



Guelph STR Town Hall #1 November 30, 2022 6:30-8 p.m.

The first of three synchronous Town Halls, seeking input from the community around short-term rentals (STR) in Guelph. At Council's direction, City of Guelph staff, along with a Working Group, have been exploring what specific regulations might be included if short-term rentals were added to the City's existing Business Licence By-law

Eight community members attended the first 90-minute, digital session, along with three City staff and two individuals from the consulting team. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions using mentimeter that mirrored some questions already included in the online survey – they could then elaborate on their answers both aloud in the chat. Input has been captured in the notes that follow.

The mix of input methods were used in different ways by different participants. Some just listened, some responded to the [anonymous] Mentimeter questions, several used the chat and some were quite vocal in the oral conversation. The number of Mentimeter responses has been noted with each question.

Scott Green provided a brief introduction that offered context to the STR by-law review currently underway. The purpose of these community sessions is to validate and deepen the work of the Working Group (WG) and seek public input on some key questions. He highlighted that this review process is happening at Council's request, and needs to result in a bylaw that encourages voluntary compliance and is manageable for the City to administer.

Questions/comments on the review process

- The City was asked to share the objectives that were discussed in the presentation. These are outlined in the February 7 staff report (page 7) available online <https://pub-guelph.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=4a8ae098-6cd4-4ece-9269-f67ed69d3a69&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=21&Tab=attachments>
- What was the problem that required this process (by-law review)? What problem is the City trying to solve?
 - Staff was directed by Council to research the subject.
 - Methodologically, Staff chose to create a Working Group (WG) and a broader community engagement process to fulfill that directive. The WG is seeking a made-in-Guelph solution while learning from the experience of other municipalities.

- The main impetus is to achieve equity in regulation across various types of accommodation, including hotels, bed and breakfasts and short-term rental units. The former two categories require a business license and are subject to safety inspections etc. There are currently no regulations affecting short-term rentals in Guelph.
- There is no current data on the number of complaints generated as a result of short-term rentals in the Guelph
- **Input:**
 - **Be sure we are solving a real and not a hypothetical problem.**
 - **Long-term rentals are likely of greater concern and there are far more of them.**
- Can people see the notes from the WG meetings and/or join the WG now?
 - Donna Tremblay to connect with Clerk's Office and determine if sharing the notes is appropriate. If so, they would be posted on the City's website Donna will follow-up with individual directly.
 - There was a call for participation in the WG in the spring, the group has meet three times since July and is nearing the end of its mandate. City received ~54 applications, ~12 were selected and provide a balance of voices around the table. No additional members can join at this time. Donna will look into whether people can attend as observers.

What is your relationship with short-term rentals inside Guelph?

(Participants were asked to choose all that apply; 6 responses)

Host or owner	5
Prospective host	3
Traveller/Visitor to Guelph	1
Guelph resident who also uses STR in Guelph	1
Neighbour to an existing STR	0
Long-term renter interested in the by-law	0
Homeowner interested in the by-law	1
Local business owner/operator in the tourism industry	1
Other	0



Rank these bylaw goals based on what is most important to you (5 responses)



Comments/questions

- If you destroy the market for short term rentals they will simple not exist. They are not taking up spaces that would otherwise be long-term rentals. (2)
- Problems are all related. LTR issues need to be resolved. Not enough protection for owners/hosts/landlords.
- Concerns that that the City does not fully understand how Airbnb works based on how the survey questions are worded, Self-regulated, peer-reviewed system. Mis-management issues are hard to find. Everything is cross-referenced.
 - WG has reviewed a lot of background data, Airbnb hosts are part of the WG, we have spoken with Airbnb. WG is looking to hear from the public on a few specific topics right now within a larger conversation – these questions do not reflect all of the issues the WG is discussing.
- Why would I, as a homeowner who also lives in the house need licensing? Second question is: In my situation, where the bathroom and the kitchen is shared, not even the Tenancy Act protects my guests. (2)
 - If the decision is to licence, you would need to comply with the by-law requirements
- Sounds as if the hotel chains applied pressure to the city.
 - So far this is the only factual piece of data we have on the issues outlined
- Can you elaborate why that matters at all? (See answers above re: what has led to this review)



Which ownership or operating model is in the best interest of Guelph?
(4 responses)

Owner must be a principal resident on the property	4
Unit owned by someone who lives in Guelph but not necessary on the same property	0
Unit owned by someone living within a 100 km radius	0
Unit owned by someone living in the province but with a local contact	0
Unit may be internationally owned or owned by umbrella corporation but with a local contact	0

- The City provided a definition of a principal residence: An “owner” is a person who owns or rents a unit alone or in partnership with another person. In a principal residence, the owner lives either in the unit or at the same address, and has it listed as their principal place of residency on their income tax and in other government records. A principal residence may even include rentable units that are on the same property but separate from the main building, such as laneway houses or a unit above a separate garage.
- Concern was expressed that the that the Working Group is on the wrong track as "owner" and "resident" are not interchangeable as the question infers. e.g. The resident may not be the owner. The resident could be local while the owner is not.



