

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

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:** Pam Kueber & Deborah Rimmler
- **Affordable Housing:** Kate McNulty- Vaughan
- **Finance Committee:** Dave Neubert
- **School Committee:** Molly Elliott
- **Select Board:** Ken Fowler

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.

Additional Information

Our team's process to consider revising Lenox bylaw to reflect evolving Short Term Rental (STR) industry:

Research

Phase 1: **Gather available research**

Reach Out

Phase 2: **Reach out to the community to gather its concerns**

Prioritize

Phase 3: **Summarize & prioritize the community's key issues & concerns**

Vote

Phase 4: **Consider bylaw changes**

Implement & Monitor

Phase 5: **Implement and monitor new bylaws**

Short Term Rental Stakeholders We Will Connect With:

1. **Townpeople** -- Vision for year-round Lenox living
2. **Homeowner Resident with a Short-Term Rental** – Use their primary residence to make money via occasional STRs.
 - a) Remains in home, rent room(s)
 - b) Leaves home, rents entire home
 - c) Rents during Seasonal Lodging period (Memorial Day though Labor Day)
 - d) Rents throughout the year
3. **Investor Non-Resident with Short Term Rental(s)** – Lives elsewhere, buy one or more properties and converts and them as fulltime Short-Term Rentals
4. **Neighbors**
 - a) Adjacent or near Homeowner Residents with Short-Term Rentals
 - b) Adjacent or near Investor Non-Residents with Short-Term Rentals
5. **Licensed Lodging Professionals** – Run B&Bs, hotels, motels, inns.
6. **Town:**
 - a) Tax revenues / Select Board, Finance Committee
 - b) Building Department
 - c) Tri-Town Health
 - d) Assessors
7. **STR Travelers** – A new generation of travelers who find benefits in staying at STRs.
8. **Local Retailers** – Benefit from any expansion in tourism made possible by more lodging options including at lower prices
 - Chamber of Commerce
9. **Cultural Anchors** – Tanglewood, theater companies and other cultural institutions that are important drivers of our tourism economy and need to rent housing from local homeowners in the summer
10. **Government Officials**
 - a) Representatives -- state legislation
 - b) Select Board -- overall reach
 - c) School Committee -- housing availability/enrollment
 - d) Affordable Housing Committee – housing availability, affordability
 - e) Financial Committee – financial implications/modeling

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

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

If 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? Share your views:

Your viewpoints reflect your role as a:

- Year-round resident
- Second-home owner
- Resident renting rooms or home now
- Investor renting homes or apartments now
- Licensed B&B, Hotel, Motel, Inn
- Local retailer
- Other:

1 Lenox should make Short-Term Rentals easy for residents to offer, so they can earn extra income to live in Lenox year-round:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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2 Let's not turn Lenox into a town where everyone visits, but no one actually lives – consider limits on Short-Term Rentals that will protect our residential neighborhoods and community character:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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3 We should encourage Short-Term Rentals as a potentially significant way to increase tourism, generate more tax revenues for Lenox, and increase home values:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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4 It's already difficult to find affordable housing in Lenox. We should be concerned about full-time Short-Term Rentals that take apartments and houses away from people who want to live here year-round:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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5 Short-Term Rentals must meet health and safety standards, not become party houses, and be taxed:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Comments (Also use reverse side and/or email):



For updates, questions or to provide more thoughts and ideas on this issue, see LenoxPlanningBoard.com for contact info.

