

Articles on Short-term Rentals

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2015 | 10 COMMENTS

Zoning Meets Property Rights: Airbnb and VRBO Outlawed in Several Utah Cities

By Josh Daniels

Recently we [interviewed](#) a St. George resident who was warned by a city code enforcement officer that his house sharing attempts via the popular site Airbnb were in violation of an ordinance prohibiting short-term rentals. The Palmers were using Airbnb to rent the basement of their home to tourists in order to supplement their family's income—an activity that yielded not a single complaint from anybody.

This crackdown highlights the strong arm of the regulatory state over a growing “sharing economy” which pits innovation, individual liberty, free enterprise, and private property rights against the regulatory “police power” of local government. This is reminiscent of recent actions in Utah to regulate popular [ride-sharing](#) apps Lyft and Uber, and innovative insurance broker [Zenefits](#)—except in this case the government is not just attempting to regulate commerce alone, but the very rights of an individual property owner.

In house-sharing arrangements, sites like [Airbnb](#) and [VRBO](#) match travelers with individual property owners who are willing to share all or part of their property with someone for a short period of time. In Utah you can find anything from someone's air mattress for \$10 per night to an entire luxurious ski lodge for thousands of dollars per night. Such a wide range of options do not exist in the commercial lodging market.

Private short-term rentals play an important role, as they cater to an underserved market segment. Many potential travelers feel constrained by a market where their options are limited to commercial hotel and motel rooms, which are often clustered in specific areas and lack the feel and warmth of a home environment. Commercial rooms are also usually priced within a specific consistent range, leaving few options for cost-conscious consumers. Additionally, most commercial options do not serve large groups and families very well; large groups might prefer an extended stay in a venue that permits cooking and other activities more akin to a home than a hotel. These are all features that the sharing economy can (and does!) provide.

The strength of a sharing economy is that there is diversity of choice for consumers at a variety of price points. The success of house sharing services to date reveals existing market inefficiencies created by regulation and central planning that have gone unnoticed. No commercial provider is offering air mattresses in someone's spare bedroom for \$10 per night. Too often we assume that the preferences of consumers are relatively homogenous and match the existing market supply. The principle of disruptive innovation reveals the fallacy of this short-sighted assumption. Steve Jobs articulated this idea well when talking about the development of the iMac. He [explained](#) that when developing an innovative new product, “a lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them.” In the case of short-term rentals, consumers did not realize they would like to rent a private person's home until these sharing platforms showed how easy and beneficial it could be.

Of course, we didn't need the internet to know that this was possible or useful. “Boarding-out” has been in practice for hundreds of years in this country. Many households in the nineteenth century took on boarders routinely to help pay the bills. Such an arrangement is efficient, as it takes advantage of unused space and can be particularly helpful to the real estate market by increasing the demand for homes. For example, a small but growing family may justify buying a five bedroom house, knowing they can rent out two of the rooms until they need the space at a later date. In this way, they can offset the cost of the larger house and avoid having to rent a smaller three bedroom apartment or move from a smaller starter home once their family has grown.

The sharing economy empowers individuals to participate in the marketplace as a sort of “micro-supplier” and not just as a consumer. This adds diversity to the market by giving consumers more choices, thereby creating efficiencies previously not possible because the transaction costs for a micro-supplier to find willing buyers was too high for any one micro-supplier. Innovative social pairing sites like Airbnb, VRBO, Lyft, and Uber bear the large upfront transaction costs of creating a platform to match these new micro-suppliers with willing consumers. The internet merely reveals the diverse suppliers and consumers and helps match them for a small fee.

Across Utah we have identified several cities that have specific regulations prohibiting short-term rentals; many more have used existing zoning restrictions to ban the practice of house sharing. The city councils of Moab, St. George, Park City, and Provo have each enacted ordinances prohibiting residents from renting their own properties to patrons. Interestingly, Park City makes an exception for residents in one specific subdivision; residents in the Prospector Village subdivision are welcome to host tourists, but those living elsewhere are not. We have also spoken to a number of individuals in other cities where code enforcement has cited zoning ordinances as the reason individuals in residential zones are not permitted to rent a portion of their house for a short-term (despite the city not having any ordinance that explicitly bans them). Utah is not unique; short-term rentals have faced [opposition](#) across the country including notable battles in New York City.

Regulation on short-term rentals, if regulated at all, should not differ significantly from regulations on long-term rentals and should not be instituted for the purpose of limiting the number of short-term rentals. Renting a home long-term does not change the property from residential to commercial, nor does a short-term stay turn the property into commercial use. The type of tenant does not change the structure or nature of the residence, and therefore should not change the zoning. A property that is rented for a short-term today may, at the discretion of the owner, be rented for a longer-term tomorrow.

Additionally, using zoning regulations to micromanage property use interferes with the fundamental right of use and enjoyment of property. It is our belief that such a practice is in fact unconstitutional and constitutes a regulatory taking. While zoning has been ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court in [Euclid v. Ambler Realty](#) as a reasonable extension of the police power to regulate nuisances, we feel that this prospective approach to control speculative potential nuisances that have not actually presented themselves runs counter to the principle of liberty. As readers learn in our [interview](#) with Mr. Palmer, existing nuisance regulations are sufficient because they apply equally to all citizens whether owners, guests, or tenants—and these ordinances are not dependent on the arrangement or length of the tenancy. If there is a noise or parking problem, then enforcement should address that nuisance instead of creating blanket rules infringing on the rights of innocent property owners in hopes of mitigating future potential (and infrequent) nuisances.

When weighing private property rights against the regulatory interests of the government, deference should always go to property rights. Government exists to protect these rights—rights whose conceptual existence pre-date the government itself. Zoning regulations turn this model on its head, arguing that property rights are in fact privileges granted by government. Once we have collectively transformed our rights into privileges granted by government, we have changed the form of government from one predicated on liberty, where government derives its power from a delegation by individuals, to a type of government where individuals are subordinate to, and serve the interests of, the state.

Creating regulations aimed at reducing the number of short-term rentals does not serve as a protection of the public or of any particular right of a neighbor. Rather, it reeks of protectionism and central planning with no substantive or legitimate public benefit. Cities in Utah should welcome the market efficiencies and economic development brought on by the innovations of the sharing economy, rather than bowing to the interests of incumbent industries using the complaint process to send enforcement officers after the upstart competitors.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2012 voted unanimously in favor of [a resolution](#) that supports allowing short-term rentals in America's cities as an economic development opportunity and proposed treating short-term rental tenants the same as long-term rental tenants. If Utah really cares about free enterprise and private property rights, it is important that cities get this right.

About the Author

Josh Daniels is a policy advisor for the Libertas Institute. He graduated with a B.A. in Political Science from Brigham Young University and with a J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center. Previously, he worked for three years as an aide to US Congressman Pete Olson and served for eight years in the United States Marine Corps.

By Heather Kelly, CNN | Posted Jun 23rd, 2016 @ 11:17am

SAN FRANCISCO (CNNA Money) — In 2013, the new owners of a four-unit Spanish-style building in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Fairfax evicted their tenants. The residents, some of whom had lived there for decades, had been paying between \$1,600 and \$2,600 a month.

A few weeks later, the same apartments popped up on Airbnb. The landlords were charging around \$500 a night.

Practically every major U.S. city is struggling with how to handle the boom of short-term rentals. Most have enacted or are considering regulations for services like Airbnb.

Critics of sites like Airbnb have long claimed that the services remove affordable housing from the market by turning rentable apartments into unofficial year-round hotels. A drop in supply can mean higher rents for remaining apartments. Hotel industry groups are also upset at the loss of revenue.

But Airbnb claims its site primarily offers an "economic lifeline" to help residents pay their bills, rent or a mortgage.

This week, Los Angeles started to take action against rent-controlled apartments that have been illegally converted into short-term rentals. The city filed criminal charges against the Fairfax building's owners and civil cases against three other building owners. Five of the displaced tenants filed a lawsuit against the owner and Airbnb in December.

The city has also proposed an ordinance that would let hosts rent their homes for up to 120 days a year, as long as they live there at least six months of the year and follow a number of rules.

New York state and San Francisco are also close to cracking down on short-term rental sites with hefty new fines.

A pending New York bill would make it illegal for many people to list their apartments on sites like Airbnb. It's already illegal for people to rent most apartments for fewer than 30 days in the state, but this law backs it up with bite. Hosts violating the ban would face fines up to \$7,500. Airbnb says more than 40,000 hosts could be subject to the fines.

"This is a bad proposal that will make it harder for thousands of New Yorkers to pay the bills," Josh Meltzer, Airbnb's head of New York public policy, said in a statement.

In Airbnb's hometown of San Francisco, a new rule set to take effect on July 27 will require all hosts to register with the city. Instead of fining hosts, the San Francisco law would fine the rental companies up to \$1,000 a day for each listing, putting the burden on the companies to make sure each listing is legal.

But the \$50 registration process is analog enough to turn off many hosts. It can't be completed online and requires submitting all the documents in person.

Chicago on Wednesday passed an ordinance that will tack a 4 percent surcharge onto short-term rentals and require hosts to register their units. It also lets some residential neighborhoods petition to have unwanted listings banned.

Other cities like Seattle and New Orleans are still weighing legislative options. They include surcharges, annual caps on rentals, and safety regulations. Airbnb and industry groups are actively talking to most of the cities, hoping to shape any future laws.

Some U.S. locations are friendlier to the industry. San Jose, Rhode Island and Denver have all passed Airbnb-friendly laws. In Philadelphia, people can share homes for up to 180 days a year.

Airbnb is not alone. Local and state governments have been busy trying to crack down on the on-demand industries that already flourished in unregulated gray areas.

Ride-hailing companies Uber and Lyft have teams of lawyers and lobbyists fighting a seemingly unending stream of lawsuits and laws. The companies recently pulled out of Austin, Texas, over background check requirements, claiming fingerprinting would slow down the driver on-boarding process

Airbnb is prepared to fight. It is valued at more than \$25 billion, and it has hired political veterans like Chris Lehane, a former adviser to Bill Clinton.

To convince cities and activists that short-term rentals can serve a common good, Airbnb might have to work harder to weed out sketchy landlords like the ones in Los Angeles.

"I think short-term rentals pose a serious threat to affordable housing," said attorney Randy Renick, who represents the Los Angeles tenants. "And in Los Angeles, the platform most widely used by landlords to evade the law is Airbnb."

Updated to include new Chicago Airbnb regulations.

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AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HURRICANE, UTAH, AMENDING SECTION 3-10-11 OF THE HURRICANE CITY CODE, REGULATING THE LICENSING AND USE OF DWELLINGS IN A RESIDENTIAL ZONE FOR SHORT TERM VACATION RENTALS.

WHEREAS the Hurricane City Council previously passed an ordinance regulating the licensing and use of dwellings in a residential zone as short term vacation rentals; and

WHEREAS said City Council thereafter placed a moratorium on the issuance of business licenses for short term vacation rentals pending further review and study of the issues surrounding the use of dwellings in a residential zone for short term vacation rentals; and

WHEREAS said City Council deems it necessary to amend said ordinance in order to balance the right of property owners to use their property in all lawful ways against the right of property owners to the quiet use and enjoyment of their property; and

WHEREAS said City Council finds it necessary for the protection and preservation of the public health, safety and welfare,

BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED that Section 3-10-11 of the Hurricane City Code be amended in its entirety to read as follows:

3-10-11 SHORT TERM VACATION RENTAL RULES AND REGULATIONS:

Regulations and restrictions imposed by this section are in recognition of the premise that a vacation rental provides lodging for a transient population that may or may not honor neighborhood mores or exhibit neighborly consideration to the same extent as permanent residents. Separation requirements listed in B. below and total license limits listed in C. below are based on a desire to maintain the overall residential character of neighborhoods and the purpose of single family residential zones to promote safe locations for residential uses.

A. Business License Required:

No dwelling in a residential zone shall be occupied or used as short term vacation rental, or advertised for use as a short term vacation rental, until such time that the owner has obtained a short term vacation rental business license issued in accordance with the provisions of this section.

