

Larimer County Short-term Rental Regulations
Summary of Initial Public Discussion Draft Webinar - Countywide
November 7, 2022
5:30pm – 7:00pm, on Zoom

Attendance

- County Team: Lesli Ellis (Community Development Director), Matt Lafferty (Principal Planner), Tawn Hillenbrand (Senior Planner), and Amy White (Code Compliance Supervisor)
- Community and STR Owner Attendance – 82 people

Short-term Rental Draft Regulations Presentation

The County Planning Team provided a brief presentation on the Short-term Rental (STR) regulations update initial public discussion draft of suggested revisions. The presentation included the project timeline, including complete and current tasks, suggested revisions to short-term rental definitions, and an explanation of existing land use approval processes. Additionally, the team presented the draft document, focusing on unincorporated Larimer County outside of the Estes Valley. The team briefly touched upon:

- The organization and layout of the initial public discussion draft document.
- Revisions made to the STR Use-Specific Standards applicable to properties located both in unincorporated Larimer County outside of the Estes Valley and in the Estes Valley.
- Revisions made to the Tables of Allowed Principal Uses, focusing mainly on the use tables specific to unincorporated Larimer County outside of the Estes Valley.

The presentation also included a link to the project website (<https://www.larimer.gov/planning/short-term-rentals>) and the project email (LUC2020@larimer.org) where additional comments and/or questions can be directed.

Participant Feedback and Questions

Following the brief presentation on the initial public discussion draft, the County team opened the webinar for participant comment and feedback, during which many participants expressed appreciation for the event. Some of the participants expressed support of the regulations, but indicated the suggested revisions need additional clarification or development while others expressed concerns related to the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and wildfire regulations and compatibility.

A summary of the specific comments and opinions received is provided below:

- The attendee expressed excitement at seeing the hosted STR option; however, there are still some issues with the regulations which they found discouraging and need to be thought through. They think the proposed regulations appear to be driven by the hotel lobby. They believe that the fire truck turnaround or emergency access should not have any impact on the use. They don't provide internet at their STR because people don't necessarily want it; therefore, internet should not be required. Regulations discourage use of private homes as STRs. It's a commercial business in homes.
- The participant stated that they are not from the hotel industry and believe the regulations are a good thing. The definition of "incompatible" should be defined. They asked if the County will regulate the number of STRs in any given area, such as percentages per neighborhood. There are studies that indicate that the number of STRs correlates to a breakdown of neighborhood community and increase in crime. There should be a threshold. Concerned that there is consideration given to floodplains but not to WUI (Wildland Urban Interface), wildfire hazards. Afraid lack of definition creates loopholes.
- Participant had a simple rental in Red Feather Lakes back in 2021 that was shut down by the County. Requirement to have a property manager within one hour of the property is unreasonable in their opinion because people in Northern Colorado should be able to manage their own property. They indicated that they cannot afford to have a property manager. The County may be unintentionally putting simple STRs out of business. The regulations, including the flood standards are tough on landowners.
- The attendee appreciates the Administrative Special Review process opposed to the others where neighbors have an opportunity to comment; this is very important. Attendee referred to a document on the STR project webpage that states that staff recommends limiting STRs in wildfire hazard areas. They would like to see restrictions in high, very high, and extreme wildfire hazard areas. STRs located in these hazard areas makes it a higher risk for others. The regulations should be more specific- if a home is on a street with 60% or more homes in the WUI, then none of the homes should be granted STR approval.
- Attendee is currently working on their house manual. Finds that the amount of information required for egress maps is overwhelming. From the perspective of someone who is in a state of panic, reading all the information on the map would be confusing. The requirements should be streamlined. Maybe the County could provide a standard format with text boxes to make putting the manual together easier. Maybe a QR code with directions. They realize that there is a Dark Sky requirement in the Estes Valley, but that should be applied countywide. People come to see our skies. Agrees with many of the comments regarding WUI. Visitors do not understand the wildfire risks. Guests should be provided risk information upon entering the STR.

