



Hall County Government

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
PLANNING AND ZONING

POST OFFICE DRAWER 1435
GAINESVILLE, GA 30503

t: 770.531.6809 | f: 770.531.3902

PLANNING AND ZONING
DIRECTOR
Beth Garmon

To: Richard Higgins, Chairman
Kathy Cooper, District 1 Commissioner
Billy Powell, District 2 Commissioner
Gregg Poole, District 3 Commissioner
Jeff Stowe, District 4 Commissioner

From: Beth Garmon, Director of Planning & Zoning

Date: September 9, 2024

Subject: Amendment of Section 17.216, Short Term Rental

Staff is proposing an amendment to Section 17.216 Short Term Rental as well as Section 17.20 Definitions. Please see the summary below of the recommended changes and the explanation for these modifications:

1. Definition of Guest House – Currently the definition of a guest house is limited in use to a non-paying guest or relative of the occupants of the premises (17.20.540.B), as well as not to be rented (17.20.540.C). Staff recommends that this restriction be removed, allowing guest houses to be used for short term rental. All other language would remain.
2. Section 17.216 Short Term Rental – Currently the section of code which establishes the standards for short term rentals is included in Title 17 of the Official Code of Hall County. Staff recommends that the short term rental regulations be moved to Title 5 – Business Licenses and Regulations as that office now serves as the department which reviews the applications and issues business licenses for short term rentals. Doing so will also provide more clarity for both Business Licenses and code enforcement should short term rental violations occur.
3. Short term rental business license revocations – language has been amended to state that if a short term rental applicant has had their business license revoked within 24 months, no new locations or renewals of an existing location shall be permitted.
4. Life safety – language has been amended to clarify the occupancy limits to 2 guest per bedroom plus 3 guests per short term rental. Staff recommends that the number of bedrooms provided on the short term rental application shall match the number of bedrooms listed on the Hall County property tax card. If the property includes more than 6 bedrooms, the maximum occupancy shall be limited to 15 guests, or the property must meet all life safety code per the Fire Marshal and International Building Code. This may include sprinkler system, fire alarm, and annual inspections.

5. Events and multiple groups – language has been added to restrict the rental of a short term rental to one group at a time, and reservations may only be for less than the entire property if the property is owner-occupied. The short term rental is also restricted from being used as an event venue, and shall not be used to host weddings, parties, or corporate events.

17.20.540. Guest house.

"Guest house" means accessory living quarters situated within a detached or semi-detached site-built structure located on the same premises with the principal residence. Guest houses shall be limited to one such structure per lot and will not include mobile or modular structures. The size of the guest house shall be limited in that the total area of all structures (existing and proposed) shall not be more than 20 percent of the total lot area, if those structures include a guest house. The guest house shall:

- A. Be located a minimum of 20 feet from the principal residence;
- B. ~~Be used by a bona fide non-paying guest or relative of the occupants of the premises; and~~
- C. Not be ~~rented or otherwise~~ occupied as a principal residence.

(Res. of 8-28-78, § 3; Res. of 4-26-91; Code 1991, § 17.20.350; Res. of 2-27-03(1), § 1)

CHAPTER 5.100. SHORT TERM RENTAL

5.100.010.	Purpose.
5.100.020.	Zoning districts.
5.100.030.	Applicability.
5.100.040.	Definitions.
5.100.050.	Property owners, local contact person, and responsible person.
5.100.060.	Business license and tax, and transferability.
5.100.070.	Standard operational requirements and conditions.
5.100.080.	Violation and penalties.

5.100.010. Purpose.

- A. The purpose of this chapter is to establish standards for short term rentals of privately owned residential structures used as vacation homes and rented to transient occupants, minimize adverse effects of short term rental uses on surrounding residential neighborhoods, and preserve the character of neighborhoods in which vacation home use occurs.
- B. This chapter is not intended to regulate hotels, motels, inns, or non-vacation type rental arrangements including, but not limited to, boardinghouses, lodging houses, or rooming houses.

5.100.020. Zoning districts.

Short term rentals are permitted in all residential zoning districts.

5.100.030. Applicability.

- A. It shall be unlawful for any owner of any property within the unincorporated areas of the county to rent or operate a short term rental of residential property contrary to the procedures and regulations established in this chapter, other provisions of this Code, or any applicable state law.
- B. The restrictions and obligations contained in this chapter shall apply to short term rentals at all times during which such vacation homes are marketed and used as short term rentals.
- C. The allowance of short term rentals pursuant to this section shall not prevent enforcement of additional restrictions that may be contained in restrictive covenants or other private contractual agreements or arrangements.