B. Conditions for Issuance of a Business License for a Short Term Vacation Rental:

In addition to any other requirement of this section, a short term vacation rental business license shall be approved by the business license officer if:

1. The dwelling unit is located in a single family dwelling that has been issued a certificate of occupancy by the date of the adoption of this ordinance, or has been in use as a residential dwelling for at least six (6) months from issuance of a certificate of occupancy before application is made for a short term vacation rental license. Notwithstanding the previous restriction,

application may be made for a short term vacation rental license for a single family dwelling that has been issued a certificate of occupancy but has not met the six month residential use restriction upon deposit of \$100 and submittal of a complete application. If applicant does not then pay the remainder of the licensing fee and complete the licensing process within 7 months of the initial deposit, deposit shall be forfeit. Portions of a single family dwelling may not be used as a short term vacation rental unless licensed as a bed and breakfast or residential hosting facility in accordance with the regulations for that use. A short term vacation rental and a bed and breakfast or residential hosting facility may not be located in the same single family dwelling,

2. The owner of a single family dwelling for which a short term vacation business license is sought does not hold a business license to operate another short term vacation rental within the Hurricane City limits. For purposes of this paragraph, "owner" means any individual, corporation, partnership, limited liability company, trust or other entity which has a legal or equitable ownership interest in the single family dwelling, or any individual who has an ownership interest in any corporation, partnership, limited liability company, trust or other entity which has a legal or equitable ownership interest in the single family dwelling.

3. The property line of another dwelling licensed as a short term vacation rental or with a complete application and deposit on file while waiting to fulfill the six month waiting period is not located within 300' (three hundred feet), as measured along the same street or around the corner, of the front property line corners of the property where the proposed short term vacation rental license is being sought,

4. The application lists the name, address and phone number of the owner or other person designated by the owner as the property manager who shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations specified in this section, and

5. The application includes a valid Utah State Tax number for remittance of transient lodging taxes.

C. Limit on Total Number of Short Term Vacation Rental Licenses:

The total number of short term vacation rental business licenses issued within the City of Hurricane shall be limited in accordance with the following:

1. The maximum number of short term vacation rental business licenses for property in single family zones to be issued shall be based on the total population of the City, allowing three (3) licenses for every 1,000 of total population.

2. The total number of licenses available each year shall be recalculated based on an estimated population derived by adding the total number of new dwelling units times 2.9 residents per unit to the prior year's base population.

3. If a complete application meeting all other requirements for licensure is received after the maximum number of licenses has been issued, the application shall be placed on a waiting list in order of the date of receipt of a completed application. No fees will be due until a license becomes available.

4. In the event of a sale or other transfer of any property containing a dwelling licensed as a short term vacation rental, the purchaser or transferee of the property shall be required to apply for a new license within forty five (45) days of the date of purchase or transfer. In the event that the purchaser or transferee fails to apply for a new license within said forty five (45) days, the license will be forfeited and the owner must re-apply for any available license or be placed on the waiting list.

D. Parking Regulations:

The owner of any property licensed as a short term vacation rental shall provide off street parking for guests in accordance with the following:

1. Off street parking shall be provided on the same lot as the dwelling which is licensed as a short term vacation rental.
2. Parking shall be provided at one vehicle per bedroom. Tandem spaces on a driveway may be used.
3. All guest parking should be contained on the site.
4. No off street parking space may be located in front of the living area of the dwelling unless there is a circular driveway.
6. The number of vehicles allowed by the occupants of a vacation rental home shall be restricted to the number of off street parking spaces provided by the owner.

E. Maintenance Standards:

Any property that contains a dwelling which is licensed as a short term vacation rental shall conform to the following standards:

1. Structures shall be properly maintained, painted and kept in good repair, and grounds and landscaped areas shall be properly maintained and watered in order that the use in no way detracts from the general appearance of the neighborhood;
2. The use of a dwelling as a short term rental shall not in any way change the appearance of the dwelling or property for residential purposes; and
3. Each sleeping room must meet current International Residential Code codes for egress and be equipped with smoke and CO detectors. A fire exiting route plan and maximum occupancy number must be posted in each sleeping room.

F. Prevention of Noise, Nuisance or Trespass:

The owner of any dwelling licensed as a short term vacation rental shall be responsible to ensure that guests or occupants of the short term rental do not:

1. Create noises that by reason of time, nature, intensity or duration are out of character with noises customarily heard in the surrounding residential neighborhood.

2. Disturb the peace of surrounding residential property residents by engaging in shouting, fighting, playing of loud music, racing of cars or recreational vehicles on streets, engaging in outside recreational activities after 10 p.m., or other similar activities.
3. Interfere with the privacy of surrounding residents or trespass onto surrounding residential properties.
4. Allow pets or animals to create noise, roam the streets, trespass on neighboring properties, or create a mess that is not cleaned up by the owner or custodian of the pet or animal.
5. Engage in any disorderly or illegal conduct, including illegal consumption of drugs and alcohol.

G. Required Posting:

The following information must be posted in a clear, concise, and unambiguous manner and in a conspicuous location inside any dwelling licensed as a short term vacation rental:

1. a copy of the vacation rental business license
2. the name, address, and phone number of the owner or property manager
3. the location of all fire extinguishers
4. a list of all rules applicable for vacation rentals
5. the maximum occupancy of the vacation rental and the maximum number of vehicles allowed.

H. Miscellaneous Rules and Regulations:

The following rules and regulations shall apply to any dwelling for which a short term vacation rental business license has been issued:

1. Outdoor pools, hot tubs or spas shall not be used between the hours of eleven o'clock (11:00) p.m. and six o'clock (6:00) a.m.
2. Maximum occupancy in any dwelling licensed as a short term vacation rental shall be ten (10) persons at any one time. If, however, the property has a fire sprinkler system or other fire suppression system acceptable to the Hurricane Valley Fire District, a greater occupancy may be approved. Maximum occupancy of the dwelling must be included in the regulations sign.
3. The owner of any property containing a dwelling licensed as a short term vacation rental shall cause to be displayed in a city approved location on the exterior of the property an approved sign containing the name and 24 hour-per-day, 365 day-per-year telephone number of the owner or other party designated by the owner as property manager who will be responsible for receiving and resolving complaints regarding activities on the property and the conduct of its occupants and guests. The sign shall not exceed 12" X 18" and shall be the only sign other than an address permitted on a short term vacation rental property.

4. The owner or property manager shall provide information on current occupants to police, emergency, or city personnel as requested. The owner or other person designated as the property manager shall respond to complaints and concerns within one (1) hour of any phone call or other notification. Failure of the owner or property manager to respond in a timely manner may result in a violation and possible fines to the business license holder and property owner.

5. The requirements of this section shall be in effect throughout the time a short term vacation rental license is in effect on the property, regardless of whether the property is occupied by the owner, non-paying guests of the owner, or paying guests of the owner. The City finds that, given the practical difficulty of determining whether or not the occupants are paying guests, enforcement of the requirements contained in this section shall be based on whether the property is licensed as a short term vacation rental.

6. An inspection of a vacation rental property for compliance with these regulations will be performed at the time of business license review. Additional inspections may be performed with 24 hour notice to the license holder/property manager if deemed necessary by the City.

7. The owner of any dwelling licensed as a short term vacation rental shall be required to collect and remit on a timely basis transient lodging taxes.

I. Enforcement Provisions:

1. Any owner of any dwelling in a residential zone within the City of Hurricane who allows or permits occupation of said dwelling as a short term vacation rental, as defined herein, without having first obtained a business license in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a Class B misdemeanor, which shall be punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 6 months, or any combination thereof for each such violation.

2. Any owner of any dwelling in a residential zone within the City of Hurricane, who, having first obtained a business license for use or occupation of said dwelling as a short term vacation rental, thereafter operates or permits operation of said short term vacation rental in violation of the terms and provisions of this section shall be guilty of an Infraction, and shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$750 for each such violation.

3. Any person who occupies a short term rental as a guest and who violates any local ordinance or state law shall be subject to arrest, issuance of a citation, or other criminal process in accordance with all state, federal or local statutes, rules or ordinances.

4. Violation of any provision of this section regulating short term vacation rentals shall constitute a separate offense for each day said violation occurs or continues.

5. In the event of three (3) or more violations of this section committed by an owner or guest, or any combination of the two, within any 12 month period, the city council may, depending on the nature or extent of the violations, proceed with revocation of the business license for any short term vacation rental property in accordance with the provisions of the general business license ordinance.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the subject matter of this ordinance shall be deemed to be of an urgent nature or in the nature of an emergency, and that this ordinance, upon passage and approval, shall take effect at the earliest possible time permitted by law after publication or posting.

PASSED AND APPROVED on this _____ day of _____, 2016.

John Bramall, Mayor

Attest:

Kaden DeMille, City Recorder

Pro Short Term Rental

About

The Short-Term Rental Advocacy Center (STRAC) is a broad-based coalition of property owners and managers, hosts, travelers and local businesses that recognizes the value of short-term rentals to both travelers and the local communities they visit. Increasingly, travelers are looking for alternative accommodations, and short-term rentals provide flexible housing options that allow them to spend longer periods of time in communities, in unique accommodations while contributing to the local economy. As such, municipalities should embrace this economic opportunity by working with industry stakeholders to establish a reasonable framework for regulating short-term rental activity so that all may benefit.

Any short-term regulation should be developed to protect the community, property owners and managers, hosts and travelers. The adoption of oppressive or limiting regulations on short-term rentals can have the detrimental effect of driving the pro-growth industry underground, effectively eliminating accountability and depriving communities of any corresponding tax and revenue benefits. Communities throughout the United States rely on local taxes to promote travel and tourism, and the fair and reasonable regulation of short-term rentals has the ability to ensure increased compliance, and in turn, increased tax revenue. At its core, successful short-term rental regulation allows municipalities to easily identify and contact a short-term rental owner, make the tax collection and remittance obligations clear, and ensure that short-term rentals remain an option for travelers. Importantly, successful regulations also balance the needs of long-term residents and the community as a whole.

Successful short-term rental regulation should:

- Recognize short-term rentals as a non-commercial activity considered under the same or similar guidelines and laws as those governing long-term residential rental properties.
- Apply to all types of short-term rentals without differentiations between residency, use, advertising or booking platforms or business models.
- Acknowledge that no additional laws or ordinances are necessary for dealing with nuisance issues, and that the enforcement of existing municipal and city codes is sufficient.
- Recognize that tax collection and remittance is not responsibility of the platform through which a short-term rental is located by a traveler or through which a reservation or payment is made.
- In cases where the registration of short-term rentals is desirable and includes the payment of an administrative or licensing fee, mandate that such fees shall be limited to a one time cost of \$100 or less and an annual renewal cost not to exceed \$25.

- Recognize the value of short-term rentals in providing flexible housing and legalize and formalize short-term rentals as a unique and valuable alternative for travelers.
- Be developed through an open and transparent dialogue among policymakers, industry stakeholders, property owners and the community.

Additional Info: The Short Term Rental Advocacy Center (STRAC) was created by Airbnb, HomeAway, TripAdvisor and FlipKey, in response to requests from owners, operators, and hosts who are seeking help to engage with policymakers that may be considering how formalizing fair and reasonable short-term rental regulations can responsibly foster this growing industry. STRAC is a project of the Travel Technology Association.

For more information about STRAC, email info@STRAdvocacy.org

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**STR PROPERTY LISTINGS ARE SPREAD ACROSS
100s OF DIFFERENT WEBSITES**



SHORT-TERM RENTAL HOUSING RESTRICTIONS

White Paper

PREPARED BY



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SHORT-TERM RENTAL HOUSING RESTRICTIONS

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PREFACE

This white paper on *Short-Term Rental Housing Restrictions* has been prepared by Robinson & Cole LLP in its capacity as national consultant to NAR. The paper is one in a series of white papers that NAR requests be prepared from time to time in order to focus on a particular smart growth-related issue that has arisen with sufficient frequency in communities around the country to merit a more in-depth analysis.

The analysis of short-term rental housing restrictions in this paper is provided by NAR under its Smart Growth program to help REALTORS® at the state and local level better understand the issues involved in these types of restrictions, and to tailor strategies, as appropriate, to address short-term rental housing regulatory initiatives in their communities.

Brian W. Blaesser
Robinson & Cole LLP
September 2011

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PAPER

This paper was prepared at the request of the National Association of REALTORS[®] (NAR). The purpose of this paper is to (1) explain the problem of short-term rental housing restrictions; (2) categorize and describe the different approaches taken by local governments to regulate short-term rental housing in their communities; (3) analyze the issues raised by these different regulatory approaches; (4) provide Realtors[®] with ways to address these issues; and (5) outline “best practices” approaches to short-term rental housing that Realtors[®] can use in discussing the issue with local government officials.

1.2 KEY TERMS

The term “short-term rental housing” typically means a dwelling unit that is rented for a period of less than thirty consecutive days. In general, short term rental housing differs from bed & breakfasts, hotels, motels, and other “lodging” uses by providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation. Although bed & breakfasts often are similar in appearance and location to many short-term rentals, they are distinguishable by the presence of the owner/operator on-site.¹ Boarding houses differ from short-term rentals by having multiple rooms or units for rent and common kitchen and dining facilities that are shared by the occupants.² Boarding houses also tend to be less transient than short-term rentals.³ Similarly, hotels and motels are distinguishable from short-term rentals by having separate entrances and an on-site management office.⁴ In some communities, short-term rental housing may be referred to as vacation rentals, transient rentals, or resort dwelling units.

