



Short-term Rental Checklist

Vacation Rental

What is a Short-term Rental?

A short-term rental is a type of lodging that is rented for a fee for fewer than 30 consecutive nights. Examples are those that are advertised on platforms such as AirBnb, VRBO, HomeAway, and Vacasa.

Short-term rentals can be:

- Rental of an entire home, condo, or apartment for short-term stays
- Rental of an entire separate unit for short-term stays, such as an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) – “mother-in-law unit”
- Rental of individual rooms within a home or apartment for short-term stays

There are two types of short-term rentals. **This checklist pertains to vacation rentals.**

- Vacation Rental is when an entire dwelling unit is rented for a short-term stay and the property owner is not on-site
- Homestay is when a room(s) is rented for a short-term stay and the property owner or long-term residence lives in the unit at the same time.

The City Olympia Short-term Rental [ordinance](#) was adopted August 27, 2021, and became effective on September 27, 2021.

What You Should Know before You Apply

1. Know what zoning and ordinances apply to your property and situation. For example, there are limits to the number of overnight guests you can have at one time in the dwelling unit, you may need an additional off-street parking space, and you must have a city business license and liability insurance on the unit. Read the [summary](#) of Olympia’s Short-Term Rental Regulations.
2. If you live in a subdivision or neighborhood with restrictive covenants, you should read the governing documents to determine if they allow or regulate rental activity. The City of Olympia does not regulate or enforce homeowner association rules or covenants.
3. If you plan to make changes or updates to your home for the vacation rental, you may need a building permit for the modifications or improvements. Building permits are separate permits. Start by reading this document: [When do I need a Permit](#).
4. You will need to obtain a City of Olympia business license. Visit the City of Olympia Business License [website](#) to learn more.
5. Short-term rental operators must remit all applicable local, state, and federal taxes unless the platform does this on the operator’s behalf. For example, all businesses conducting business in Olympia must file Business & Occupation (B&O) taxes. Check with the [State Department of Revenue](#) regarding their standards and tax requirements and visit the City’s Business and Occupation (B&O) Taxes [website](#).
6. You will need to identify a local contact that lives within 15 miles of the unit, or within Thurston County, whom will be available to respond 24 hours per day, seven days per week to inquiries or complaints from guests, neighbors, or City staff. The local contact may be a property owner or designee. You will need to notify the Community Planning and Development Department with changes to the local contact when applicable.
7. You will need to have operating smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.

8. You will need to post the [Good Neighbor Guidelines](#), a copy of your current business license, emergency contacts for police, fire and emergency medical services, an evacuation plan and a floor plan labeling interior rooms and the location of all sleeping areas and bedrooms of the dwelling unit with escape routes and emergency egress windows.
9. If you intend to have a vacation rental in an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) the ADU must first be [legally established](#) and permitted as an ADU with the Community Planning and Development Department (CPD).
10. If you already have an existing vacation rental, the vacation rental may continue to operate but you must obtain a permit for the unit with the Community Planning and Development Department.
11. Vacation rental permits are valid for two years from the date they were issued. If you plan to continue the use of the vacation rental the permit must be renewed every two years.
12. Violations of Code requirements will be subject to civil penalties or suspension or revocation of the city business license or permit.

How to Apply for a Short-term Rental Vacation Rental

You must have the items listed below ready before you apply for an [online](#) short-term rental vacation rental. All details in the form are required before the city can process and review your short-term rental permit request.

- City of Olympia business license number
- Certificate of liability insurance (COI) – this is a summary and proof that you possess liability insurance coverage in not less than one million dollars. The document describes the policy’s status, type of liability coverage details, and provides information about the insurance company issuing the coverage.
- Property owner’s name, address, phone number
- Local contact’s name, address, phone number
- Address of the vacation rental
- Type of dwelling unit
- Total number of bedrooms
- Total number of short-term rentals per parcel
- If the dwelling unit is located in a multifamily building:
 - Does the dwelling unit or building have a Multifamily Tax Exemption status?
 - Is the dwelling unit in a rent- or other income-restricted building?

What to Expect

1. A Customer Service Center Permit Specialist will review your application for completeness.
2. A Land Use Planner will review the application for compliance with standards and regulations pertaining to short-term rental vacation rentals. The zoning, housing type, number of rooms, and whether the unit is legally established will be evaluated at this time.
3. The target review period is 14 days from a complete application.
4. Beginning in December 2021 the permit review fee will be \$100 required at the time of permit issuance. Contact a City Planner for updates to the City’s Land Use Application Review Fees schedule.

Speak to a City Planner to obtain guidance on your permit request. Planners are available on-call most business workdays. Community Planning and Development Department, 36.753.8314, cpdinfo@ci.olympia.wa.us.

Resources

[RCW Chapter 34.37](#)