

## Info about Short-Term Rentals

For more information about this issue, process, updates, and to contact us with additional ideas and concerns, see the Planning Board’s website, [LenoxPlanningBoard.com](http://LenoxPlanningBoard.com)

### What is the goal of the Short-Term Rentals subcommittee?

Lenox’s economy derives much of its strength from the tourism industry -- and nearly one in three Americans stayed in a Short-Term Rental in 2015.

At the same time, Lenox derives much of its vitality from year-round residents, and it’s likely that residents and visitors alike don’t want the town to lose its unique character.

Gathering input from citizens throughout Lenox, our aim is to assess both the opportunities and concerns presented by Short-Term Rentals. Then, together as a community, we can decide how they will fit into our long-term vision for our town.

To ensure we get good cross-section of views from across Lenox, this project is being led by team representing several Town groups, including:

- Planning Board
- Affordable Housing Committee
- Finance Committee
- School Committee
- Select Board

### What is a Short-Term Rental?

“Short-Term” means renting for 30 days or less in a home, apartment, condo, etc. including:

- *Owner-occupied* -- renting a room in a house where the owner remains as host.
- *Non-owner-occupied* -- renting a whole house or apartment with no owner on site.

Rentals of 31 days or more are not considered short term. They are subject to different regulations (as if you were leasing a property long term) and are not part of this review.

### What is allowed in Lenox right now?

- Currently allowed: Renting rooms in an owner-occupied home for any number of days during the height of our tourist season. *See 8.8.1 “Seasonal Rental of Rooms” for details.*
- Not specifically addressed: “Short Term Rental” of a home with no owner on site.

Note: Hotels and B&Bs are forms of Short Term lodgings that are considered “commercial” (rather than “residential”) in use and must comply with various state and local requirements.

### How many Short-Term Rentals are operating in Lenox right now?

- **84 homes with no owners on-site** – Mid-July, we found 84 homes, apartments, condos or guest houses available for Short Term Rental on websites Airbnb, HomeAway, and FlipKey.
- **20 rentals of rooms with owners on-site** -- according to our count.

### What about collecting taxes on these rentals?

That will require enabling legislation from the State. Right now, there are two bills, H3454 and S1353, that would make tax collection possible. We are told this legislation may pass this year and are monitoring the situation.

Importantly, this legislation also will likely provide additional framework for any new Lenox bylaws.

# Worksheet: Short-Term Rentals in Lenox -- We Want Your Input

**Our Subcommittee:**  
Planning Board: Pam Kueber and Deborah Rimmler  
Affordable Housing: Kate McNulty Vaughan  
Finance Committee: Dave Neubert  
School Committee: Molly Elliott  
Select Board: Ken Fowler

**Think about your neighborhood specifically...  
...then, about the Town more broadly:**

**If and as more houses and apartments are converted to Short-Term Rentals – especially without an owner on site and/or by investors – what are the concerns and the opportunities – the pros and the cons – to your neighborhood and to the Town?**

**Your viewpoints reflect your role as a:**

- \_\_\_\_ Year-round resident
- \_\_\_\_ Resident renting rooms or home now
- \_\_\_\_ Investor renting homes or apartments now
- \_\_\_\_ Licensed B&Bs, Hotels, Motels, Inns
- \_\_\_\_ Lenox schools
- \_\_\_\_ Neighbor
- \_\_\_\_ Traveler to Lenox
- \_\_\_\_ Local retailer
- \_\_\_\_ Cultural anchor
- \_\_\_\_ Other:



**For questions or to provide more thoughts and ideas on this issue, see [LenoxPlanningBoard.com](http://LenoxPlanningBoard.com) for subcommittee members' contact info**

## **Which policy objectives do you think Lenox should focus on as we develop guidelines around this issue? You have 100 points -- how would you “weigh” the issues?**

### **Supplement Incomes**

Allow residents to earn extra income that may help them afford to live here year-round.

### **Value Tourism**

Recognize Short-Term Rentals as a potentially significant way to increase tourism; minimize regulation that could drive visitors to other towns.

### **Be Fair to the Lodging Industry**

Ensure a level playing field for hotels, inns and B&Bs, who must comply with costly regulations to operate.

### **Protect Year-Round Life**

Do not turn Lenox into a town where everyone visits, but no one actually lives; protect residential neighborhoods and community character.

### **Protect Housing**

Prevent long-term rentals from being converted to Short-Term Rentals, and prevent investors from driving up costs to rent apartments or purchase homes.

### **Additional Revenue Source**

Provide an additional source of excise (rooms) tax revenue for the Lenox budget.

### **Protect Property Values**

Recognize that monetizing Short-Term Rentals may increase property values for current Lenox home owners

### **Ensure Health & Safety**

Short-Term Rentals must meet health and safety standards and not become party houses.