Terms that appear in **bold typeface** are defined in the Glossary found at the end of this paper.

SECTION 2: OVERVIEW OF SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

2.1 PURPOSE – THE MUNICIPAL PERSPECTIVE

Many communities around the country, both vacation destination communities and non-vacation communities, have implemented some form of short-term rental housing regulation. Below is an overview of the most common reasons cited by communities for regulating short-term rental housing.

¹ See Nate Hutcheson, “Short-Term Vacation Rentals: Residential or Commercial Use?,” *Zoning News* (March 2002, American Planning Association) (hereinafter “APA Report”).

² See APA Report at 5.

³ See APA Report at 5.

⁴ See APA Report at 5.

2.1.1 Protection of Neighborhood Environment

The most commonly cited municipal purpose for regulating short-term rental housing is to protect the character of existing residential neighborhoods. Often these communities are responding to complaints from permanent residents about the disturbances that may be caused by short-term tenants, including excessive noise, late night parties, trespassing, increased traffic, and other disruptive activities. Generally speaking, the rationale is that vacationers and guests who do not have ties to the local community are more concerned with maximizing their fun than they are with being a good neighbor. This rationale is evident in the “resort dwellings” ordinance adopted by the City of Venice, Florida, which states:

[The] City council finds that resort dwelling rental activities in single-family neighborhoods affects the character and stability of a residential neighborhood. The home and its intrinsic influences are the foundation of good citizenship. The intent of these regulations is to prevent the use of single-family residences for transient purposes in order to preserve the residential character of single-family neighborhoods.⁵

2.1.2 Protection of Physical Characteristics

Some communities also cite the need to protect the physical characteristics of their residential neighborhoods. The underlying rationale is that short-term rental properties generally are not owner-occupied and therefore are less likely to be cared for to the same degree as permanent residences. At least, in theory, absentee property owners are presumed to be less diligent about the types of regular and routine maintenance tasks typically associated with home ownership, such as lawn maintenance, tree and shrub pruning, and exterior painting.

2.1.3 Revenue

For many communities, particularly those with a robust tourist industry, short-term rentals represent a potentially significant source of tax revenue. In Texas, for example, the Hotel Occupancy Tax statute broadly defines the term “hotel” to include any building that offers sleeping accommodations for consideration, including a “tourist home” or “tourist house,” and imposes a six percent tax on the price paid for such accommodations.⁶ Moreover, the Municipal Hotel Occupancy Tax statute authorizes Texas cities, towns and villages to impose and collect an additional nine percent tax on hotels, including short-term rental properties.⁷ The potential revenue available to municipalities with authority to tax short-term rentals is exemplified by a 2011 study prepared by the city auditor for Austin, Texas, which estimated that the city could gain \$100,000 to \$300,000 annually by collecting taxes on short-term rental properties.⁸ Communities that desire to collect such taxes may impose registration or licensing requirements as a means of identifying properties that are being used for short-term rentals and are therefore subject to taxation.

⁵ Venice, FL Land Development Code § 86-151.

⁶ See Texas Code §§ 156.001, 156.052. Accommodations of “at least 30 consecutive days, so long as there is no interruption of payment for the period,” are exempt from the tax. *Id.* § 156.101.

⁷ See Texas Code § 351.003.

⁸ See “City of Austin begins work on short-term rental regulations; Planning Commission to address safety, tax revenue concerns,” (Source: impactnews.com: Central Austin, April 22, 2011).

2.1.4 Fairer Competition with Licensed Lodging

Short-term rental restrictions may also be viewed as a means of leveling the playing field between the short-term rental industry and competing overnight lodging uses that may be specifically regulated under state or local law, such as hotels and bed and breakfasts. In some cases, the hotel industry has lobbied for the adoption of such regulations on the grounds that short-term rentals are functionally the same as hotel units and therefore should either be taxed and regulated like hotels, or prohibited. At a June 2011 meeting of the Planning Board of Buncombe County, North Carolina, for example, several hoteliers cited unfair competition in arguing against the potential repeal of a ban on vacation rentals in the county's more restrictive residential zoning districts. One industry representative testified that hotels "spend many, many hours and many, many dollars abiding by all the regulations that [hotels] are required to abide by and that many do not apply to short-term rentals."⁹

2.1.5 Protection of Renter Safety

A less commonly cited reason for the adoption of short-term rental regulations is the protection of renter safety. The rationale is that operational restrictions (e.g., occupancy limits based on septic system capacity) and inspection requirements are necessary to ensure the safety of occupants of short-term rental units. The City of Big Bear Lake, California, for example, has a "transient private home rentals" ordinance that is intended, in part, "to ensure . . . that minimum health and safety standards are maintained in such units to protect the visitor from unsafe or unsanitary conditions."¹⁰

2.2 TYPES OF SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

2.2.1 Prohibition

From the perspective of a short-term rental property owner, the most severe form of restriction is an outright ban on short-term rentals. A short-term rental prohibition may be limited to specific neighborhoods or zoning districts, or may be community-wide.

2.2.2 Geographically-Based Restrictions

Communities that choose to allow short-term rentals often use their zoning authority to regulate the use on a geographic basis. For example, Venice, Florida regulates short-term rental properties (referred to locally as "resort dwellings") only in the city's Residential Estate (RE) and Residential Single Family (RSF) zoning districts.¹¹ Similarly, Maui County, Hawaii permits transient vacation rentals only within certain business zoning districts and certain designated

⁹ "Buncombe planners wade into Asheville-area vacation rental issue again; County debates relaxing the rules," *The Asheville Citizen-Times*, June 6, 2011.

¹⁰ City of Bear Lake, CA Municipal Code § 17.03.310(A).

¹¹ See generally Venice, FL Land Development Code § 86-151.

“destination resort areas,” including the Wailea, Makena, Kaanapali, and Kapalua Resort Areas.¹²

2.2.3 Quantitative and Operational Restrictions

Other communities that allow short-term rentals may choose to implement a cap on the number of short-term rental permits that may be issued. Such an approach constitutes a compromise between short-term rental owners who argue that they have the right to rent their properties on a short-term basis, and opponents who argue that short-term rentals should be prohibited as an unlawful commercial use in a residential neighborhood. Quantitative restrictions may take the form of a fixed limit on the total number of short-term rental permits that may be issued at any given time. The City of Santa Fe, New Mexico, for example, authorizes the Land Use Director to issue “up to 350 short term rental permits” for residential properties that do not otherwise qualify for permits as an accessory dwelling unit, owner-occupied unit, or unit located within a “development containing resort facilities.”¹³ Similarly, the City of Cannon Beach, Oregon maintains a 92 permit cap on the number of transient rental permits that will be issued by the city.¹⁴ Alternatively, a community may implement a proximity restriction that prohibits a short-term rental property from being located within a certain distance of another short-term rental property. The “Residential Vacation Rentals” ordinance of San Luis Obispo County, California, for example, provides:

[N]o residential vacation rental shall be located within 200 linear feet of a parcel on the same block on which is located any residential vacation rental or other type of visitor-servicing accommodation that is outside of the Commercial land use category.¹⁵

Another type of quantitative restriction is that in the Mendocino County, California zoning ordinance, which requires the county to maintain a ratio of “thirteen (13) long term residential dwelling units to one (1) single unit rental or vacation home rental.”¹⁶

Many short-term rental regulations incorporate performance-type standards for the operation of short-term rental properties. Below are examples of these types of standards that are frequently incorporated into short-term rental regulations:

- **Maximum Occupancy Limits:** This standard limits the maximum overnight occupancy of short-term rental properties based on the number of bedrooms in the home (for example, the Isle of Palms, South Carolina limits overnight occupancy to two persons per bedroom plus an additional two persons¹⁷) and/or on the septic capacity of the property. In Sonoma County, California, for example, the maximum overnight occupancy of a vacation rental property on a conditional septic system is “equal to the design load of the septic system.”¹⁸

¹² See Maui County, HA County Code § 19.38.030(B).

¹³ See Santa Fe, NM City Code § 14-6.2(A)(6)(a)(i).

¹⁴ See City of Cannon Beach, OR Zoning Code § 17.77.020(F).

¹⁵ San Luis Obispo County, CA Code § 23.08.165(c).

¹⁶ Mendocino County, CA Code § 20.748.020(A).

¹⁷ See Isle of Palms, SC City Code § 5-4-202(1).

¹⁸ See Sonoma County, CA Code of Ordinances § 26-88-120(f)(2).

- Rental Period Restrictions: This restriction places a limit on the number of times a property may be rented for short-term occupancy. The City of Santa Fe, New Mexico, for example, limits short-term rental units to a maximum of 17 rental periods per calendar year and permits no more than one rental within a seven consecutive day period.¹⁹
- Parking Requirements: This standard may require that the short-term rented property provide more off-street parking than comparable properties that are occupied by owners or long-term tenants. Santa Fe also specifically prohibits short-term rental occupants from parking recreational vehicles on site or on the street.²⁰
- Noise Level Limits: This standard applies specific noise level limitations to activities associated with short-term rental properties. Sonoma County’s vacation rental ordinance, for example, includes an “Hourly Noise Metric” table that imposes specific quantitative noise level limits on vacation rentals during “activity hours” (9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.) and “quiet hours” (10:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m.).²¹
- Required Postings: This standard requires owners to prominently display a copy of the operational restrictions and contact information for the owner, manager, or other representative of the rental property.²² Owners may also be required to incorporate the operational restrictions in all rental agreements.
- Emergency Access Requirements: If located behind a locked gate or within a gated community, short-term rental units may be required to provide a gate code or lockbox with keys to local police, fire, or emergency services departments.²³
- Mandatory Designated Representatives: This standard requires that the short-term renter provide a current 24-hour working phone number of the property owner, manager, or other designated representative to local officials and to property owners within a certain distance of the rental unit. Some communities also require that the designated representative be available during all rental periods within a certain distance (e.g., a one-hour drive) of the rental property.²⁴
- Trash and Recycling Facility Storage: This standard requires that trash and recycling bins be stored in a location that is not visible from public rights-of-way. Section 5.25.070 of the City of Palm Springs, California vacation rental ordinance, for example, states: “Trash and refuse shall not be left stored within public view, except in proper containers for the purpose of collection by the collectors and between the hours of five a.m. and eight p.m. on scheduled trash collection days.”²⁵

¹⁹ See Santa Fe, NM City Code § 14-6.2(A)(6)(a)(ii).

²⁰ See Santa Fe, NM City Code § 14-6.2(A)(6)(a)(ii).

²¹ See Sonoma County, CA Code of Ordinances § 26-88-120(f)(6).

²² See, e.g., Venice, FL Land Development Code § 86-151(2)(b)(1).

²³ See, e.g., Sonoma County, CA Code of Ordinances § 26-88-120(f)(14).

²⁴ See, e.g., Sonoma County, CA Code of Ordinances § 26-88-120(f)(13).

²⁵ Palm Springs, CA Municipal Code § 5.25.070(g).

2.2.4 Registration/Licensing Requirements

Owners who intend to offer their property for use as a short-term rental unit may be required to register their property with the local government. Garrett County, Maryland, for example, requires owners to register their property with the Office of Licensing and Enforcement Management and to pay a one-time fee as condition precedent to receiving a “transient vacation rental unit license” from the County.²⁶ Short-term rental licenses often are valid only for a one- or two-year period, requiring property owners to renew the licenses—and to pay associated fees—on a regular basis.

Many communities require short-term rental properties to pass certain inspections prior to the issuance of a permit, license, or renewal. Tillamook County, Oregon, for example, as a condition to the issuance of a short-term rental permit, requires property owners to obtain a certification from a certified building inspector evidencing compliance with all applicable operational standards, including minimum fire extinguisher and smoke detector requirements, emergency escape and rescue standards, and structural requirements.²⁷

2.3 ENFORCEMENT

Communities typically enforce their short-term rental regulations (a) in accordance with a generally applicable enforcement provision contained in the code of ordinances or zoning ordinance, or (b) through a specific enforcement provision incorporated into the short-term rental regulations. Article 9 of the Isle of Palms, South Carolina Code of Ordinances is one example of a short-term rental ordinance that contains no specific enforcement provision, but is enforced under a generally applicable penalty provision.²⁸ Under the Isle of Palms Code of Ordinances, violation of the short-term rental ordinance is subject to the same penalties and procedures as a violation of any other provision the zoning code. Potential penalties for a violation are established under Section 5-4-7 of the Code of Ordinances, which states:

In case a structure or land is or is proposed to be used in violation of this chapter, the Zoning Administrator may, in addition to other remedies, issue and serve upon a person pursuing such activity or activities a *stop order* requiring that such person immediately cease all activities in violation of this chapter.

