



## Guelph STR Town Hall #3 December 8, 2022 6:30-8 p.m.

The third Town Hall took place in-person at City Hall. Four individuals took part in the meeting: two individuals that had participated in the first digital focus group and a couple. All participants are currently STR property owners. Due to the size of the group and the in-person format, a less formal conversation took place (i.e. not Mentimeter) allowing for everyone to provide input on key issues, as well as voice concerns and ask questions. At the end of the session, participants were appreciative of the opportunity to provide feedback and said they felt heard. Conversation highlights are captured in the notes that follow.

Scott Green did a similar presentation to the one shared at previous meetings. Facilitator Rebecca Sutherns then visually reviewed the bylaw development process and the range of opinions being heard on a few key issues such as principal residence requirements.

### Questions/comments on the review process

- One participant had a question about what information the Working Group (WG) started with.
  - WG had the original staff report that went to Council in February. There was supplemental information provided by staff, including municipal comparator research and a map of STR units in the city. Staff spoke to Airbnb and have access to that portal for information. The minutes from the WG meetings are now available for review online. Different perspectives and opinions in the WG, so we're having these sessions to address some of the topics they wanted additional public input on.
- Why aren't the WG members here?
  - WG members were invited to attend and listen. Some joined to listen to the online sessions.
- How can the public communicate with the WG members?
  - Contact info is private.
- What was done between meetings?
  - WG was welcome to do their own research and bring it back to the group. Staff did additional research as well and posted it on a portal for the group.
- Minimal information right now about what was researched. Will be interesting to see the report.
  - Meeting minutes and background information is available online.
- Public can register to be a delegate at the Council meeting to speak to the staff report that goes to Council.

- City has made a recommendation to Council already (in Feb). Staff report recommendation licensing. Based on what data?
  - Looked at what other municipalities are doing. Council then directed them to do more research, which led to this process.

## Overall comments

- Reviewed the WG meeting minutes – found them helpful. Ties back to complaint from other accommodation providers (i.e. hotels, B&B) that are regulated. Struggling with City's lean towards licensing vs. registration. Big step, especially for small businesses.
- Principal residence requirement is strict.
  - Currently own a second property next door to primary residence, but separate property/unit. Would be excluded if primary residence was a requirement even though right next door.
  - As a traveller, primary residence doesn't matter. As long as there is clear communication to the guest and a local contact provided. It doesn't matter if the local contact is the owner
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- Perception that it's happening, it's done. Seems like a decision has already been made (comment made by 2 participants).
  - Council direction was to look into adding it to the Business License By-law. WG has explored licensing, registration and no regulation. WG was leaning towards licensing. No regulations or requirements for registration. No inspections etc.
- No known issues reported. Why go this route?
  - Equity issue – hotels and bed and breakfasts operate similar businesses and are subject to licensing
- Brief conversation about the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) – Guelph is adopting a 4% tax applied for every overnight stay.
  - UofG exemption? Potentially exempt from licensing and registration as well?
  - Provincial legislation allowed for universities to be exempt from MAT
  - 4% tax would be captured through Airbnb platform as well
- Business License By-law has regulations that apply across all businesses and some that only to apply to some business categories. Would STR be its own category? Are there other things that would apply to STR. Don't reinvent the wheel. If existing by-laws would apply, don't duplicate or make new ones (i.e. Noise by-law covers noise complaints.)
  - If registered, not licensed, businesses would be enforced under existing bylaws such as parking, noise, but doesn't stop them from operating as a business. Are existing tools enough without having to license?
- See the value in the inspections – ensures safety of guests. Were careful to take this into account when planning the STR unit. Good to have efforts validated. Would add value, being a licensed STR.
- Some concern with costly repairs/work that might arise from inspections.
  - Current property is not accessible – could that become an issue?
    - Only if the City makes it a requirement



- Is self/private regulation enough? Airbnb has high standards, very reputable. Can the City rely on these platforms to do the regulation for them?
  - In the owners' best interest to run business well – good reviews
  - Property owner can adjust settings for security on Airbnb. High settings were people have to reach out to owner, can't book directly. Have to provide government ID, and have positive reviews as a renter. Owner can decide.
- Concern with a question in the online survey asking what was important to people when choosing a location (i.e. proximity to 401, public transit, shopping etc.) This depends on the individual's purpose for travelling. People pick their location based on their needs. Small business provides diversity of location. Don't need to have regulations based on location.
  - Location is only relevant if people indicated that they wanted this regulated by the City. Likely won't be.
- Who is paying for research to do this study/process?
  - Municipal process that the City is paying for. How much has been spent? Most of the work is done by staff. Don't track hours for specific projects. City staff have been doing research, communications staff help with stakeholder engagement, consulting team have helped facilitate meetings and survey design. This is part of municipal work, on Council's direction.
- So many unique situations. Market and demand inform the supply. Like the idea of "light touch" licensing.
- STR and LTR are connected. Cannot solve STR problem without solving LTR issues.
- If looking at overall housing market, need to look at STR and LTR. Council needs to look at both to solve the problem. LTR owners do not have protection (renters not paying and/or not leaving the property). This was a concern among several STR owners. Looks like they're just interested in pleasing hotels, big business.
- If licensing is applied, Airbnb prices will go up and the market will shrink.
- Number of Airbnbs is insignificant compared to the estimated numbers of LTRs in Guelph
- Why do we care what other municipalities are doing? Should have a made in Guelph solution.
  - Different municipalities have done different things in response to STR
  - Learn from their experiences, not reinvent the wheel.
  - Council has a list of comparator municipalities that Guelph uses
  - Comparators lean towards a primary residence requirement. This is not generally what we're hearing for Guelph so far.
- Feel disconnected from WG/peers – they're making recommendations and they don't know our unique experiences.
  - Can reach out to Councillors, delegate at Council meeting
  - Minutes list WG member names
- Don't see a benefits to me (the owner) in licensing
- Not in favour of licensing. Incentivize people to come forward (register) voluntarily, at a lower fee.
  - Would be more supportive of that model .Self-regulating. A voluntary registry with lower fee would be more palatable.



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- Most successful STR owners are likely compliant with health, safety, fire. Already have high standards.
- Would licensing be a selling point? Is there an off-setting benefit to hosts?
  - No tenants care about licensing
  - Might be a requirement of Airbnb on their site (if you're within Guelph) – this would be the case. Airbnb would require hosts to be licensed if the City makes it a requirement.
  - Airbnb contacted hosts and encouraged them to attend these public meetings!