5.100.040. Definitions.

The following words, terms, and phrases, when used in this chapter, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning.

Managing agency or agent. A person, firm or agency representing an owner or owners of a short term rental.

Noise regulations. Those regulations contained in the Official Code of Hall County, Georgia, chapter 8.80, noise control.

Officer of the county. The officer or officers who are authorized by O.C.G.A. §§ 41-2-7 through 41-2-17 and by this chapter of the Official Code of Hall County to exercise the powers prescribed by such ordinances or any agent of such officer or officers.

Owner. A person that holds legal and/or equitable title to private property.

Private. Intended for or restricted to the occupants and/or guests of his or her short term rental; not for public use.

Property. A residential legal lot of record on which a short term rental is located.

Rental term. The period of time a responsible person rents or leases a short term rental.

Short term rental. The transient occupancy of a vacation home, rented for the purpose of overnight lodging for a period of not less than two nights and not more than 30 consecutive nights.

5.100.050. Property owners, local contact person, and responsible person.

A. *Property owners.*

1. The owner and/or local contact person shall use reasonably prudent business practices to ensure the short term rental is used in a manner that complies with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to the use and occupancy of the subject vacation home, and shall further use reasonably prudent business practices to ensure the occupants and/or guests of the vacation home do not create noise in violation of the noise regulations of this Code or disturbances, engage in disorderly conduct, or violate any applicable law, rule or regulation pertaining to the use and occupancy of the subject vacation home.

B. *Local contact person.*

1. Each owner of a short term rental shall designate a local contact person who has access and authority to assume management of the short term rental and take remedial measures while the short term rental is being rented to an occupant and/or guest. An owner of a short term rental may designate himself or herself as the local contact person.
2. The local contact person shall be at least 21 years of age.
3. There shall only be one designated local contact person for a short term rental at any given time.
4. The local contact person shall be required to respond to the location of the short term rental 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and within one hour after being notified by the county of the existence of a violation of this chapter or any other provision of this Code, or any disturbance or complaint requiring immediate remedy or abatement regarding the condition, operation, or conduct of occupants of the short term rental.
5. An owner may retain a managing agent, managing agency, operator, or representative to serve as the local contact person to comply with the requirements of this section, including, without limitation, the licensing of the short term rental, the management of the short term rental, and the compliance with the conditions of the license. The owner of the short term rental is responsible for compliance with the provisions of this section and the failure of an agent, representative, or local contact person to comply with this section shall be deemed noncompliance by the owner.
6. The owner must immediately notify the county business license department in writing upon a change of local contact person or the local contact person's telephone number. This notification will be on forms prescribed by the business license department. The new, revised business license, which will not extend the expiration date of the business license, will be issued for a fee of \$25.00; must be posted in the vacation home within ten days of any change of local contact person information and before occupants can rent the short term rental; and updated notices mailed out to all residential neighbors per section 5.100.060 of this Code.

C. *Responsible person.*

1. Each rental party of the short term rental shall have an occupant designated to be the responsible person.

-
2. The responsible person must be at least 25 years of age.
 3. The responsible person is legally responsible for ensuring that all occupants and/or guests of the short term rental comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations pertaining to the use and occupancy of the subject short term rental.

5.100.060. Business license and tax, and transferability.

A. Business license and tax.

1. The owner shall pay all required excise tax per section 3.40.020 of this Code;
2. No owner or local contact person of a short term rental shall rent that vacation home without first applying for and registering the business per section 3.40.060 of this Code;
3. The owner shall comply with all other applicable provisions of chapter 3.40 of this Code;
4. The owner shall obtain a business license for said short term rental and comply with all applicable provisions of title 5 of this Code for business licenses and regulations;
5. A separate business license shall be required for each vacation home used for short term rental;
6. A business license application **for a new location, or renewal of an existing location**, may be denied if the applicant has had ~~a prior short term rental for the same home or location~~ any Hall County short term rental license revoked within ~~12~~ **24** months of the application;
7. A business license application will be denied if the property for which the business license is sought is subject to one or more covenants proscribing or restricting the use of the property as a short term rental.
8. The following additional information shall be required to be submitted with each application for a business license for a short term rental:
 - (a) The name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the local contact person for the short term rental;
 - (b) The number of bedrooms and approximate square footage in the short term rental, and the maximum number of overnight and daytime occupants;
 - (c) Acknowledgement that the owner and local contact person have read all regulations pertaining to the operation of a short term rental;
 - (d) True and correct copies of any and all covenants to which the property sought to be used as a short term rental is subjected, together with a sworn statement on a form prescribed by the county on which the owner and applicant swear under oath that the property is subject to no covenants other than those which have been provided to the county by the owner and applicant.