Any person violating any of the provisions of this chapter shall be deemed guilty of a *misdemeanor* and shall for each violation, upon conviction thereof, be punished as provided in section 1-3-66. Each day that a violation continues shall constitute a separate offense.²⁹

²⁶ See Garrett County, MD Code of Ordinances § 160.03(A).

²⁷ See Tillamook County (OR) Short Term Rental Ordinances, Sections 6 (Standards) and 9.A.b (Short Term Rental Permit Application Requirements).

²⁸ See generally Isle of Palms, SC City Code §§ 5-4-201 to -206 (Short-Term Rentals) and § 5-4-7 (Violations and Penalties).

²⁹ Isle of Palms, SC City Code § 5-4-7 (Emphasis added).

By contrast, the short-term rental ordinances of Sonoma County, California and Santa Fe, New Mexico contain specifically applicable enforcement provisions. Under Section 26-88-120(g) of the Sonoma County vacation rental ordinance, individuals who register an initial complaint about a vacation rental property are directed to the contact person identified in the zoning permit or use permit issued for the property. Subsequent complaints are addressed to code enforcement officials who are responsible for conducting an investigation to determine whether there was a violation of a zoning or use permit condition. Code enforcement may accept neighbor documentation consisting of photos, sound recordings and video as proof of an alleged violation. If code enforcement verifies that a violation has occurred, then a notice of violation is issued and a penalty may be imposed in accordance with Chapter 1 of the Sonoma County Code. In addition, under Section 26-88-120(g)(1), code enforcement officers are also given the discretion to schedule a revocation hearing with the board of zoning adjustment. If a vacation rental permit is revoked, then a new zoning or use permit for a vacation rental may not be reapplied for or issued for a period of at least one year.³⁰ Santa Fe's short term rental unit ordinance includes a specific provision that authorizes the city to revoke a short term rental permit upon conviction for a third violation of the ordinance.³¹

SECTION 3: IMPACTS OF SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

3.1 IMPACTS ON RENTAL PROPERTY OWNERS

3.1.1 Rental Income

For some rental property owners, the adoption of short-term rental restrictions may result in the *loss* of rental income altogether. The most obvious example is an owner of property located in a zoning district where short-term rentals are no longer allowed under a local ordinance. In areas where short-term rentals are allowed, other property owners might face the loss of rental income due to their inability, for financial or other reasons, to satisfy the requirements for obtaining a permit, such as minimum off-street parking or structural requirements. As discussed in Section 5.3.6 below, some short-term rental regulations might also cause an owner to lose rental income because of suspension or revocation of a rental permit, even if the reason for suspension or revocation is beyond the owner's control (e.g., tenant behavior).

There are several ways in which a short-term rental restriction might also result in a *decrease* in rental income. An ordinance that restricts the number of times a property may be rented per year could have a significant impact on the property's income potential. Santa Fe, New Mexico, for example, limits short-term rentals to 17 rental periods per year.³² A maximum overnight occupancy provision could also negatively affect the income potential of a rental property by reducing the number of guests to whom a home may be rented. Rental restrictions can also cause a reduction in rental income where they have the effect of narrowing the field of potential tenants or discouraging vacationers from renting a home. For example, an ordinance that prohibits

³⁰ See generally Sonoma County, CA Code of Ordinances § 26-88-120(g).

³¹ See Santa Fe, NM City Code § 14-6.2(A)(6)(a)(iv).

³² See Santa Fe, NM City Code § 14-6.2(A)(6)(a)(ii)(B).

short-term occupants from parking a recreational vehicle on site or on the street might deter families who travel by RV from renting a home in Santa Fe.³³

3.1.2 Property Values

Short-term rental restrictions can affect property values in different ways. Generally speaking, all else being equal, if identified negative impacts of short-term rentals in a district or neighborhood are reduced or eliminated by short-term rental housing restrictions, property values may increase. On the other hand, the added limitations on the use of properties that short-term rental housing restrictions impose may cause property values in the district or neighborhood to decrease. The precise impact that short-term rental restrictions have on property values will depend on various factors, including the general character of the community (e.g., vacation destination versus non-destination community), the precise terms of the ordinance, local and national economic conditions, and local real estate market conditions.

3.1.2.1 Existing Short-Term Rental Properties

In general, the value of a home that was used as a short-term rental prior to the adoption of restrictions, but is either prohibited or restricted from future use as a short-term rental, can be expected to *decrease*. That is particularly true in vacation destination communities, where homeowners often purchase second homes as investment properties.³⁴ These potential buyers often plan to use the second home as a short-term rental property until they retire or otherwise become able to maintain the property as their full-time residence.³⁵ Such buyers would tend to be less interested in purchasing in an area where the short-term rental market is highly uncertain or is constrained by burdensome regulations.

In some circumstances, it is conceivable that a short-term rental ordinance could increase the value of those homes that were used as short-term rentals prior to the adoption of the restrictions *and* become lawfully licensed for use under the new regulations. Under the general economic principle of supply and demand, if an ordinance has the effect of reducing the *supply* of short-term rental properties and the *demand* for short-term rental properties rises or remains constant, then the value of individual properties licensed as short-term rental properties after the adoption of regulations, can be expected to rise.

3.1.2.2 Properties Not Previously Used as Short-Term Rental Properties

The impact of short-term rental restrictions on the value of properties that were not used as short-term rentals prior to adoption of the restrictions will also vary. The value of a property that becomes licensed as a short-term rental for the first time under a new ordinance conceivably could *increase* if the quantity of short-term rental properties on the market falls as a result of the

³³ Section 14-6.2(A)(6)(a)(ii)(E) of the Santa Fe Short Term Rental Ordinance states: “Occupants shall not park recreational vehicles on site or on the street.”

³⁴ See National Association of Realtors®, *Nearly One in Seven Homebuyers Owned or Bought A Second Home During First Quarter*, July 13, 2003 (accessed at <http://www.realtor.org/publicaffairsweb.nsf/Pages/SecondHomeReport?OpenDocument>).

³⁵ See *id.*

ordinance. In residential neighborhoods where the existence of short-term rentals is considered a negative, an ordinance that prohibits future short-term rental activity in those neighborhoods could positively affect the value of homes in these locations.

3.1.3 Operational Costs

Short-term rental regulations tend to increase the cost of owning and operating a rental property in a number of ways. The regulations typically require owners to pay an up-front registration or permit fee and may also require payment of additional licensing fees on an annual or other recurring basis. Inspection requirements also add to the cost of operating a short-term rental since, in most cases, the inspections are performed at the owner's expense. Performance standards may also require an owner to undertake costly improvements in order to obtain a short-term rental permit. An owner may be required to expand an existing driveway in order to satisfy a minimum parking requirement or to upgrade electrical or sewer systems in order to qualify for a permit. In addition, a rental property owner who resides out of state may have to hire a property manager in order to satisfy a requirement that a designated representative be available at all times and within a certain proximity of the unit during any rental period.

3.1.4 Nonconforming Use Status

A property that was used as a short-term rental prior to the adoption of an ordinance that no longer allows short-term rentals may become a **nonconforming use** under state and local zoning laws. Although state and local zoning laws typically allow nonconforming uses to continue, the right to alter or expand a nonconforming use is usually limited and often requires the issuance of a special permit, or an equivalent form of zoning relief, from the local planning commission or board of appeals. In addition, a nonconforming use that is discontinued for a specific period of time (typically one or two years) may be deemed abandoned, and thereafter prohibited from resuming at a future date.

3.2 COMMUNITY IMPACTS

3.2.1 Local Real Estate Market

In vacation destination communities, many property owners depend on the income gained from short-term rentals to pay their mortgages, real estate taxes, association dues, and other expenses. If that income is taken away or severely reduced by short-term rental restrictions, the only alternative for those homeowners might be to sell their homes immediately in order to avoid foreclosure or a distressed sale. A widespread ban on short-term rentals that results in a substantial number of homes being sold or foreclosed upon may flood the market, causing property values to fall and remain depressed for a period of time.

3.2.2 Tourism

Short-term rental restrictions may negatively impact local tourism in at least two ways. First, they may affect the occupancy rates of vacation rentals by increasing the per-person cost of short-term rentals because they limit the maximum occupancy of a short-term rental unit. Short-

term rental restrictions may also cause rental property owners to increase their rental rates and minimum security deposits in order to cover the increased cost of operating a short-term rental and the risk of incurring a fine or having their rental licenses revoked or suspended. All else being equal, the higher rental rates paid by smaller groups of tenants, increase the per-person cost of short-term rentals in communities with short-term rental ordinances.

Second, tourists who become aware of the new restrictions may perceive them as being motivated by, and evidence of, an “anti-tourist” sentiment among full time residents of the community. Regulations that single out short-term rentals for different treatment may implicitly brand short-term renters as being potentially disruptive even though an individual tenant may have done nothing wrong. Provisions that allow random inspections of short-term rentals without imposing reasonable restrictions on the time or manner of those inspections may be perceived as an invasion of privacy and an unreasonable disruption of a family vacation. A perceived anti-tourist sentiment may ultimately discourage tourists from vacationing in that community.

A January 2010 report prepared by the Napa Valley Vacation Rental Alliance, argued that the availability of short-term rental properties could determine where a family or groups of friends vacationing together chooses to stay. The report states:

Throughout the world, some travelers prefer private dwellings to hotels. For instance, those traveling as a family or group of friends often want spacious accommodations and kitchens. This market segment will not substitute conventional lodging if vacation rentals are not provided, they will simply go elsewhere. Thus, by eliminating vacation rentals, Napa County would deter a substantial number of visitors who currently spend on restaurants, wine, attractions and services and who would instead spend for leisure outside our County.³⁶

The 2008 study “Economic Impact of Transient Vacation Rentals (TVRs) on Maui County”³⁷ commissioned by the Realtors[®] Association of Maui (the “Maui TVR Study”) reached a similar conclusion. Acknowledging that “the TVR industry is concerned about . . . the potential enactment of legislation meant to marginalize [the TVR] industry, and the potential economic consequences of such policies,” the Maui TVR Study concluded:

The extent of the loss of the TVR industry due to government regulations depends to what extent TVR visitors substitute an alternative Maui County accommodation type to TVRs if they are unavailable or not sufficiently available to meet the current and expected future demand level for their accommodation type. In a global market place with alternatives to Maui destinations offering a literal potpourri of accommodation experiences, the modern, well-informed and sophisticated visitor can find the accommodations experience that best fits their tastes and preferences.

³⁶ Napa Valley Vacation Rental Alliance (NVVRA): A Coalition of Napa County Stakeholders (prepared for Napa County by Napa Valley Vacation Rental Alliance (NVVRA), Jan. 2010) (available on-line at <http://www.white.com/nvvra/media/WHY%20CODIFYING%20VACATION%20RENTALS%20NOW%20IS%20OOD%20PUBLIC%20POLICY.pdf>).

³⁷ “Economic Impact of Transient Vacation Rentals (TVRs) on Maui County,” prepared by Dr. Thomas Loudat & Dr. Prahlad Kasturi for the Realtors[®] Association of Maui (Jan. 8, 2008) (hereinafter the “Maui TVR Study”).

Based on the increasing market share of TVRs on Maui from 2000 to 2006 relative to other accommodation types one can reasonably surmise that the modern visitor increasingly prefers a TVR or its equivalent experience. Thus, even though elimination of Maui TVRs may not result in the loss of all TVR visitors who may substitute an alternative Maui County accommodation type yet available, we would still expect a significantly negative economic impact in Maui County if TVRs are eliminated or significantly reduced.³⁸

3.2.3 Local Economy

Local economies that lean heavily on the tourist economy are more susceptible to the potential impacts of short-term rental restrictions. Even a slight impact on tourism in these communities can have a significant negative effect on the viability and success of restaurants, retail establishments, and other local businesses that provide services to tourists. The potential dollar impacts of a reduction in visitor numbers due to a short-term rental restriction is illustrated by the daily spending calculations of the Maui TVR Study, which calculated that transient vacation rental visitors spent an average of \$159.16 per day in Maui County.³⁹ Based on 2006 transient vacation rental visitor data (105,967) and a 6.85 day average length of stay, the study concluded that transient vacation rentals produced more than \$115 million in total revenue from lodging, food and beverage, entertainment, shopping, and other county businesses and services.⁴⁰

3.2.4 Tax Revenue

Short-term rental restrictions can have a positive effect on tax revenue if communities are authorized by state law to impose and collect a tax on short-term rentals. Cities, towns and villages in Texas, for example, are authorized by the Municipal Hotel Occupancy Tax statute to impose and collect a nine percent tax on the price paid for short-term rentals.⁴¹ In 2011, the City of Austin estimated that it could gain an additional \$100,000 to \$300,000 in tax revenue by taxing short-term rental properties.⁴²

At the same time, however, short-term rental restrictions that negatively affect local tourism could cause sales tax revenue to decrease if restaurant and retail sales are down due to diminished tourism.

