

Olympia Planning Commission
Summary of Public Comments – April 19, 2021
Short Term Rental Ordinance Public Hearing

Public Hearing Comments

Below the major themes of comments made at the April 19 Public Hearing on the proposed Short Term Rental (STR) Ordinance. Staff responses are provided to assist the Planning Commission's deliberations.

Impacts on Existing Short Term Rentals

General Issue Raised	Staff Response
Concern over amount of permit fee for vacation rentals	The amount of a permit fee will be set based on the estimated cost of the City to review a permit application. Under the proposed ordinance, the application review would include relatively few requirements and would involve a fairly short time commitment by City staff.
Homestay STRs should also be required to obtain a permit requirement and adequate insurance	State liability insurance requirements apply to all STRs, both vacation rentals and homestays (RCW 64.37.050). A permit requirement is not proposed because homestay STRs are anticipated to have fewer impacts to neighbors. The owner or a permanent resident are required to live on-site, providing a 24/7 contact for neighbors in case of issues. A permit requirement would also be more difficult to enforce as homestays may not appear significantly different than a homeowner having a guest stay in their home.
Could existing STRs be exempted from requirement of an additional off-street parking space?	Some properties do not have enough space to add an off-street parking space. This would be required under the proposed ordinance for STRs that rent more than two bedrooms, and for properties that contain two STRs where one is a single-family house. If Commissioners choose, alternative language could be added to Table 38.01 in Section 9 of the ordinance to state "Short Term Rentals that existed prior to the effective date of this ordinance are exempt from this requirement."
Please exempt existing STRs from the ordinance, or at least	The ordinance proposes a permit requirement for vacation rentals in part to ensure the City can verify they meet existing code requirements and state

from limit of two STRs per owner.	<p>laws. Exempting all existing STRs would not provide a mechanism for the City to verify those current requirements are met.</p> <p>If Commissioners choose, alternative language could be added to exempt STRs existing as of the effective date of the ordinance from specific new requirements proposed in the ordinance. This could include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit of two STRs per owner • Maximum of two STRs per parcel • Prohibition of vacation rentals in accessory dwelling units • Limit of STRs in multifamily developments to one unit or 3% of units, whichever is less
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Ordinance is Not Restrictive Enough/Will Allow Too Many Impacts to Neighborhood

General Issue Raised	Staff Response
Maximum limit of 10 adults per STR is too many. Should be reduced to avoid impacts of 'party houses'.	<p>Some STR ordinances in other cities include a maximum number of guests. Ten is a common number for those that do establish a maximum. Two adults per bedroom is also a common limitation established by other cities.</p> <p>If Commissioners choose, another maximum number of guests could be included in the ordinance. The terms "occupants" and "occupancy" could also be changed to "overnight guests" for clarification.</p> <p>In addition, staff recommends language be added in Section 6 of the ordinance, to clearly prohibit special events such as parties, weddings, receptions, etc. This would be added as OMC 18.04.060.JJ.1.i:</p> <p>"No short-term rental shall be used by guests to host a special event, such as a party, wedding, reception or similar event, that involves persons in addition to overnight guests."</p>
More off-street parking spaces should be required if have up to	If Commissioners choose, alternative language could specify an additional off-street parking space be required for each bedroom, or for every two bedrooms, in an STR.

five bedrooms in an STR.	
Please restrict corporate ownership of STRs.	The proposed ordinance addresses this issue indirectly by limiting any owner to no more than two vacation rentals in Olympia. If an owner forms a corporate entity, the proposed ordinance also limits it to two vacation rentals. This still allows for local individuals to form a small corporate entity to manage two or fewer vacation rentals if they choose for individual reasons.
Should include regular city inspections to ensure safety of guests.	City zoning ordinances do not include regular city inspections for other transient accommodations.

Enforcement

General Issue Raised	Staff Response
How do neighbors find out who the 24-hour contact is?	24/7 contacts for each vacation rental will be made available on the City's website.
City code enforcement is not available nights and weekends. They cannot provide adequate response.	Code enforcement complaints can be submitted 24/7 through QAlert on the City's website. Code enforcement officers will investigate complaints, and contact the owner/operator. Their authority could include civil penalties or removal of permit and business license for repeated offenses. For immediate response during hours code enforcement officers are not available, contact the Olympia Police Department.