

Online open house underway for short-term rental Zoning By-law amendment

Sept. 17, 2020 — As the City continues efforts to address the impacts of short-term rentals on the community, staff are looking to the public for their input.

An online open house is underway, running until Oct. 16, providing the public with a breakdown of proposed amendments to the City's Zoning By-law related to short-term rentals (STRs). Several concerns related to such property uses were identified in previous public consultation on the topic in late 2019.

On Feb. 24, 2020 City Council directed staff to begin the process of amending the Zoning By-law to address STRs, such as those commonly listed on sites such as AirBnB and Vrbo. Such rentals, where a dwelling is rented and the property owner is not present during the rental period of 28 days or less, have been the source of several concerns including housing stock impacts, noise complaints and property standards issues.

The proposed amendments, which are scheduled to be considered by Council following an in-person public meeting on Nov. 16, will better clarify when and how such STRs should be permitted.

The proposed Zoning By-law Amendment allows for some STR operations in residential areas provided they aren't the primary use of the dwelling. The property must operate first and foremost as a full-time residence, with the resident temporarily renting out the entire dwelling unit on an occasional basis. The property cannot function solely as a STR; ensuring the housing stock is not impacted, while still allowing residents the opportunity to generate supplementary income.

This is proposed to be achieved by:

- Defining STRs as home-based businesses wherein a dwelling unit is rented for a period not exceeding 28 consecutive days
- Requiring that a STR be the primary residence of the operator (owner / tenant)
- Requiring the provision of an additional 0.5 parking spaces for each bedroom being rented
- Allowing home-based businesses to operate in any dwelling unit instead of the current limitation to only principal dwelling units; home-based businesses are still only permitted as secondary use for the properties they occupy
- Expanding bed and breakfast permissions to all dwelling types, provided the property owner / operator remains on site while hosting guests

“We are focussing on better defining how these businesses can operate in a manner that avoids negative impacts not only on neighbours, but also on the overall housing stock in the City,” said Director of Planning and Building Services Tami Kitay, adding, “if approved, these revised regulations will allow us to better address concerns and move forward with a potential licensing process.”

It is important to note STRs like this are similar to both hotels / motels and traditional bed and breakfasts. Most notably hotels / motels also offer rentals for periods of no more than 28 days with rental accommodations functioning as the primary use on site. These operations are permitted in certain commercial, mixed-use and employment zones.

Bed and breakfasts are similar to STRs in that they offer accommodation for up to 28 days. Unlike STRs however, bed and breakfast owners / operators remain on site during the rental period, renting individual rooms to patrons. Bed and breakfasts are permitted in residential zones as home-based businesses.

In development of the amendment staff focused on:

- Protecting the housing supply
- Providing reasonable enforcement options
- Protecting residential neighbourhood character
- Supporting opportunities for supplementary income
- Supporting tourism and tourist spending in St. Catharines

Residents can visit engagestc.ca/ShortTermRental to learn more about the proposed amendment, ask questions and leave feedback.

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Contact:

Tami Kitay
Director of Planning and Building Services
tkitay@stcatharines.ca