3.2.5 Affordable Housing

Short-term rentals can affect housing costs in a community. When property owners elect to rent their homes on a short-term basis rather than renting on a longer-term basis (e.g., by the season or by the year), “they essentially squeeze the supply of housing, pushing up the demand, and subsequently, the cost” of housing in the community.⁴³ In some cases, allowing short-term rentals may fuel speculation in rising housing markets by allowing investors to cover the

³⁸ Maui TVR Study at 1-2.

³⁹ See Maui TVR Study at 16.

⁴⁰ See Maui TVR Study at 16-17

⁴¹ See Texas Code § 351.003.

⁴² See “City of Austin begins work on short-term rental regulations; Planning Commission to address safety, tax revenue concerns,” (Source: impactnews.com: Central Austin, April 22, 2011).

carrying costs of a house for a period of time while the property appreciates in value and then sell it for a profit.⁴⁴ Tourist communities, in particular, may be affected if the workers in low-paying service and tourism related jobs can no longer afford to live in the community or within a reasonable commuting distance.⁴⁵

3.2.6 Governmental Administrative Costs

Short-term rental restrictions create additional administrative burdens on local government, including the processing of permit, licensing and registration applications. Local building officials are likely to be faced with an increased volume of required inspections. Code enforcement personnel and the police officers may be required to assume additional enforcement duties under a short-term rental ordinance. The financial burden of administering a short-term rental ordinance may weigh heavily on vacation-destination communities, where the a high volume of short-term rental properties may require local government to hire additional staff or pay increased overtime costs to current staff in order to implement the short-term rental program.

3.3 IMPACTS ON RENTERS

3.3.1 Rental Fees

As discussed above, the adoption of short-term rental restrictions may cause rental property owners to increase rental rates as a means of recovering licensing and permit fees, inspection and other related costs. If regulations expose a property owner to the risk of incurring a fine or having the owner's rental license suspended or revoked, the owner may also increase the minimum security deposit as a means of deterring tenants from engaging in behavior that might violate the short-term rental regulations.

3.3.2 Inventory of Short-Term Rental Units

Short-term rental restrictions can also reduce the inventory of short-term rental units in a community in various ways. For example, zoning regulations may prohibit short-term rentals in single-family residential zoning districts or within certain areas or neighborhoods. An owner who successfully operated a short-term rental property without complaint prior to the adoption of licensing requirements may be barred from continuing the use if the property does not conform to the new licensing criteria. More generally, owners may simply decide they do not want to assume the increased cost and risk of continuing to use their property as a short-term rental, and withdraw their properties from the inventory of short-term rental in the community.

⁴³ APA Report at 2.

⁴⁴ *See id.*

⁴⁵ *See id.*

3.4 UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

3.4.1 “Underground Market” for Short-Term Rental Units

Short-term rental restrictions that impose high permit and licensing fees, onerous inspection requirements, and performance standards that are difficult or costly for owners to satisfy might have the unintended effect of creating an underground market for short-term rentals, in which owners continue to rent their properties without obtaining the required permits. Owners who depend on rental income to pay their mortgages to pay the maintenance costs of a second home may be willing to risk incurring fines and other penalties if an ordinance creates obstacles that cannot be overcome or that may make it economically infeasible to obtain a rental permit.⁴⁶

3.4.2 Uncertainty in the Short-Term Housing Market

A short-term rental regulation that authorizes the suspension or revocation of a short-term rental permit can also introduce a degree of uncertainty in the short-term rental housing market. Vacation travelers often reserve short-term housing accommodations several months in advance of a planned vacation, particularly when the stay is planned during a destination’s peak visitation period. Under those circumstances, for example, it is conceivable that a family may make a reservation and pay a deposit several months in advance of a holiday ski vacation only to discover later that the home they had reserved is no longer available because its short-term rental permit was suspended or revoked. In some cases, by the time a vacation home renter makes that discovery, it may be too late to find suitable alternative short-term housing, leaving the vacationer with a negative impression of the local community—an impression that the vacationer is likely to share with others.

SECTION 4: LEGAL ISSUES RAISED BY SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

4.1 AUTHORITY TO REGULATE

In general, short-term rental restrictions are typically adopted under the specific authority of a state **zoning enabling statute** or the general **police power** delegated to local governments by the state constitution, or by statute. Zoning regulations that restrict short-term rentals in residential areas have been upheld where the restrictions are found to be substantially related to land use impacts in the area.⁴⁷ Prohibiting short-term occupancy in single-family areas has been held to be within the lawful scope of the zoning power.⁴⁸

However, in 2011 the Florida State Legislature enacted legislation that specifically limits the authority of local governments to regulate or prohibit short-term rentals. Enacted as Chapter No.

⁴⁶ See “More destinations shut the door on vacation rentals, *USA Today*, August 6, 2010 (commenting that the ban on short-term rentals in New York City apartments, most of which are already prohibited under many condominium and co-op bylaws, “will simply go further underground”).

⁴⁷ 5 RATHKOPF’S THE LAW OF ZONING AND PLANNING § 81:11 (4th Ed 2011) (hereinafter “RATHKOPF”) (citing to *Brown v. Sandy Bd. of Adjustment*, 957 P.2d 207 (Utah Ct. App. 1998) (finding that city has authority to prohibit short-term rentals in single-family neighborhood)).

⁴⁸ RATHKOPF § 81:11 (citing *Cope v. City of Cannon Beach*, 855 P.2d 1083, 317 Or. 339 (1993) and *Ewing v. City of Carmel-By-The-Sea*, 234 Cal. App. 3d 1579, 286 Cal. Rptr. 382 (6th Dist. 1991)).

2011-119 on June 2, 2011, the Florida law (entitled “An act relating to public lodging establishments and public food service establishments”) states:

A local law, ordinance, or regulation may not restrict the use of vacation rentals, prohibit vacation rentals, or regulate vacation rentals based solely on their classification, use, or occupancy. This paragraph does not apply to any local law, ordinance, or regulation adopted on or before June 1, 2011.⁴⁹

As of the date of this paper, Florida appears to be the only state to have enacted legislation limiting the authority of local governments to regulate or prohibit short-term rentals. It is conceivable, however, that the Florida law may become a model for other states. This would appear to be the most likely in those states where short-term rentals comprise a meaningful segment of the tourist lodging industry.

4.2 TAKINGS

It is well established that a land use regulation that is excessively restrictive may constitute a “taking” of property for which compensation must be paid under the state constitution and the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.⁵⁰ The prevailing test for determining whether a regulatory taking has occurred was established in the landmark case of *Penn Central Transportation Co. v. City of New York*,⁵¹ decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1978. The *Penn Central* test requires a balancing of the public and private interests involved in each case, weighing the following three factors: (1) the economic impact of the regulation on the property owner; (2) the extent to which the regulation interferes with the property owner’s “distinct investment-backed expectations;” and (3) the character of the governmental action (i.e., physical invasion v. economic interference).⁵²

The application of the *Penn Central* “balancing test” is illustrated in an Oregon case that concerned a takings challenge to a short-term rental ordinance. In that case⁵³ rental property owners challenged a City of Cannon Beach, Oregon ordinance that prohibited the creation of new transient occupancy uses and required existing transient occupancy uses to end by 1997. The petitioners claimed that Ordinance 92-1 constituted a taking of property without just compensation under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.⁵⁴ The Supreme Court of Oregon, however, upheld Ordinance 92-1, focusing ultimately on the economic impact of the restrictions:

We next consider whether Ordinance 92-1, by prohibiting transient occupancy, denies property owners economically viable use of their properties. We conclude that it does not. On its face, Ordinance 92-1 permits rentals of dwellings for periods of 14 days or more. The ordinance also permits the owners themselves to reside in the dwellings.

⁴⁹ The enrolled version of House Bill No. 883 is available on the Florida State Legislature’s website at: <http://myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h0883er.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0883&Session=2011>.

⁵⁰ PATRICIA E. SALKIN, 2 AMERICAN LAW OF ZONING § 16:1 (5th ed. 2008) (hereinafter “SALKIN”).

⁵¹ *Penn Central Transportation Co. v. City of New York*, 438 U.S. 104, 98 S. Ct. 2646 (1978).

⁵² SALKIN § 16:9 (citing *Penn Central*, 438 U.S. at 124).

⁵³ *Cope v. City of Cannon Beach*, 855 P.2d 1083 (Or. 1993).

⁵⁴ *See id.* at 1084.

Although those uses may not be as profitable as are shorter-term rentals of the properties, they are economically viable uses.⁵⁵

As the court's analysis indicates, plaintiffs who challenge a short-term rental restriction as a taking of property face an uphill battle. As a practical matter, it is difficult to argue that a short-term rental prohibition denies the owner of *all* economically viable use of his land, particularly where longer-term rentals are still allowed.

4.3 DUE PROCESS

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits any governmental action that deprives “any person of . . . liberty or property, without **due process** of law.” This clause imposes both substantive and procedural requirements. The substantive component of the due process clause, known as “substantive due process,” tests the governmental purposes implemented by land use regulations. To satisfy substantive due process, a regulation must advance a legitimate governmental purpose.⁵⁶ In general, a local land use ordinance will survive a substantive due process challenge if there exists a rational relationship between the terms of the ordinance and a legitimate governmental interest.⁵⁷ A local ordinance may be challenged on due process grounds either on its face, or as applied to a particular case. When a landowner makes a *facial* challenge to a zoning ordinance, “he or she argues that *any* application of the ordinance is unconstitutional.”⁵⁸ On the other hand, when a landowner makes an *as applied* challenge, he or she attacks “only the specific decision that applied the ordinance to his or her property, not the ordinance in general.”⁵⁹

In a California case,⁶⁰ the plaintiffs challenged the city of Carmel's transient rental ordinance on substantive due process grounds, arguing that the prohibition was “not rationally related to the goals sought to be achieved.”⁶¹ The California court of appeals rejected the substantive due process claim, finding that the ordinance was rationally related to the goals and policies set forth in the city's general plan, as well as the stated purpose of the R-1 district.⁶² In support of its conclusion, the court explained that short-term rentals were inconsistent with the residential character of the community:

It stands to reason that the “residential character” of a neighborhood is threatened when a significant number of homes—at least 12 percent in this case, according to the record—are occupied not by permanent residents but by a stream of tenants staying a week-end, a week, or even 29 days. Whether or not transient rentals have the other “unmitigatable, adverse impacts” cited by the council, such rentals undoubtedly affect the essential character of a neighborhood and the stability of a community. Short-term tenants have little interest in public agencies or in the welfare of the citizenry. They do not participate in local government, coach little league, or join the hospital guild. They

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 1086-87 (internal citations omitted).

⁵⁶ See SALKIN § 15:2.

⁵⁷ See *id.*

⁵⁸ *WMX Technologies, Inc. v. Gasconade County*, 105 F.3d 1195, 1198-99 n.1 (8th Cir. 1997) (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ See SALKIN § 15:2.

⁶⁰ *Ewing v. City of Carmel-by-the-Sea*, 234 Cal. App. 3d 1579 (6th Dist. Cal. 1991).

⁶¹ *Id.* at 1596.

⁶² See *id.* at 1589.

do not lead a scout troop, volunteer at the library, or keep an eye on an elderly neighbor. Literally, they are here today and gone tomorrow—without engaging in the sort of activities that weld and strengthen a community.⁶³

Referring back to its discussion of Carmel’s stated goals, the court summarily concluded:

We have already determined that the ordinance is rationally related to the stated goal. Carmel wishes to enhance and maintain the residential character of the R-1 District. Limiting transient commercial use of residential property for remuneration in the R-1 District addresses that goal.⁶⁴

The California state court decision illustrates the difficulty of challenging a short-term rental restriction on substantive due process grounds. In general, a short-term rental restriction seems likely to survive substantive due process scrutiny if the local jurisdiction articulates a legitimate governmental interest (e.g., the protection of residential character in predominantly single-family neighborhoods), and can produce some findings connecting short-term rental activity to the types of neighborhood and community impacts described in Carmel’s transient rental ordinance.

