

## Short-term rental owners could need business license: Town

If you're looking to make some extra money renting out a property or even a room on a short-term basis, the Town of Aurora might soon require you to get a business license.

The potential need for a license is one of the recommendations coming out of a staff report looking at ways to ensure safety, maintenance, and upkeep of licensed properties, including those listed on platforms like Airbnb.

A key recommendation is requiring all short-term rentals (STR) and bed and breakfasts to obtain a business license and post a sign on their property to identify the premises as an STR business.

Throughout the past number of years, STRs have steadily increased in communities across North America as an alternative to traditional lodging options, said Alexander Wray, Manager of Bylaw Services, in a report to Council this week. This increased growth has resulted in community concerns for public safety, property maintenance and noise impacts to Aurora's neighbourhoods.

This provision will mandate the Town of Aurora has approved, and a license exists for, the STR or bed and breakfast accommodation. It also ensures that the community is aware a business exists on the premises and may allow for complaints for non-compliance to be filed.

Further recommendations, if ultimately approved by Council at the end of this month, will limit one STR or bed and breakfast approved for one lot or one dwelling unit on a lot, require one off-street parking space for each bedroom unit, and set a maximum of six guests and three bedrooms for STR use.

This provision [to limit one STR per lot] will only allow for one type of business to be operated on the property. For example, an operator cannot rent out the main floor and basement suites at the same time. This will assist in minimizing community concerns by restricting the number of STR bookings and dwelling units permitted to be rented. [Parking requirements] will aid in reducing on-street parking concerns related to STR business practices. This regulation (on the maximum number of guests) is intended to significantly minimize community impacts such as house parties, noise, waste, and general nuisance behaviours.

If approved, the license holder must be available to respond to any complaint within two hours of being notified. This, says Mr. Wray, is to ensure operators are held accountable to their properties and can address any concerns from the municipality and local emergency services.

A demerit point system could also be put in place for license holders as a result of complaints.

This requirement will aid in ensuring continued compliance with other relevant Town Bylaws and Provincial Acts, said Mr. Wray. For example, if a noise complaint is received and determined to be valid, the property will accumulate demerit points on its license. This process is intended to hold operators accountable and ensure continued compliance with bylaws and Provincial acts while also mitigating impacts to the general community.

Once the pre-determined demerit point threshold is met, the operator may have their license suspended or revoked and will no longer be eligible to operate a STR or bed and breakfast business in Aurora. The decision to re-instate, add conditions, or permanently revoke the license falling under the purview of the Aurora Appeals Tribunal, pursuant to existing provisions established in the Licensing and Appeals Tribunal bylaws.

Data brought together by the Town estimates there is anywhere between 56 and 115 unique STR properties in Aurora, numbers which fluctuate seasonally. Such rentals can cost an average of \$113 per night and 68 per cent of these opportunities were found classified as single-family homes.

64 per cent of listings advertise the entire home for rent," said Mr. Wray. "This translates to, on average, between 36 to 74 entire home listings at any given time. Short-term rental companies that market, advertise or facilitate STR bookings through their platforms will be required to apply for and obtain an annual business license with a one-time licensing fee of \$5,000. An ongoing fee of \$1 for every night booked through the STR company will be remitted to the Town. This specific licensing requirement aligns with the City of Toronto and Town of Newmarket and staff are recommending a consistent approach for the Town of Aurora to off-set administrative costs associated to the monitoring and enforcement of STRs. Additionally, staff are recommending an annual license fee of \$400 per STR."

Staff anticipate, should the program be approved, the new measures could bring between \$16,000 and \$32,000 into Town coffers annually.

By Brock Weir  
Editor  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter