house. This guide is for active-duty owners turning a Fort Gordon-area home into a rental — written by people who watch this play out hundreds of times a year.

The reality. Most Fort Gordon (formerly Fort Eisenhower) owners who PCS to another duty station within 2–4 years of buying don't want to sell into a soft market and walk away with little or nothing. Renting through the next assignment, and sometimes the one after that, often nets more than selling at the wrong moment — especially with depreciation deductions and the § 121 capital gains exclusion working in your favor. This is the playbook.

SHOULD YOU SELL OR RENT? A 5-MINUTE FRAMEWORK

Run through these honestly before you decide. If you answer "yes" to three or more of the SELL column, sell. If you answer "yes" to three or more of the RENT column, rent. Mixed answer means run the numbers with a CPA.

LEAN TOWARD SELL IF...	LEAN TOWARD RENT IF...
You've been in the home less than 12 months — selling costs eat most or all of your equity	You have at least 12–18 months left on the IRC § 121 exclusion clock (lived in home 2 of last 5 years)
Your monthly rent estimate is less than 1% of the home's value (mortgage + tax + insurance underwater)	Rent comfortably covers PITI + property management + 8–10% reserve for vacancy and repairs
You're getting out of the Army at the next station and won't be back to the CSRA	You may PCS back to Fort Gordon later (common with cyber and signal careers)
The home needs \$20K+ in deferred maintenance you don't want to finance from a duty station 1,500 miles away	The home is in good condition; HVAC is <10 years; roof has life left
You can't tolerate the idea of a maintenance call at midnight	You're willing to either self-manage or pay a property manager 8–10% of collected rent

THE TAX MATH EVERY PCS OWNER SHOULD KNOW

IRC § 121 — CAPITAL GAINS EXCLUSION ON SALE

If you've lived in the home as your primary residence for at least 2 of the last 5 years when you sell, you can exclude up to **\$250,000 of gain (\$500,000 married filing jointly)** from federal income tax. This is the #1 reason PCS owners rent for 2–3 years and then sell. After 3+ years of rental use, the 5-year lookback no longer contains 2 years of primary residence, and the exclusion is gone.

IRC § 168 — DEPRECIATION

The IRS lets you depreciate the building (not the land) over 27.5 years — effectively a deduction worth roughly 3.6% of the building's basis each year against your rental income. This often pushes your rental income to a paper loss for tax purposes even when you're cash-flow positive. The depreciation is recaptured when you sell, but at a maximum 25% rate, and only against the amount actually taken.

SCRA & ACTIVE-DUTY TAX PROTECTIONS

Active-duty service members have an additional benefit on § 121: the 2-of-5-year clock can be **suspended for up to 10 years during qualifying active-duty service**. That means a servicemember who rents the home for 6–8 years during continuous active-duty assignments far from the property can still qualify for the exclusion. This is a major reason military landlords can hold rentals longer than civilian landlords without losing the tax break.

Always run the numbers with a CPA who knows military tax issues. Several CSRA-area CPAs specialize in this. McBride Property Management can refer you.

SETTING UP BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE CSRA

The owners who run into trouble post-PCS are almost always the ones who left town with loose ends. This is the practical pre-departure checklist.

AUTHORITY & COMMUNICATION

- Property management agreement signed OR Special Power of Attorney drafted naming a trusted local agent
- Spouse or POA-holder has access to the home, the lender, and the insurance carrier
- Mail forwarding set up with USPS
- Backup email address that isn't .mil — you'll lose .mil access at separation/retirement
- Calendar reminder to renew driver's license, registration, insurance from new state if changing

INSURANCE SWITCH

- Homeowner's policy switched to landlord / DP-3 policy effective the day the tenant moves in
- Confirm liability coverage of at least \$300K; \$500K is better
- Loss of rents coverage of at least 6 months
- Umbrella policy considered if you'll own multiple rentals
- Lease requires tenant carry renter's insurance with you named as interested party

LENDER & HOA NOTIFICATIONS

- Mortgage lender notified that home is now a rental (most VA and conventional loans permit this when you PCS)
- If VA loan: confirm continued eligibility — PCS occupancy waivers are routine but document the move
- HOA notified of change to tenant occupancy; tenant added to gate access if applicable
- Property tax mailing address updated to your forwarding address or property manager

UTILITIES & VENDOR HANDOFFS

- Power, water, gas accounts ready to transfer to tenant the day of move-in (don't shut off — transfer)
- Lawn care, pest control, pool service set up if landlord-provided (otherwise spell out tenant responsibility in lease)
- HVAC service provider noted; annual contract considered for predictability
- Plumber, electrician, locksmith, handyman contacts on file with property manager or spouse / POA

MILITARY-FRIENDLY LEASE CLAUSES THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE

The lease for a Fort Gordon-area rental should anticipate military tenants even if you don't market that way — about half of the rental demand in the corridor is military, and the SCRA termination right applies whether your lease addresses it or not. Better to address it cleanly:

- A **military clause** mirroring SCRA in plain language so tenants understand their rights and don't argue about format.

- **Acceptable notice methods** listed explicitly: hand delivery, FedEx/UPS, certified mail with return receipt, designated email address.
- **30-day deposit return** after termination — matches Georgia law and SCRA.
- **Showings during termination window** — you want to re-rent before vacancy hits.
- **Deployment communications** — named secondary contact (spouse, parent, JAG-appointed POA).
- **Pet provisions** that don't auto-exclude PCS pets — many otherwise great military families have a dog.

A REALISTIC 90-DAY PCS TIMELINE

1 90 days before report date.

You have orders. Decide: sell or rent. Talk to a CPA about § 121 timing if it's close. If renting, choose self-manage vs property manager — this drives everything else.

2 75 days out.

If using a property manager, sign the management agreement. If self-managing, set up POA for whoever will represent you locally. Switch homeowner's policy to landlord policy effective your move-out date.

3 60 days out.

Pre-rental property prep begins. Paint, carpet, deep clean, HVAC service. Photos staged for listing while you're still in the home and it shows well. Notify lender and HOA.

4 45 days out.

Listing goes live. Showings start. Begin tenant screening as applications come in. Aim to have a signed lease 2–3 weeks before your move-out.

5 30 days out.

Lease signed. Tenant move-in date set. Pack out your household; final personal cleaning and any last touch-ups. Get the move-in inspection scheduled.

6 ~10 days out.

Movers come. House is empty, professionally cleaned, ready for the move-in inspection. Keys, garage remotes, fobs counted and bagged for handoff.

7 Move-in day (yours and theirs).

Tenant inspection completed and signed. Utilities transferred. You leave the CSRA with a tenant moving in behind you and a rent payment due on the 1st.

COMMON PCS LANDLORD MISTAKES (AND HOW TO AVOID THEM)

MISTAKE

- Listing at "what I need to break even" instead of market rent
- No backup local contact while you're deployed
- Same homeowner's policy after the tenant moves in
- Skipping the move-in inspection report
- Choosing tenants by gut after a 10-minute showing
- Cash deposits in personal checking account
- No depreciation taken on the tax return

FIX

- Price to comparable rented homes; if PITI exceeds market rent, that's a sale conversation
- Property manager OR a written POA in the CSRA before you leave
- DP-3 landlord policy with rent loss coverage and higher liability
- Required under Safe at Home Act; the form is in this packet
- Written screening criteria, full background, credit, prior landlord calls
- Escrow at a federally insured institution per O.C.G.A. § 44-7-31

- Work with a CPA who knows military landlords — the depreciation deduction is worth thousands per year

WHAT MCBRIDE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT HANDLES FOR PCS OWNERS

If you'd rather not manage your home from Fort Hood or Kaiserslautern or Korea, here's the short list of what gets handed off:

- Pre-rental walk-through and prep recommendations
- Professional listing photos and marketing
- Tenant showings (in-person and self-show options)
- Fair-housing-compliant tenant screening
- Georgia or South Carolina lease drafting
- Move-in inspection and security deposit escrow
- Rent collection and owner disbursement
- Maintenance coordination 24/7
- Annual property inspection
- Lease renewals and rent reviews
- Move-out inspection and deposit accounting
- 1099 issuance and year-end owner statements for taxes

Ready to talk through your specific situation? Call or text Noah at **706.701.5940**. We'd rather have a 15-minute conversation now than fix a problem in 6 months.

This guide is general information for landlords. It is not legal, tax, or financial advice and does not create a property management or attorney-client relationship. Tax outcomes depend on your specific situation; consult a CPA familiar with military landlords. Statutory and regulatory references reflect law in effect as of early 2026 and are subject to change. McBride Property Management complies with the Federal Fair Housing Act and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.