4.4 EQUAL PROTECTION

The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment commands that no State shall “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws,” which states the basic principle that all persons similarly situated should be treated alike.⁶⁵ The general rule is that a state or local law is presumed to be valid and will be sustained if the classification drawn by the law is rationally related to a legitimate state interest.⁶⁶ If a local or state law does not involve a suspect classification (e.g., one that treats persons differently on the basis of race, alienage, or national origin) or a fundamental right (e.g., the right to vote, the right to interstate travel), then an equal protection challenge is analyzed under the rational basis test. The rational basis test is a very deferential test, under which an ordinance generally will be upheld if there is any “reasonably conceivable state of facts that could provide a rational basis for the classification.”⁶⁷ Moreover, the rational basis test does not require a legislative body to articulate its reasons for enacting an ordinance, because “[i]t is entirely irrelevant for constitutional purposes whether the conceived reason for the challenged distinction actually motivated the legislature.”⁶⁸ This means that a court may find a rational basis for a law, even if it is one that was not articulated by the legislative body.

A short-term rental ordinance may be vulnerable to an equal protection challenge on the ground that it treats similar properties differently based on whether a property is occupied by short-term tenants or longer term tenants. For example, take an ordinance that generally does not impose a

⁶³ *Id.* at 1591.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 1596.

⁶⁵ See generally *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, 216 (1982).

⁶⁶ See generally *Schweiker v. Wilson*, 450 U.S. 221, 230 (1981); *United States Railroad Retirement Board v. Fritz*, 449 U.S. 166, 174-175 (1980); *Vance v. Bradley*, 440 U.S. 93, 97 (1979); *New Orleans v. Dukes*, 427 U.S. 297, 303 (1976).

⁶⁷ *United States Railroad Retirement Bd. v. Fritz*, 449 U.S. 166, 101 S. Ct. 453, (1980).

⁶⁸ *FCC v. Beach Communications, Inc.*, 508 U.S. 307, 113 S. Ct. 2096 (1993).

maximum occupancy limit on single family homes in a city's residential zoning districts, but does impose such a limit on homes that are used for short-term rentals. On its face, this ordinance treats similar properties (i.e., single family homes in the same zoning district) differently, based on whether they are used as a short-term rental. Because no suspect classification or a fundamental right is implicated, an equal protection claim against the ordinance would be reviewed under the deferential rational basis test. For the same rational basis reasons discussed above in connection with a substantive due process challenge, the short-term rental ordinance is likely to survive judicial scrutiny.

Since 2000, as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Village of Willowbrook v. Olech*,⁶⁹ "selective enforcement" claims in land use cases may also be brought under the Equal Protection clause. Selective enforcement claims generally assert that a municipality arbitrarily applied its land use ordinance to a conditional use permit or other land use approval, or that enforcement of the ordinance was arbitrarily selective.⁷⁰ In *Olech*, the village refused to supply water to the plaintiffs unless they granted the village an easement that it had not required of other property owners. It was alleged that the village did so to retaliate for the plaintiffs having brought an earlier, unrelated suit against the village. The question before the Supreme Court was whether an individual who does not have a suspect classification or fundamental interest claim can nevertheless establish a "class of one" equal protection violation when vindictiveness motivated the disparate treatment. The Court held:

Our cases have recognized successful equal protection claims brought by a "class of one," where the plaintiff alleges that she has been intentionally treated differently from others similarly situated and that there is no rational basis for the difference in treatment. In so doing, we have explained that "the purpose of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment is to secure every person within the State's jurisdiction against intentional and arbitrary discrimination, whether occasioned by express terms of a statute or by its improper execution through duly constituted agents."⁷¹

From a plaintiff's perspective, the difficult part of the *Olech* decision is its requirement that selective enforcement claims involve intentional treatment. Moreover, it is unclear whether the intentional treatment rule requires merely an intent to do an act or, more specifically, the intent to harm or punish an individual for the exercise of lawful rights.⁷² Since *Olech*, most cases involving "class of one" equal protection claims that assert selective enforcement have not been successful.⁷³

⁶⁹ *Village of Willowbrook v. Olech*, 528 U.S. 562, 120 S. Ct. 1073 (2000).

⁷⁰ BRIAN W. BLAESSER & ALAN C. WEINSTEIN, FEDERAL LAND USE LAW & LITIGATION § 1:20 (Thomson-Reuters/West: 2011) (hereinafter "BLAESSER & WEINSTEIN").

⁷¹ *Olech*, 528 U.S. at 564 (citations omitted).

⁷² See BLAESSER & WEINSTEIN § 1:20.

⁷³ See generally BLAESSER & WEINSTEIN § 1:20, fn. 7.

SECTION 5: WAYS TO ADDRESS PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

5.1 QUESTION THE NEED FOR SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

One of the first questions that should be asked when a city or town proposes to adopt a short-term rental ordinance is whether there truly exists a need for the restrictions. In some cases, the perceived need for a short-term rental ordinance may be based solely on anecdotal evidence about the alleged problems caused by short-term rental tenants rather than on documented evidence that short-term rental tenants are causing problems. If nothing more than anecdotal evidence is provided in support of a proposed ordinance, it may allow opponents to later argue that it was adopted arbitrarily without any rational basis.

5.1.1 Empirical Analysis

Where proposed short-term rental restrictions appear to be supported solely by anecdotal evidence, Realtors[®] should question whether empirical studies using data from police call logs, code enforcement activity, and prosecutorial records have actually established the alleged adverse impacts to the community, and the degree to which those impacts are attributable to short-term rental properties. Below are some examples of the types of inquiries Realtors[®] can make of local government officials:

- What number of complaints logged by the local code enforcement and police departments were generated by short-term rentals? Does the data evidence an increase in the number of complaints attributable to short-term rentals over the last five years?
- How do the complaints concerning short-term rentals relate to the number of individuals occupying the short-term rental that is the subject of the complaint? Does the city or town have factual support to justify a proposed occupancy limit for short-term rental housing and to what extent does this limitation exceed the occupancy limits applicable to other types of housing?
- Does a specific type of complaint (e.g., noise disturbance, litter or trash, parking violations, or late night parties) constitute a large percentage of the total number of complaints recorded in the last five years? If so, does a provision of the local zoning or general ordinance already regulate the offending behavior? If it is possible to address the majority of the problems by enforcing existing nuisance regulations, rather than by imposing new maximum occupancy limits on short-term rentals, it may call into question the need for the proposed ordinance.
- Does a disproportionate number of complaints arise from a small number of rental properties? If yes, then a more appropriate response might be to adopt narrowly tailored regulations. An

example of this approach would be a regulation that would apply only after one or more violations are found on a property, rather than imposing the cost and disruption of new regulations on all owners of short-term rental property.

5.1.2 Stakeholder Input

Realtors[®] should also urge that local government officials seek and consider input from individuals and organizations with a stake in the short-term rental industry as early in the process as possible. Stakeholder groups should include representatives of local homeowner associations, rental property management associations, the local Realtor[®] associations, the chamber of commerce, local tourism bureau, and other organizations involved in the short-term rental industry.

5.1.3 Public Process

Realtors[®] should actively monitor and participate in the public hearing process. Early on, Realtors[®] should request an invitation to participate in any stakeholder groups formed by the local government prior to the public hearing process. Local governments often allow interested parties to discuss their concerns with local officials responsible for drafting and advising the local legislative body on a proposed ordinance at the beginning of the process. To the extent possible, Realtors[®] should take advantage of this opportunity to meet with the local planner or other staff members who may be drafting a proposed short-term rental ordinance.

State and local open public meetings laws generally require local legislative bodies to publish notice of scheduled public hearings, typically in the local newspaper, by posted notice at city or town hall, and/or on the official website of the city or town. If a draft of the proposed short-term rental ordinance is available prior to the public hearing, Realtors[®] should request a copy and review it thoroughly in advance of the hearing.⁷⁴ Realtors[®] should be prepared to submit written comments and/or to testify at the public hearing about their concerns with the proposal.

5.2 SUGGEST ALTERNATIVES TO SHORT-TERM RENTAL RESTRICTIONS

5.2.1 Enforcement of Existing Ordinances

Communities that wish to address the potential negative impacts of short-term rentals on residential neighborhoods likely already have regulations in place that are aimed at curtailing those types of impacts on a community-wide basis. In many cases the existing ordinances already address the types of behaviors and activity that would be the focus of short-term rental performance standards or operational restrictions. Below are some examples.

5.2.1.1 Noise Limits

Absent **preemption** by federal or state law, the control of noise is generally within the police power authority of local government. Communities commonly adopt noise control ordinances

⁷⁴ The Realtor[®] association may obtain assistance in this effort through NAR's Land Use Initiative program.

for the purpose of controlling unnecessary, excessive, and annoying noise within the community. In the City of San Luis Obispo, California, for example, the Noise Control Ordinance Noise Control Ordinance (Chapter 9.12 of the San Luis Obispo Municipal Code) expressly declares any noise in violation of Chapter 9.12 to be a **public nuisance**, punishable by civil or criminal action. The term “noise disturbance” is defined to mean:

any sound which (a) endangers or injures the safety or health of human beings or animals, or (b) annoys or disturbs reasonable persons of normal sensitivities, or (c) endangers or injures personal or real property, or (d) violates the factors set forth in Section 9.12.060 of this chapter. Compliance with the quantitative standards as listed in this chapter shall constitute elimination of a noise disturbance.⁷⁵

Additionally, specific types of noise violations that commonly arise in residential neighborhoods are regulated under Section 9.12.050, including the following:

- Noise disturbances that are “plainly audible at a distance of fifty feet from the noisemaker, unless the noise does not penetrate beyond the boundaries of the noisemaker’s own premise.”⁷⁶
- Operating, playing or permitting the operation or playing of any radio, television set, phonograph, drum, musical instrument, or similar device between the hours of 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM in such a manner as to create a noise disturbance audible across a property line.⁷⁷
- Operating, playing or permitting the operation or playing of any radio, television set, phonograph, drum, musical instrument, or similar device in a manner that creates a noise disturbance at any time in excess of noise levels defined in Section 9.12.060 (measured by decibel levels and duration of the disturbance).⁷⁸

5.2.1.2 Public Nuisance

In general, cities and counties have the police power to declare and abate nuisances. The Boulder, Colorado nuisance abatement ordinance (Title 10, Chapter 2.5 of the Boulder Revised Code) defines a “public nuisance” to mean:

[A]ny condition or use of any parcel on or in which two or more separate violations of the Boulder Municipal Code have occurred within a twelve-month period, or three or more separate violations have occurred within a twenty-four month period, if, during each such violation, the conduct of the person committing the violation was such as to annoy residents in the vicinity of the parcel or passers-by on the public streets, sidewalks, and rights-of-way in the vicinity of the parcel.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ City of San Luis, California Municipal Code § 9.12.020(U).

⁷⁶ See San Luis Municipal Code § 9.12.050(A).

⁷⁷ See San Luis Municipal Code § 9.12.050(B)(1)(a).

⁷⁸ See San Luis Municipal Code § 9.12.050(B)(1)(b).

⁷⁹ “Nuisance Abatement Information Sheet,” City of Boulder, Colorado (available on-line at http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/files/PDS/Code%20Enforcement/nuisanceabat_info.pdf).

No violations or actions are designated as “public nuisance” acts. Instead, the determination whether a violation triggers the nuisance abatement process is made by the responding law enforcement agency. For instance, in some cases, a trash violation may trigger the nuisance abatement process, while in others the problem might be best handled with a municipal court summons. Legal remedies to abate public nuisances generally include the filing of a criminal complaint, or a civil action, or an administrative abatement.

5.2.1.3 Property Maintenance Standards

A property maintenance ordinance might be adopted for the purpose of maintaining, preserving, or improving a community’s inventory of residential and non-residential buildings. To accomplish this, property maintenance ordinances typically establish standards for the exterior maintenance of affected structures, including basic structural elements such as foundations and supporting columns, exterior finish surfaces, and doors and windows. Property maintenance standards may also require property owners to maintain existing trees, shrubs and other significant vegetation, and to keep all exterior areas sanitary free of trash and refuse.

5.2.1.4 Unruly Public Gathering Ordinance

Some communities, particularly college towns, such as Berkeley, CA and Tucson, AZ, have adopted “unruly gathering” ordinances that create significant sanctions for residents and property owners who host gatherings that create a substantial disturbance, as well as for party attendees who contribute to the problem. A significant advantage that an unruly gathering ordinance would have over a general noise ordinance or short-term rental ordinance is that the individual responsible for the disturbance is also penalized, rather than the tenant and/or property owner alone. Since the penalties for violating a noise ordinance generally apply only to the residents of the property where the violation occurs, a noise ordinance is unlikely to deter party guests from violating its terms.