B. All business licenses issued pursuant to this chapter are subject to the following standard conditions:

1. The owner or local contact person shall, by written agreement with the responsible person, limit overnight occupancy of the short term rental to the specific number of overnight occupants designated in the business license application;
 2. Prior to permitting occupancy of a short term rental by a transient occupant, the owner or the local contact person shall:
 - (a) Obtain the name, address, and a copy of a valid government identification of the responsible person;
 - (b) Provide information about the short term rental regulations to the responsible person; and
-

-
- (c) Provide and require that such responsible person execute a formal acknowledgement that he or she is legally responsible for compliance by all occupants and/or guests of the vacation home with all applicable laws, rules and regulations pertaining to the use and occupancy of the short term rental.
- 3. Parked vehicles:
 - (a) Shall not be parked on the county right-of-way or along any roadways at any time; and
 - (b) Shall be parked outdoors on the property only on designated hard surfaced areas with gravel, concrete or asphalt surfacing; and shall not be permitted outside such hard surfaced areas (i.e., no parking in yards or neighbor's properties).
 - 4. The owner and/or local contact person shall use best efforts to ensure that the occupants and/or guests of the short term rental do not violate the noise regulations set forth in title 8 of this Code by notifying the occupants of the rules regarding short term rentals and responding when notified that occupants are violating laws regarding their occupancy. It is not intended that the owner and/or local contact person act as a peace officer or place himself or herself in harm's way;
 - 5. The owner and/or local contact person shall use best efforts to ensure that the occupants and/or guests of the short term rental do not violate the domestic animal regulations set forth in title 4 of this Code by notifying the occupants of the rules regarding short term rentals and responding when notified that occupants are violating laws regarding their occupancy. It is not intended that the owner and/or local contact person act as a peace officer or place himself or herself in harm's way;
 - 6. The owner and/or local contact person of the short term rental shall post a copy of the business license and a copy of the conditions set forth in this chapter in a conspicuous place within the short term rental;
 - 7. All business licenses issued under this chapter shall be valid for no more than one year, beginning on the date of issuance and expiring on December 31st of that year; and
 - 8. Upon the issuance of a new short term rental business license, or an updated local contact person, or a change in business license name, the county shall mail a notice to all residences within 500 feet of the property line of the short term rental notifying the neighbors that a short term rental business license has been issued and providing information regarding how to lodge complaints regarding the short term rental, if any.
- C. *Transferability.*
 - 1. No business license issued under this section shall be transferred or assigned or used by any person other than the owner or local contact person to whom it is issued, or at any location other than the one for which it is issued.

5.100.070. Standard operational requirements and conditions.

- A. *Parked vehicles.* All parked vehicles at the short term rental shall comply with all applicable provisions of section 5.100.060 of this Code.
 - B. *Life safety and sanitation.*
 - 1. The occupancy shall be limited to two adults guests per bedroom plus three adults additional guests per each short term rental property. The bedroom(s) shall be inspected by Hall County prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy (CO). If a whole house is being used as a STR, the bedroom count must also match the Hall County property tax records. If the property has more than 6 bedrooms, the maximum occupancy shall be limited to fifteen guests total, or the applicant must meet all life safety codes including installation of a sprinkler system, fire alarm, and annual fire inspection.
-

-
2. Short term rentals shall meet **all** applicable International Building Code, ~~and~~ International Fire Code, **and Life Safety Code as adopted by the State**. For properties that are served by septic, short term rentals shall meet **all** applicable Environmental Health regulations.
 3. Short term rentals shall meet applicable state department of natural resources and the county public safety regulations.
 4. The owner and/or local contact person shall maintain a house number that is visible from the street at all times.
 5. **A short-term rental license is limited to one reservation at any time. Short-rentals may not be less than whole house unless the property is owner-occupied; in such cases, rentals shall also be limited to one reservation at any time.**
 6. **A short-term rental may not be advertised as an event venue and may not be used by the guests to accommodate weddings, parties, corporate events, or similar functions.**