To what extent would a principal residence requirement increase the chances of success for the bylaw objectives?

(4 responses)



More comments:

- It is not important where the owner lives as soon as they provide proper communication and support for the guest. It is his/her responsibility.
- Primary residence is important. Regulations for property owners.
- What happens if primary residence is a requirement? No one would be allowed/qualified to rent out on Airbnb in Guelph?
 - If that's what Council decides, then yes. People would need the primary residence requirement to get a license.
 - But they will make this decision based on YOUR report/input.
- Different types of hosts in Airbnb. Some have one property and rent part of it. Some rent multiple properties as a business. Puts small business in unfamiliar and unequal position if you make regulations about licensing for small rentals. Income is incomparably different. Give huge privileges to larger businesses and kill smaller ones.
 - Would licensing disadvantage smaller businesses?
 - Everyone would have to meet the same criteria
 - If a primary residence is required and you have multiple properties, they would need to licence them all
 - Municipal Act does not allow the City to make money on licensing. Develop business licence fee based on costs (fire, health, zoning inspections and administration) – a cost recovery model.
 - It is a per unit cost. Larger businesses have more units so would pay more.
- UofG has lots of STRs – would they be subject to this as well?



- Yes, absolutely
- Is there evidence to suggest that licensing helps with anything?
 - Licensed – must meet the criteria. Can promote this to prospective tenants that you meet a certain standard.
 - A licensed STR meets certain standards. Will help the City who has to deal with complaints.
- Are short-term rentals less safe than long-term (from police perspective)?
- Needs standards on LTR before STR. Small number of STR and large number of unlicensed LTRs.
- Some listing platforms have high standards and they are used the most. We do not know how many STRs are not on those platforms – a high percentage would be.
 - Airbnb regulates itself based on reviews. Those that don't stand up will get bad reviews and not continue to get bookings.
- So far we have not heard a real data-driven problem statement

If a licensing model is adopted, should the City limit short-term rentals in any of the following ways?

(4 responses)

	No	Unsure	Yes
Number of licences given out to any one person or entity	4		
Number of licences given out across the city	4		
Number of licences given out in any one neighbourhood or area of the city	4		
Locations within a neighbourhood or an area of the city they can operate	3	1	
Number of guests allowed on the property	1		3

- As soon as City starts making these decisions, it will be a mess. People choose places they like. Different requirements and needs for different people – the City doesn't know anything about them. Regulating is a big mistake. Leave little businesses alone to happily develop. That is what will lead to the prosperity of the community, tourism.

What kind of location or area within the city might you be looking for when selecting a short-term rental in Guelph?

(4 responses)

Specific neighbourhoods	3
Services nearby	2
Shopping nearby	0
Close to transit or train station	0



Access to 401 or major highways	0
Onsite parking	2
Location is not important	1

What kind of accommodation type might you be looking for?

(3 responses)

Single room	2
Suite, studio or bachelor apartment style unit	1
Full house	2
Full apartment	2
Separate one bedroom unit in an occupied house	2
Separate 2 or more bedroom unit in an occupied house	1
Separate building on a property where the main home is occupied by the host	2

Is there anything else you would like to share to help us develop a short-term rentals by-law that is right for Guelph?

- We want data, we want real issues, not hypothetical issues. So far there is zero evidence that there are real issues to be addressed
- As is very clear, most participants in this discussion are Airbnb hosts. How can you get input from other residents? Or, does the fact that no one seems to be here, is this not a concern for residents in general? (3)
- The cost of licensing will bury this market alive unless you guys change direction, This is all truly terrible news for all of us so far.
- Question about how the City tracks Airbnbs in the city
 - Granicus is the software being used
- Participant received information in the mail about the community consultation. It had a specific address but no name. How did the City get this information?
 - Granicus extracts info on addresses of STRs in Guelph. Based on these addresses the City was able to send information to postal codes in an area where STRs are located so they could attend the sessions and/or take the survey.
- The questions suggest a lack of understanding about the industry and the global economy of sharing. No reason to bring in licensing without solving real problems. Adding costs and taking money out of pockets. Don't care that the City doesn't make money on licenses.
- If I want to rent my house twice a year while on vacation, do I need to have a fire inspection? People will leave the market.



Will/did you attend another Town Hall or complete the online survey
(Choose all that apply; 1 response)

Yes, I will attend another town hall meeting	1
Yes, I have filled out the survey	1
Yes, I will fill out the survey	
I am not sure about attending	
I am not sure about the survey	

Next steps

- Community consultations will end in mid-December. Staff will review the input and report back to the Working Group in January.
- Working Group will make recommendations to staff, who will then make final recommendations for Council's consideration.
- Report will go to Council in March 2023