5.2.1.5 Nighttime Curfew

To the extent that under-aged drinking and juvenile crime are a significant contributors to excessive noise and party disturbances in short-term rental properties in residential neighborhoods, a nighttime curfew ordinance that prohibits persons under the age of 18 years from being on or about public streets and public places during specified hours of the day could be an effective deterrent. The effectiveness of nighttime curfews is evidenced by a 2002 survey published by National League of Cities, in which 97% of communities that have nighttime curfew ordinances reported that they help combat juvenile crime. It bears noting, however, that a juvenile curfew ordinance generally would not be applicable to college students and other youthful offenders over the age of eighteen. To the extent that parties hosted and attended by college-aged young people are perceived as causing the disturbances that are of greatest concern, a curfew ordinance would probably have little, if any, effect.

5.2.1.6 Parking Restrictions

Communities often address the problem of improperly parked vehicles and excessive numbers of vehicles parked in residential neighborhoods through off-street parking regulations. These regulations may include provisions that prohibit vehicle parking within front yard setback areas in residential zoning districts and that restrict vehicle parking to hard surface driveways or designated parking areas. Regulations may also prohibit parking on grass areas, sidewalks, or within a certain distance of side property lines.

5.2.2 Adoption of Ordinances that Target Community-Wide Issues

Communities that have not adopted general community-wide noise regulations or the other regulations aimed at curtailing the types of behaviors and activities that would be regulated under a short-term rental ordinance, should be encouraged to adopt such general regulations rather than to single out short-term rental properties for regulation.

5.3 SHORT-TERM RENTAL HOUSING REGULATION BEST PRACTICES

This section presents several types of “best practice” provisions that have been implemented in jurisdictions which have short-term rental restrictions and which Realtors[®] may find acceptable, depending upon local market conditions. Each section begins with a brief description of the type of best practices. This description is followed by one or more examples of the best practice technique as adopted by local jurisdictions.

5.3.1 Narrowly-Tailored Regulations

An effective short-term rental ordinance should be narrowly tailored to address the specific needs of the local community. The potential for over-regulation is a legitimate concern, particularly when a proposed ordinance is driven by the vocal complaints of one or more permanent residents about their negative experiences with nearby short-term renters. Residents often complain that short-term rentals are inherently incompatible with residential neighborhoods and demand an outright prohibition against the use. In those circumstances, the concern is that elected officials, in an effort to please their constituency, may acquiesce to those demands without carefully considering: (a) whether there truly exists a need for short-term rental restrictions; and (b) if a need exists, what regulatory approach is best-suited to addressing the particular needs of the community.

Short-term rental restrictions can be tailored to fit the specific needs of the community in several important ways. As a threshold matter, communities should consider the degree to which short-term rentals need to be regulated. If a community’s overriding concern is that a significant number of residential properties that are being used as short-term rentals are failing to report and pay local and state transient occupancy taxes, then an ordinance requiring short-term rental owners to register their properties with the local government and penalizing noncompliance may be sufficient to address that concern. To the extent that short-term rentals are a problem only in certain residential neighborhoods, a rationally justified ordinance that applies only in those areas

would be a more appropriate response than one that regulates the use more broadly, even in areas where short-term rentals not only are accepted, but also are highly desired.

Best Practice Example: Clatsop County, Oregon. In Clatsop County, the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map divides the county into nearly forty zoning district designations, including more than a dozen residential districts.⁸⁰ The county’s short term vacation rental ordinance, however, applies only to properties within the Arch Cape Rural Community residential district.⁸¹

5.3.2 “Grandfathering” Provisions

Short-term rentals that lawfully existed prior to the enactment of a short-term rental ordinance, but are not allowed under the newly adopted ordinance—either because the use is prohibited outright or because the applicant is unable to satisfy the criteria for obtaining a permit—should be allowed to continue (i.e., “grandfathered”) if the property owner is able to demonstrate that the short-term rental use pre-dated the ordinance. Zoning ordinances typically contain a general nonconformity provision that establishes the requirements for a use or structure to secure a legal nonconforming status. However, short-term rental ordinances may also contain specific grandfathering clauses that allow short-term rentals in existence on the effective date of the ordinance to continue even if the property cannot satisfy the applicable requirements.

Best Practice Example: Kauai County, Hawaii. Under Section 8-3.3 of the Kauai County Code, transient vacation rentals are generally prohibited in the R-1, R-2, R-4, and R-6 residential zoning districts, except within the designated Visitor Destination Areas established under the Code. However, under Sections 8-17.9 and -17.10, single-family transient vacation rentals in non-Vacation Destination Areas that were in lawful use *prior* to the effective date of the ordinance are allowed to continue, subject to obtaining a nonconforming use certificate. To obtain a nonconforming use certificate, an owner must provide a sworn affidavit and demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Director that:

[the] dwelling unit was being used as a vacation rental on an ongoing basis prior to the effective date of this ordinance and was in compliance with all State and County land use and planning laws . . . up to and including the time of application for a nonconforming use certificate.⁸²

The owner of operator of a transient vacation rental unit bears the burden of proof in establishing that the use is properly nonconforming based on submission of the following documentary evidence: records of occupancy and tax documents, including: State of Hawaii general excise tax and transient accommodations tax filings, federal and/or state income tax returns for the relevant time period, reservation lists, and receipts showing payment of deposits for reservations and fees for occupancy of the subject property by transient guests.⁸³

⁸⁰ See Clatsop County, OR Land and Water Development and Use Ordinance, Table 3.010.

⁸¹ See Clatsop County, OR Ordinance No. 03-13.

⁸² Kauai County Code § 8-17.10(c).

⁸³ Kauai County Code § 8-17.10(e).

Best Practice Example: Monterey County, California. Monterey County’s short-term rental ordinance grandfathers short-term rental units that were in operation before the ordinance was adopted. Section 21.64.280 of the Zoning Ordinance provides:

Transient use of residential property in existence on the effective date of this Section shall, upon application, be issued an administrative permit provided that any such units devoted to transient use are registered with the Director of Planning and Building Inspection and the administrative permit application is filed within 90 days of the effective date of this Section. . . . The owner/registrant shall have the burden of demonstrating that the transient use was established. Payment of transient occupancy taxes shall be, but is no the exclusive method of demonstrating, evidence of the existence of historic transient use of residential property.⁸⁴

5.3.3 Quantitative and Operational Restrictions

Quantitative Restrictions. The use of quantitative restrictions (i.e., fixed caps, proximity restrictions, and maximum short-term to long-term occupancy ratios) as a means of mitigating the impacts of short-term rentals can be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, such limitations on the number of short-term rentals allowed in a community are preferable to an outright prohibition on the use. On the other hand, for property owners desiring to enter the short-term rental market after the effective date of a short-term rental ordinance, a quantitative restriction may act as a barrier to entry. Quantitative restrictions therefore may constitute a reasonable compromise position in circumstances where community support is divided on a proposed short-term rental ban.

Jurisdictions considering a quantitative restriction should carefully consider which technique is best suited to further the needs and goals of the community. For example, if a community finds that the negative impacts of short-term rentals are manifested only when they exist in clusters or in close proximity to one another in a residential neighborhood, then a *proximity restriction* would be a more effective technique than a fixed cap or ratio. On the other hand for a community seeking to maintain a balance between its long-term housing needs and visitor-oriented accommodations, a maximum *ratio* of long term residential dwelling units to short-term rental permits would be more effective than a fixed cap or proximity restriction.

Best Practice Example: Mendocino County, California. Section 20.748.005 of the Mendocino County Code states that the county’s “single unit rentals and vacation rentals” ordinance is intended, in part, “to restore and maintain a balance between the long-term housing needs of the community and visitor oriented uses.” To maintain that balance, the ordinance requires the county to “maintain, at all times, for new vacation home rentals or single unit rentals approved after the effective date of this ordinance, a ratio of thirteen (13) long term residential dwelling units to one (1) single unit rental or vacation home rental.”⁸⁵ While the ordinance does not require any reduction in the number of single unit rentals and vacation rentals in existence on the effective date of the ordinance, no new applications may be approved unless and until

⁸⁴ Monterey County, CA Zoning Ordinance § 21.64.280(d)(1)(b).

⁸⁵ Mendocino County, CA Code § 20.748.020(A).

thirteen new residential dwelling units have been completed since the single unit rental or vacation home rental permit was approved.⁸⁶

Best Practice Example: San Luis Obispo County, California. The vacation rental ordinance adopted by San Luis Obispo County was adopted for the general purpose of ensuring that short-term rental uses “will be compatible with surrounding residential uses and will not act to harm and alter the neighborhoods they are located within.”⁸⁷ More specifically, the county found that “residential vacation rentals have the potential to be incompatible with surrounding residential uses, especially when several are concentrated in the same area, thereby having the potential for a deleterious effect on the adjacent full time residents.”⁸⁸ Accordingly, rather than prohibiting vacation rentals in county neighborhoods, San Luis Obispo County adopted the following proximity restriction on the use:

[N]o residential vacation rental shall be located within 200 linear feet of a parcel on the same block on which is located any residential vacation rental or other type of visitor-servicing accommodation that is outside of the Commercial land use category.⁸⁹

Operational Restrictions. Although short-term rental restrictions commonly include some operational restrictions, the restrictions often unnecessarily duplicate generally applicable regulations already adopted by the local jurisdiction. Several of these types of regulations are discussed in Section 5.2 above. In general, the types of negative impacts most commonly cited by communities with short-term rental restrictions—late-night music and partying, garbage left out on the street on non-pickup days, illegal parking, and negligent property maintenance—are community-wide concerns that are best regulated with a generally applicable ordinance rather than one that singles out short-term rentals for disparate treatment. It stands to reason that the impacts that these types of activities have on residential neighborhoods are the same regardless of whether they are produced by long-term residents or short-term renters. Therefore, the best practice technique for addressing those concerns is to adopt a general ordinance that governs the activity or behavior in all areas of the community.

5.3.4 Licensing/Registration Requirements

Virtually all short-term rental ordinances require owners who intend to offer their property for use as a short-term rental to obtain a license or permit prior to commencing the use. In general, licensing and registration requirements enable local governments to create and maintain a database of dwelling units being operated as short-term rentals for code enforcement and transient occupancy tax collection in jurisdictions authorized to collect such taxes. The procedures and criteria for obtaining a short-term rental license or permit should be clearly set out in the local ordinance. Short-term rental licensing and registration applications should be processed administratively and without need for a public hearing. Such licensing/registration requirements should not require a conditional use permit or a similar-type zoning permit.

⁸⁶ See Mendocino County, CA Code § 20.748.020(A)-(B)..

⁸⁷ San Luis Obispo County, CA Code § 23.08.165(a).

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ San Luis Obispo County, CA Code § 23.08.165(c).

Best Practice Example: City of Palm Springs, California. In the City of Palm Springs, residential property owners are required to register the property as a vacation rental prior to commencing the use. Section 5.25.060 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code requires owners to submit a registration form that is furnished by the city and that requires certain information to be provided, including, for example: (a) the name, address, and telephone number of the owner and his agent, if any; (2) the address of the vacation rental unit; (3) the number of bedrooms in the rental unit; and (4) evidence of a valid business license issued for the business of operating vacation rentals, or submission of a certificate that owner is exempt or otherwise not covered by the city’s Business Tax Ordinance for such activity. Vacation rental registration also requires the owner to pay a fee in an amount to be established by the city council, subject to the limitation that the registration fee “shall be no greater than necessary to defer the cost incurred by the city in administering the [vacation rental registration].”⁹⁰

Best Practice Example: City of Encinitas, California. In the City of Encinitas, short-term rental permits likewise require submittal of an application form and payment of a fee no greater than necessary to defer the cost incurred by the city in administering the short-term rental permit program. Short-term rental permits will be granted “unless the applicant does not meet the conditions and requirements of the permit, or fails to demonstrate the ability to comply with the Encinitas Municipal Code or other applicable law.”⁹¹

5.3.5 Inspection Requirements

As noted in Section 3.1.3, many communities require short-term rental properties to pass certain inspections prior to the issuance or renewal of a short-term rental permit. However, mandatory inspection requirements arguably do not advance a community’s interests in protecting and maintaining residential character or preventing the adverse effects of transient occupancy on residential neighborhoods. Therefore, if a short-term rental ordinance is specifically adopted for reasons related to protection of residential character, then a mandatory inspection requirement is unnecessary and should not be imposed upon rental property owners.

