

June 8, 2023 STR Presentation

Imagine, after you have worked hard saving for that “perfect” home, that you found a modest cape on a quiet road in a residential neighborhood that is just right. It is a home that you saved up for, and sacrificed for, and although you barely saved enough to muster up a down payment, you take the huge and scary step and make the biggest purchase investment in your life.

It’s not an extravagant home, but you’re proud of your accomplishment, full of hope, and happy to finally have a place to call your own.

Ponder, though, what rights do you have that the surrounding homes will continue to be similar to yours in size, scale, and use?

What prevents your neighbor from demolishing her home and erecting an apartment building? What would stop your neighbor across the street from turning his single-family home into a duplex, or from turning his home into a boutique hotel, also known as a short-term rental, that is rented to tourists on a daily basis?

When we make an investment in a community, aren’t we expecting that what we bought and paid for is what we will actually receive; and if changes in the neighboring structures, densities, and uses of homes do happen, that the changes will be done in a thoughtful and deliberative way?

Does this matter to you? Is there a “social contract” that the town and neighborhood you invested in will remain unchanged in terms of size, scale, density, and use of the surrounding homes? How much change in the surrounding development is rational, or should even be allowed?

So while your investment in that modest shingled cape should not be immune from changes associated with housing around it, the changes should be done in a thoughtful, considered and in a fair manner.

The conversion of nearby single-family homes into short-term rentals should not be allowed in residential districts.

During this hearing, no one, except STR owners, has spoken in favor of allowing STRs. The record is replete with reasons why STRs should not be allowed, and

there is a long history of STR complaints and difficulties in enforcing our existing STR regulations.

As discussed when the public hearing was opened in April, non-hosted STRs reduce the supply of homes for permanent residency, which conflicts with the POCD and increases housing costs. STRs negatively impact the ability of nearby homeowners to sell their homes unless they sell to an STR operator; the STR regulations are difficult to enforce, especially in a timely manner; there is no way to for an STR operator to properly vet his guests; and the economic benefits STRs will bring to our town are minimal.

STRs are a commercial use because they are required to pay the daily bed tax, the same as for a hotel. As such, if allowed, STRs should be limited to our commercial districts. If you decide to allow STRs in residential districts, they must require a resident host who lives on the property.

The application should be amended in one of two ways.

The best would be to simply prohibit STRs in residential districts. This would be the easiest to enforce, and the prohibition of STRs appears to be working well in Noank. *All that is necessary is to (a) remove Short-Term Rentals from the Use Table, (b) delete §8.31, and (c) include a statement in the regulations that the rental of dwelling units, or bedrooms in a dwelling, with terms of 30 or fewer days, is not permitted.*

But if your intent is to allow STRs, then §8.31.B.9 should require:

“... A notice on short-term rental platforms, such as AirBnb and Vrbo, that includes the maximum number of guests, including minors, the number of bedrooms available for use by STR guests, the limit on the number of guest vehicles allowed to be parked on the property, a statement that STR guest parking is required to be off-street, a prohibition on guest conduct that is unlawful or constitutes a nuisance, the pet rules, and a notice that the STR has a resident host who lives on the property.”

However, as stated earlier, my preference is that you reject the proposed regulations and replace them with regulations that prohibit STRs in residential districts.

Are there any questions?