FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following answers a list of common questions about short-term rentals. If you have more questions, please email planning@whitehorse.ca.

ABOUT THE NEW RULES

Why does the City have short-term rental regulations?

The City created these rules because short-term rentals were not regulated under the previous Zoning Bylaw approved in 2012. Since this time, the number of short-term rentals have grown and so have concerns about the potential impacts to long-term housing access. The new rules help support a balanced supply of long-term housing in Whitehorse and promote safe accommodation for guests.

What do the new rules for short-term rental regulate?

Zoning Bylaw 2025-37 defines short-term rentals and Section 5.22 lays out the regulations. These regulate where short-term rentals are allowed, how many are permitted, and how they can be operated.

Short-term rental operators are required to obtain a Development Permit and Business License for every short-term rental they operate.

Where short-term rental is listed as a permitted use in the Zoning Bylaw, it may be in any housing form allowed in that zone, such as a house or basement unit. Your short-term rental must be in accordance with all the regulations in the Zoning Bylaw, including the maximum number of units per lot, as well as all other bylaws.

Why are there limits to how many short-term rentals I can operate in residential zones and not commercial zones?

Residential zones are intended mainly for housing. The limits help keep residential areas primarily residential, while still allowing for some short-term rental use.

Commercial zones like downtown Whitehorse are intended to accomodate a broader mix of uses, including commercial activities and residential development. As a result, short-term rentals are subject to fewer restrictions in these areas.

EXISTING SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Does the City have any records of locations operating as short-term rentals in the past?

No. The City does not have records of where short-term rentals may have operated in the past because this use was not previously a regulated use. There has not historically been a regulatory framework in place to enable the issuance of Development Permits or Business Licenses for this use.

Does prior short-term rental history create “grandfathered rights”?

No. Existing short-term rental activity does not automatically create “grandfathered” rights because short-term rentals were not previously approved as a specific regulated use.

Past operation does not automatically give an existing short-term rental approval under the new rules. All short-term rentals must meet the requirements that come into force on October 1, 2026.

I already have a short-term rental. Can I keep operating it?

You can continue operating your property as a short-term rental if it meets the new rules. Existing and new short-term rentals must comply with the regulations in effect as of October 1, 2026.

In residential zones and the OAG zone, operators have until October 1, 2027, to apply for one short-term rental on a lot where they do not live. After that date, no new non-primary residence short-term rentals will be allowed. If one was lawfully approved before October 1, 2027, it may continue as a non-conforming use unless the use stops for 12 months.

In commercial zones, operators do not need to live on the property, and there is no limit on the number of short-term rentals on a lot or operated by one person.

SHORT-TERM RENTAL ELIGIBILITY

Do I need to own the property to run it as a short-term rental?

You don't have to be the owner. But if you're not the owner, you need to have a lease agreement. You also need to be the person named on the Development Permit and Business License.

Can I operate a short-term rental if I do not reside on the property?

In residential zones and the OAG zone:

Yes, until October 1, 2027, you may obtain a Business License and Development Permit to operate one short-term rental on a lot where you don't reside.

After October 1, 2027, no new non-primary residence short-term rentals will be allowed. If a permit is issued prior to October 1, 2027, the use may still continue as a non-conforming use after that.

In commercial zones, there is no requirement that you must live on the lot.

How do I know if my property is my primary residence?

As defined by the Zoning Bylaw, a primary residence means the dwelling unit where a person ordinarily resides, makes their home, and conducts their daily life, and is used for legal, tax, and identification purposes. A person may only have one primary residence at a time.

If your short-term rental approval depends on the property being your primary residence, it must remain your primary residence for as long as you operate the short-term rental.

Do I need to register if I only rent my property for part of the year, for less than 30 days at a time?

Yes, even if you only rent your property for a portion of the year, you must register your short-term rental.

Can a short-term rental have multiple operators?

No. Each short-term rental must have one operator, and the same operator must be named on the Development Permit and Business License. The operator is the legal owner or lessee of the dwelling unit used as a short-term rental.

An operator may hire a third-party management service to perform day-to-day tasks such as housekeeping or booking management, but the management service is not considered the operator.

The short-term rental operator is responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable zoning regulations, licensing requirements, and all other applicable legislation.

Can my partner and I each operate separate non-primary residence short-term rentals?

In residential zones and the OAG zone, the limit of one non-primary residence short-term rental applies to each operator, not to a household. However, each person must independently meet the definition of a short-term rental operator in the Zoning Bylaw. This means each person must be the legal owner or lessee of the dwelling unit being used as a short-term rental and be named on the business license issued for that short-term rental operation.

In commercial zones, there is no limit on the number of short-term rentals that may be operated by a single operator. You and your partner may each operate any number of short-term rentals, provided each rental complies with the applicable rules in the Zoning Bylaw.

Can I rent my short-term rental for stays longer than 30 days?

Yes. The definition of a short-term rental refers to accommodation for stays that are *typically* less than 30 days, but individual stays may be longer than 30 days.

For example, a guest may stay in a short-term rental for 60 days, and subsequent guests may stay for only a few days or a few weeks. In that situation, the dwelling unit would still be considered a short-term rental.

However, if a dwelling unit is rented exclusively for periods longer than 30 days and is no longer being used to provide short-term accommodation, it would no longer be considered a short-term rental.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Who needs to apply?

All short-term rental operators need to apply. This is a person who is the legal owner or lessee of a dwelling unit that is used as a short-term rental.

How do I apply for approval for my short-term rental?

Complete the Development Permit and Business License application on the City's online e-permitting system. You will be required to upload documents to support your application, including a certificate of title, proof of residence (if applicable), site plan, fire safety plan, emergency escape plan, and fire safety self-attestation.

Fees for the Business License and Development Permit will be collected after you've submitted your application. Your business license and building safety documentation will have to be renewed annually, one year from the date of last issuance.

Will there be a grace period for individuals operating or advertising short-term rentals without a valid Business License?

The City recognizes that operators may need time to obtain the approvals required to operate a short-term rental legally. Beginning October 1, 2026, enforcement will initially focus on education and compliance, with the goal of helping operators understand and meet the new requirements. Enforcement efforts are expected to increase over time, providing operators with an opportunity to bring their short-term rentals into compliance.

The City may still take stronger enforcement action immediately for operations that are not capable of complying with the regulations, or where there are public safety concerns.

Do I need to submit proof of insurance?

The City does not require evidence that a dwelling unit has proper insurance for the operation of a short-term rental. The City recommends operators speak with their insurance providers about their coverage.

How long will it take for the short-term rental to be approved?

The City's target processing time of 15 business days for simple Development Permit applications will apply to short-term rental and bed and breakfast applications. Processing times may be longer during the initial implementation period due to a high volume of applications

Will the approval process involve inspections?

The approval process does not normally involve inspections. However, Development Officers, Business Licence Designated Officers, and Bylaw Services Constables may enter a property, in accordance with applicable legislation, to determine compliance with City bylaws. Where notice is required by law, the City will provide advance notice before entering a property.

The Fire Department is also authorized to conduct inspections. Inspections may be carried out on a random basis or where there are reasonable grounds to believe that fire safety requirements are not being met.

I have several short-term rentals on the same property. Do I need to register them all?

Yes. Each short-term rental unit must be registered with the City. Multiple units on the same property may be covered under a single Business License and Development Permit, provided all applicable requirements are met.

However, registration fees apply to each short-term rental unit. For example, if you operate two short-term rental units on the same property, you may submit a single Business License application, but you must pay the required fee for each unit.

I already have a business license for a home-based business. Can I operate a short-term rental under the same license?

No. Under the Business License Bylaw, each distinct business activity requires its own business license. If you operate a short-term rental, you must obtain a separate business license for that activity, even if you already hold a business license for another business operating at the same property.

Why do I have to pay fees to register my short-term rental?

Registration fees help cover the cost of administering the short-term rental program, including application processing, compliance monitoring, and enforcement.

Short-term rentals also require approvals under City bylaws. A Development Permit is required to establish a short-term rental use, and a valid Business Licence is required to operate a business in Whitehorse. Similar licensing requirements apply to other accommodation businesses, such as hotels and motels.

Will my property taxes change once I register my short-term rental?

The City does not determine property assessments or tax classifications. These are established by the Government of Yukon. Based on the City's understanding, using a dwelling as a short-term rental is not expected to change a property's tax classification. As a result, the City does not expect this use, on its own, to affect the property taxes payable.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

How will the City enforce short-term rentals? What happens if I don't comply?

The City will use a combination of proactive monitoring and complaint-based enforcement. This may include reviewing online listings, investigating suspected non-compliance, and working with booking platforms to obtain information about unpermitted operations or remove listings where compliance cannot be achieved. Where violations are identified, the City may take enforcement action, including notices of violation, orders to comply, offence tickets or fines, and any other measures authorized by municipal bylaws and applicable legislation.

How do I raise concerns about a short-term rental in my neighbourhood?

You may report a concern or problem:

- Online: https://www.whitehorse.ca/contact-us/report-a-problem/
- Phone Bylaw Services: 867-668-8317 or the Trouble Line at 867-667-2111
- In-person: Bylaw Services is located at the Public Safety Building, 305 Range Road.