5.100.080. Violation and penalties.

A. Violation.

1. The following conduct shall constitute a violation for which the penalties specified in paragraph D. of this section 5.100.080 may be imposed, or the business license suspended or revoked:
 - (a) The owner or local contact person has violated any of the provisions of this chapter; or
 - (b) The owner or local contact person has violated any zoning, building, health or life safety provision; or
 - (c) The owner or local contact person has failed to comply with all applicable provisions of chapter 3.40 of this Code.
2. Any violation of the provisions of this section by occupants and/or guests of the short term rental shall be enforced pursuant to this section, and any other applicable Code sections. Enforcement actions may be brought against occupants and/or guests of a short term rental for violations of this section and any other provision of this Code notwithstanding that this section may also make the owner or local contact person of the short term rental responsible for the conduct constituting the violation.
3. Any advertising of the short term rental shall conform to information included in the short term rental business license and requirements of this section, and shall include notification of the maximum occupancy, and provisions regulating noise.

B. Abandonment. The abandonment or failure to use a residence as a short term rental for a period of 12 consecutive months for any period shall be deemed an abandonment of the rental use and the owner shall be required to obtain a new business license for the property.

C. Complaints.

1. The complaining party shall first attempt to communicate with the owner or local contact person designated and describe the situation that is out of compliance with this Code;
2. If the complaint is not resolved with the owner or local contact person, then the complaining party may next provide a written complaint to the county marshal which shall include a description of the complaint, the attempts to resolve the complaint, and the complaining party's contact information.

D. Penalties.

1. The penalties for violations specified in section 5.100.080 of this Code shall be as follows:

-
- (a) For the first violation within any 12-month period, the penalty shall be a written notice of violation and a fine not to exceed \$500.00;
 - (b) For a second violation within any 12-month period, the penalty shall be a written notice of violation and a fine not to exceed \$1,000.00;
 - (c) For a third violation within any 12-month period, the penalty shall be a written notice of violation, a fine not to exceed \$2,000.00, the business license shall be revoked for a period of 24 months, and the owner or local contact person shall not be eligible to reapply for a business license on the property in violation for a period of 24 months from the date of revocation.
2. A short term rental that is determined to be operating without the necessary business license required under this section shall subject the owner to a penalty of \$500.00. Each day the short term rental is marketed or rented for overnight accommodation shall constitute a separate violation.
 3. Failure of the owner or local contact person to respond to calls or complaints regarding the condition, operation, or conduct of occupants and/or guests of the short term rental in a timely and appropriate manner shall be grounds for imposition of penalties as set forth in this chapter. It is not intended that an owner or local contact person act as a peace officer or place himself or herself in an at-risk situation.
 4. In addition to the penalties described above, any person violating the provisions of this chapter by operating a short term rental without a valid business license may be prosecuted according to the general penalties described in section 1.50.020 of this Code.

E. *Enforcement.*

1. Penalties, including a notice of violation, shall be imposed, and business licenses shall be revoked, in the manner provided in this chapter.
 - (a) Complaints shall result in a notice of the complaint being directed to the local contact person designated in the business license. The local contact person shall be responsible for contacting the responsible person to correct the problem within one hour. This local contact person is required to visit the property to confirm compliance with this chapter, unless compliance can reasonably be confirmed without visiting the property.
 - (b) If non-compliance with provisions of this section occurs, the business license department or officer of the county shall conduct an investigation whenever there is reason to believe that an owner and/or local contact person has failed to comply with the provisions of this chapter. The investigation may include an inspection of the premises, review of law enforcement/security reports, online searches, citations, or neighbor documentation consisting of photos, sound recordings and video all of which may constitute evidence of a violation. Should the investigation support a finding that a violation occurred, the business license department or designee shall issue written notice of the violation and intention to impose a penalty and/or revoke the business license. The written notice may be served either by first class mail, by commercial overnight delivery, by personal service on the owner and/or local contact person, or by any other reasonable means of delivery, including email, and shall specify the facts which, in the opinion of the business license department, constitute grounds for imposition of the penalties and/or revocation, and specify that the penalties will be imposed and/or that the business license will be revoked 15 calendar days from the date of the notice unless the owner and/or local contact person files with the business license department a request for an appeal hearing before the board of commissioners. In considering such appeal, the board of commissioners shall determine whether the business license department has erred in his/her interpretation and/or enforcement of this chapter.
 - (c) The business license department or officer of the county is hereby authorized and directed to establish such procedures, as specified in title 5 of this Code, which may from time to time be required to carry out the purpose and intent of this chapter. The county marshal and/or the county sheriff or his or her designee shall also have authority to enforce this chapter.