- This attendee's biggest concern is that a small STR can have 10 people. This seems huge in the context of a neighborhood. This is highly disruptive. Renters should not be able to run a B&B and sublease the other rooms. This could happen under the radar. The B&B should be an owner or someone who is accountable. Management within one hour seems reasonable for most people; should be responsive. What kind of accountability is there for landlords? STRs create dead space in neighborhoods, this changes the character and quality of the neighborhood. The number of STRs should be controlled. The long-term wear and tear on the community should be considered.
- Concerned about the Limited STR, this would be detrimental if applied to properties without the owner having a choice. Transferability should be allowed as seen in Option 1. Transferability is a good thing as a responsible host/owner and when safety updates can be passed. Once the property is made safe, it would be good to be able to pass that on. This could drive property values up which is beneficial. Appropriate cigarette disposal should be addressed.
- Questions about the process they go through to get a permit and fees. There does not seem to be volumetric on the fees. A large corporation pays the same amount as individual owners with lower income. To put \$2-3k in to get a permit is a heavy burden for small applicants. That's the primary problem. The full process and cost should be disclosed at the beginning so that owners can decide whether to proceed or not.
- Attendee recently invested in a property that is zoned for a STR use. Neighbors are sending threatening comments before even getting through the process. If the use is not compatible, this process and appeals should be based on facts not on emotions. If they or any owner is abiding by the laws, they should be able to have a STR; however, they feel like they might be denied or shut down because neighbors don't like STRs.
- Believes that definitions or options – limited and full – muddies the waters. This should be clarified. An owner should have a choice. STRs create connection and human experience. There is something about being able to stay in someone's home, to be local. This is not just about the money. STRs allow owners to open their homes. Agrees that WUI regulations should be considered.
- Attendee stated that comments are more about the application process. They went through the process, which took about 6 months to complete, including the life safety inspection and cost about \$10k. Once approved by the Director, the neighbors appealed, and they lost the case. At this point they are struggling to keep the house. The community only thinks that investors want to do this, but this attendee believes this is not true. Would like to say that notification went to about 50 people in this case. Most who opposed the use were farther away and not neighbors. If someone appeals, they should pay a larger fee because the current fee pales in comparison to what they paid.
- Where can we find the information that supports the needs for all these regulations? Regulations should be relevant to issues. They could stand behind regs that are relevant. Attendee proposes instead that owners be required to provide disclosure of risks of the

specific property. Let the adults be responsible for their actions. Let owners be good landlords.

- Regarding the references to WUI – campsites are located in these areas and allow open fires. Regulations on STRs would be more extreme than to regulations on campsites. STRs are a much safer environment. The attendee believes that this doesn't make much sense. Annual or semi-annual fees seem extreme. Maybe this should be required every five years. Why recheck every year, this seems excessive. Big money seems to be pushing the small people out.
- Regarding the fire truck turnaround - What size is the fire truck these regulations are based on? Fire trucks in Red Feather Lakes are small. People do not clean after themselves at campsites and many residents spend a lot of time cleaning up after the campers. STRs are better regulated than camps; are a better option. Many homes are not occupied and are open to theft. STRs can eliminate this.
- People purchase a place and whether they rent for a year – they have a right to purchase the property. Agrees with previous comment about vacant homes. Would like to see comments about safety issues, fire calls, etc. If we can target those rather than blanket regulations for all.
- Believes that STRs should be limited to a set number and this should be based on merit. STRs that are functioning and play by the rules should not be subjected to scrutiny. Would be disappointed about a percentage that shows up arbitrarily.
- Why are only solid fuels addressed? Propane can ignite as well. More fuels should be limited or prohibited. Enforcement of the regulations should be improved. Ten persons for a STR seems very large. Most homes do not typically sleep more than four, even if on occasion they sleep more. Believes that in their neighborhood, a ten occupancy STR would produce more persons in that one location than sleep in the neighborhood every night. The attendee believes this is inappropriate and can destroy communities by making strangers the most prominent population in the area. Attendee highly disagrees with transferring permits for STRs. Believes that STRs can degrade property values for neighbors. The 500-foot notification should be improved.
- STRs give homeowners the capability of perhaps enjoying their retirement. These homes would be sitting vacant creating dead space. STRs get cleaned and maintained more often than long term rentals, they abide by a higher 5-star standard. Renting out one's home as a STR or long-term rental is the business of the homeowner, not their neighbor. These homes are looked at with cameras and cleaning staff, so the home is continually monitored.
- Attendee is concerned with the changes to the character of the neighborhood. One located near them is enormous and is an absentee landlord. This is a concern because they have limited water, dirt roads, and extreme fire risk. A small STR was approved with only their promise as a guarantee and now they have a huge one applying adjacent to it.

- Regarding the water source for firefighting, the only time a fire department uses public water is when there is a fire hydrant. This is only in cities, not in most if not all of unincorporated Larimer County. Reliable water source for drinking etc., yes, but for firefighting? The attendee believe that this is just not accurate with how fires are actually fought; fire trucks that carry water respond to rural areas to extinguish fires.

During the webinar participants could submit questions to the Q&A section. Those questions submitted were not addressed during the webinar; however, a response to many of the questions are included in an amended FAQ document contained on the STR project website or are addressed in the webinar presentation.