Best Practice Examples: Douglas County, Nevada; City of Palm Springs, California; and Sonoma County, California. The short-term rental ordinances adopted by these communities were generally adopted for reasons related to the impacts of short-term rental uses on residential neighborhoods. However, none of these ordinances include a mandatory inspection requirement, either at the time of initial permit issuance or thereafter.

Mandatory inspection requirements may be justified in cases where a short-term rental ordinance is adopted for the purpose (at least in part) of ensuring the safety of short-term rental tenants. For example, one of the stated purposes of the transient private home rental ordinance adopted by the City of Big Bear Lake, California is “to ensure . . . that minimum health and safety standards are maintained in such units to protect the visitor from unsafe or unsanitary conditions.”⁹² It stands to reason that a provision requiring inspection of transient private rental

⁹⁰ City of Palm Springs, CA Municipal Code § 5.25.060(b).

⁹¹ See City of Encinitas, CA Municipal Code § 9.38.040(A)(3).

⁹² City of Bear Lake, CA Municipal Code § 17.03.310(A).

homes in Big Bear Lake to determine compliance with such minimum health and safety standards would further that purpose.

However, even if a mandatory inspection requirement can be justified, the scope of the inspection program should be limited to the initial permit issuance and thereafter only on a reasonable periodic basis. Provisions requiring short-term rental units to be inspected annually (typically as a condition precedent to the issuance of a permit renewal), such as Section 17.03.310(D)(2) of the Big Bear Lake ordinance, are unnecessarily burdensome on owners and the local government alike.

Best Practice Example: City of Cannon Beach, Oregon. The short-term rental ordinance adopted by the City of Cannon Beach provides an example of a more reasonable periodic inspection requirement. Under Section 17.77.040(A)(2) of the Cannon Beach Zoning Code, at the time of application for a new transient rental permit (or new vacation home rental permit) the dwelling is subject to inspection by a local building official to determine conformance with the requirements of the Uniform Housing Code. Thereafter, twenty percent of the dwellings that have a transient rental or vacation home rental permit are inspected each year, so that over a five-year period, all such dwellings have been re-inspected.⁹³

5.3.6 Enforcement Provisions

When short-term rental restrictions are adopted pursuant to a local government's zoning authority and incorporated into the jurisdiction's zoning code, it is reasonable to expect the ordinance to be enforced in accordance with the generally applicable enforcement provisions of the zoning code, if one exists. Similarly, it is reasonable to expect that short-term rental registration and licensing provisions that are incorporated into a community's general (non-zoning) code to be enforced pursuant to the generally applicable code enforcement provision. The short term rental regulations adopted in Tillamook County and Clatsop County, Oregon and Monterey County, California, for example, are enforced in accordance with generally applicable enforcement and penalty provisions.

It is not uncommon, however, for communities to enact special enforcement and penalty provisions in their short-term rental ordinances. Many short-term rental ordinances contain enforcement and penalty provisions that penalize violations more severely than other types of code violations. In Palm Springs, California, for example, a first violation of the Vacation Rental Ordinance is subject to a \$250 fine and subsequent violations are subject to a fine of \$500.⁹⁴ By contrast, under Section 1.06.030 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code, the general penalties for code violations are \$100 for the first administrative citation and \$250 for the second. The Vacation Rental Ordinance does not explain why violations of that ordinance are penalized more severely than other types of code violations.

Enforcement provisions should not penalize short-term rental property owners (or their agents) for violations beyond their control. For example, if a short-term rental *tenant* violates a noise level restriction, the property owner should not be held responsible for the violation.

⁹³ See City of Cannon Beach, OR Zoning Code § 17.77.040(2)(a).

⁹⁴ See City of Palm Springs, CA Municipal Code § 5.25.090(a).

Best Practice Example: Douglas County, Nevada. Chapter 5.40 of the Douglas County Code regulates vacation home rentals in the Tahoe Township. Although the vacation home rental ordinance imposes certain operational restrictions on permitted rental units (e.g., parking and occupancy limitations and trash/refuse container rules), Section 5.40.110 states that a permit may be suspended or revoked only for a violation committed by the owner.

5.41.110 Violation and administrative penalties.

- A. The following conduct is a violation for which the permit [sic] suspended or revoked:
 - 1. The owner has failed to comply with the standard conditions specified in section 5.40.090(A) of this code; or
 - 2. The owner has failed to comply with additional conditions imposed pursuant to the provisions of section 5.40.090(B) and (C) of this code; or
 - 3. The owner has violated the provisions of this chapter; or
 - 4. The owner has failed to collect or remit to the county the transient occupancy and lodging taxes as required by Title 3 of this code.
 - 5. Any false or misleading information supplied in the application process.

Prior to the imposition of fines or other penalties, a short-term rental ordinance should conform to the due process requirements established under state law and/or the local jurisdictions charter or code of ordinances. At a minimum, before fines or other penalties are imposed, property owners should be given notice of, and an opportunity to cure, any alleged violation, except where exigent public safety concerns exist. As demonstrated in the best practice examples below, property owners should be given the opportunity to request a public hearing and have the right to appeal a local government's decision to suspend or revoke a short-term rental permit.

Best Practice Example: City of Encinitas, California. Under Section 9.38.060 of the City of Encinitas short-term rental ordinance, penalties may be imposed and permits may be suspended only in accordance with the following provisions:

- A. The City Manager shall cause an investigation to be conducted whenever there is reason to believe that a property owner has failed to comply with the provisions of this Chapter. Should the investigation reveal substantial evidence to support a finding that a violation occurred, the investigator shall issue written notice of the violation and intention to impose a penalty, or penalty and suspend the permit. The written notice shall be served on the property owner and operator or agent and shall specify the facts which in the opinion of the investigator, constitute substantial evidence to establish grounds for imposition of the penalties, or penalties and suspension, and specify that the penalties will be imposed and/or that the permit will be suspended and penalties imposed within 15 days from the date the notice is given unless the owner and/or operator files with the city clerk the fine amount and a request for a hearing before the City Manager.
- B. If the owner requests a hearing within the time specified in subsection (A), the City Clerk shall serve written notice on the owner and operator, by mail, of the date, time and place for the hearing which shall be scheduled not less than 15 days, nor more

than 45 days of receipt of request for a hearing. The City Manager or his or her designee shall preside over the hearing. The City Manager or his or her designee shall impose the penalties, or penalties and suspend the permit only upon a finding that a violation has been proven by a preponderance of the evidence, and that the penalty, or penalty and suspension are consistent with this Chapter. The hearing shall be conducted according to the rules normally applicable to administrative hearings. A decision shall be rendered within 30 days of the hearing and the decision shall be appealable to the City Council if filed with the City Clerk no later than 15 days thereafter, pursuant to Chapter 1.12.⁹⁵

Best Practice Example: City of Cannon Beach, Oregon. Section 17.77.050(B) of the Cannon Beach Zoning Code provides another example of the notice and public hearing process afforded to short-term rental property owners prior to the imposition of fines or the revocation of a permit.

5. The city shall provide the permit holder with a written notice of any violation of subsection (A)(4) of this section that has occurred. If applicable, a copy of the warning notice shall be sent to the local representative.
6. Pursuant to subsections (B)(4)(b) through (d) of this section, the city shall provide the permit holder with a written notice of the permit suspension and the reason for that suspension. The permit holder may appeal the suspension to the city council by filing a letter of appeal with the city manager within twenty days after the date of the mailing of the city manager's order to suspend the permit. The city manager's suspension shall be stayed until the appeal has been determined by the city council. The city council shall conduct a hearing on the appeal within sixty days of the date of the filing of the letter of appeal. At the appeal, the permit holder may present such evidence as may be relevant. At the conclusion of the hearing, based on the evidence it has received, the council may uphold, modify, or overturn the decision of the city manager to suspend the permit based on the evidence it received.
7. Pursuant to subsection (B)(4)(e) of this section, the city shall provide the permit holder with a written notice that it intends to revoke the permit and the reasons for the revocation. The city council shall hold a hearing on the proposed revocation of the permit. At the hearing, the permit holder may present such evidence as may be relevant. At the conclusion of the hearing, based on the evidence it has received, the council may determine not to revoke the permit, attach conditions to the permit, or revoke the permit.
8. A person who has had a transient rental occupancy permit or a vacation home rental permit revoked shall not be permitted to apply for either type of permit at a later date.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ City of Encinitas, CA Municipal Code § 9.38.060.

⁹⁶ City of Cannon Beach, OR Zoning Code § 17.77.050(B)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Common law: Law developed by judges through decisions of courts and similar tribunals rather than through legislation (statutes) or executive actions.

Due Process: The constitutional protections given to persons to ensure that laws are not unreasonable, arbitrary, or capricious. When such laws affect individuals' lives, liberty, and property, due process requires that they have sufficient notice and opportunity to be heard in an orderly proceeding suited to the nature of the matter at issue, whether a court of law or a zoning board of appeals. Essentially, due process means fairness.

Equal Protection: The right of all persons under like circumstance to enjoy equal protection and security in their life, their liberty, and their property and to bear no greater burdens than are imposed on others under like circumstances.

Nonconforming Use: A use that lawfully existed prior to the enactment of a zoning ordinance, and that is maintained after the effective date of the ordinance, although it does not comply with the zoning restrictions applicable to the district in which it is situated, is commonly referred to as a "nonconforming use."⁹⁷

Police Power: The power that resides in each state to establish laws to preserve public order and tranquility and to promote the public health, safety, morals, and other aspects of the general welfare.

Preemption: A doctrine based on the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution that holds that certain matters are of such national, as opposed to local, character that federal laws preempt or take precedence over state laws on such matters. As such, a state may not pass a law inconsistent with the federal law. The doctrine of *state law* preemption holds that a state law displaces a local law or regulation that is in the same field and is in conflict or inconsistent with the state law.⁹⁸

Public Nuisance: At common law "public nuisance" generally consists of "an unreasonable interference with a right common to the general public, including activities injurious to the health, safety, morals or comfort of the public."⁹⁹

Zoning Enabling Statute: State legislation "authorizing local governments to engage in planning and the regulation of activity on private land."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ PATRICIA E. SALKIN, AMERICAN LAW OF ZONING § 12:1 (5th ed. 2010).

⁹⁸ Article VI, Section 2, of the U.S. Constitution, commonly referred to as the "Supremacy Clause," provides that the "Constitution, and the Laws of the United States ... shall be the supreme Law of the Land."

⁹⁹ ZONING AND LAND USE CONTROLS § 16.02[2].

¹⁰⁰ See ZONING AND LAND USE CONTROLS, Ch. 1, Introduction and User's Guide § 1.02[2] (LexisNexis Matthew Bender) (hereinafter "ZONING AND LAND USE CONTROLS").

St. George cracking down on short-term rentals in residential areas

By Ladd Egan

For the Deseret News

Published: Aug. 9, 2016 3:30 p.m. Updated: Aug. 9, 2016 3:00 p.m.

ST. GEORGE — Renting out homes, basements and apartments to vacationers is big business thanks to booking sites like Airbnb and VRBO.

In Utah, St. George is a hot spot for short-term rentals in residential areas, but that could be changing soon.

In areas like the Green Valley neighborhood, nightly rentals to vacationers is allowed because of proper zoning, but if you step into a traditional residential neighborhood, the zoning is more restrictive.

"We recognize that we are a destination for vacationers, and so we want to accommodate that the best we can while protecting the integrity of our traditional neighborhoods," said Marc Mortensen, assistant to St. George's city manager.

Online booking companies like Airbnb and VRBO say they offer residents an "economic lifeline" of extra income, but cities say having vacation rentals in regular neighborhoods is an invitation for problems.

"In just recent weeks, we've had instances where neighbors call and say, 'Hey, there's six, seven, eight cars parked in front of this residence,'" Mortensen said. "We've had a report where there were as many as 40 people staying in one residence, and that has a negative impact on the neighborhood."

When homeowners rent out basements or entire homes to vacationers, they compete with hotels. That raises questions about the lack of regulations and the collection of tourism taxes.

Kendall Clements of Escape Properties helps homeowners rent out their vacation properties. He hopes more can be done to adapt to the changing marketplace.

“The city of St. George is probably 10 years behind the curve on their ordinance structure,” Clements said. “I’m not a fan for every house to be a vacation home. I think that’s bad for the economy as a whole. But for those who are currently doing it, if we could license them and start to ensure that we have that tax revenue, I think (the) community would be better off.”

A bill before the Utah Legislature this year sought to loosen restrictions on short-term rentals, but it stalled in the early stages. As for St. George, city officials say they’re trying to be responsive, even changing zoning in a few areas, but the law will be enforced.

“The maximum penalty for a short-term rental is class B misdemeanor, so we take this very seriously and we hope others do as well,” Mortensen said.