



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

SHORT-TERM RENTAL

AUGUST 4TH PLANNING BOARD MEETING

AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 4.60 – SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Background

- On August 7, 2017, the Cambridge City Council adopted Ordinance No. 1397, Short-Term Rentals, codified as Zoning Ordinance Article 4, Section 4.60. The Ordinance has not been amended since taking effect April 1, 2018.
- On August 5, 2025, the Planning Board heard the original petition and voted a strong recommendation to adopt it.
- On August 27, 2025, the Ordinance Committee allowed the petition to lapse, and the Council issued Policy Order POR 2025 #121, requesting further community outreach and additional recommendations.
- From December 17, 2025 – January 26, 2026, ISD conducted public outreach via an online survey regarding STR ordinance changes

Ordinance adopted

August 7, 2017 — City Council adopts Ordinance No. 1397 (STR), Zoning Article 4, Section 4.60

Ordinance takes effect

April 1, 2018 — effective date

Ordinance has not been amended since

Planning board hearing

August 5, 2025 — hears original petition, votes a strong recommendation to adopt

Petition lapses; outreach ordered

August 27, 2025 — Ordinance Committee lets the petition lapse; Council issues Policy Order 2025 #121, requesting further outreach and recommendations

ISD public outreach survey

December 17, 2025 – January 26, 2026 — ISD conducts public outreach via a survey regarding STR ordinance changes

STR Overview as of June 2026

Host Compliance Reports there are 716 STR in Cambridge

- As of June 2026, there were **216** registered short-term rental units citywide
- Estimated **500** unregistered units

Breakdown of registered units:

- **142** operator-occupied units (**66%**)
- **74** owner-adjacent units (**34%**)

Community Engagement Process

- ISD conducted a survey from December 17, 2025 – January 26, 2026
- The survey was sent to all registered STR operators as well as Cambridge Condo Alliance leaders
- Survey was also promoted via flyers/QR codes at City Hall Annex, Lombardi Building, DPW, and Main Library + branches
- Published on City website and social media
- Dedicated ISD counter hours offered for public questions and feedback
- Up to 23 questions (some conditional), including 3 write-in questions

Survey Response Overview

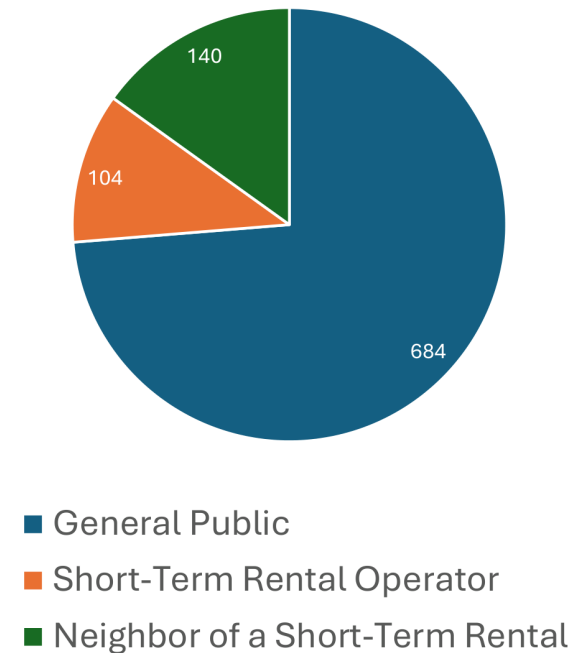
928* total responses, including the following breakdown by respondent type:

- **74%** of respondents identified as member of the General Public
- **11%** of respondents were Short-Term Rental Operators (this percentage accounts for nearly half of all registered operators)
- **15%** were Neighbors of a short-term rental

An additional breakdown showed that:

- **84%** of respondents were property owners in Cambridge and of those respondents, **55%** were condo unit owners

*98% of respondents identified as Cambridge residents



Key Survey Findings: Day Limits, Condo Approval, Enforcement

59% of all respondents indicated that they supported limitations on the number of days an entire short-term rental unit can be rented as a whole:

- **64%** of General Public respondents approved of a limit
- **68%** of respondents who identified as a Neighbor of a STR unit approved of a limit
- **11%** of STR Operators

77% of condo association residents support requiring a letter of approval from condo associations before an STR application is approved

- **Result:** Proposed amendments continue to require condo association consent for both owners and tenants

Many respondents requested stronger enforcement against unauthorized short-term rentals in the write in responses

- **Result:** New enforcement section

Recommendations Overview

- Updated definitions of Short-Term Rentals, including a new third category: Autonomous Unit
- New definitions for booking agent/platform, primary residence, registration number, and registration database
- Updated operating requirements, including compliance standards with state and local law
- Updated registration requirements for Operators and Booking Agents/Platforms
- A proposed a 90 day per calendar year limit to STRs

New Definitions

- **Booking Agent / Platform** – Third party that facilitates reservations or collects payment for a short-term rental.
- **Booking Service** – Reservation or payment service that facilitates a short-term rental transaction.
- **Primary Residence** – Residential unit where the Operator resides at least **9 months of the year**.
- **Proof of Primary Residence** – Documentation demonstrating the unit is the Operator's primary residence.
- **Registration Number** – Unique City-issued identification number assigned to a registered short-term rental.
- **Registry Database** – ISD-maintained database of registered short-term rentals and booking agents/platforms.
- **Short-Term Rental** – Rental of a residential unit (or bedroom) for fewer than **28 consecutive days**; proposed maximum of **90 rental days per calendar year**.
- **Autonomous Unit STR** – Entire primary residence rented while the Operator is temporarily absent.
- **Operator-Occupied STR** – Up to three bedrooms rented while the Operator remains on-site.
- **Owner-Adjacent STR** – Entire unit in a building of four or fewer units owned by the Operator, who resides in another unit in the building.
- **Short-Term Rental Operator** – Owner or authorized primary leaseholder offering the short-term rental.

Updated Definitions: Operator-Occupied & Owner-Adjacent

Previous Definitions

Operator-Occupied Short-Term Rental:

- The short-term rental of at least one but no more than three (3) individual bedrooms within the primary residence of its Operator. One bedroom must be reserved for the Operator. The Operator must be present for the duration of the short-term rental.

Owner-Adjacent Short-Term Rental

- The short-term rental of a residential unit in its entirety that is not the primary residence of the Operator but is located within a residential building with a total of four or fewer units where all units in the building are owned by the Operator, and one of the units in the building is the primary residence of the Operator. An owner-adjacent short-term rental may be rented only as a whole unit to one party of short-term renters at any one time. An owner-adjacent short-term rental may not be rented as separate bedrooms to separate parties.

Overview of Requirements for Operation of a Short-Term Rental

- Only Autonomous Unit, Operator-Occupied, and Owner-Adjacent STRs are permitted.
- Operators must register with ISD before operating.
- Units must comply with all applicable building, fire, sanitary, and local codes.
- Operators must maintain liability insurance.
- Registration Number must appear on all listings.
- ISD may immediately revoke registration if a property is deemed a nuisance.
- Commercial meetings and hourly rentals are prohibited.

Updated Operator Requirements Cont...

- Condo association approval continues to be required for both owners and tenants
- Registrations tied to both unit and Operator — do not transfer upon sale
- Duty to amend application within 30 days of material changes
- No transfer or assignment of STR certification to another person

Short Term Rental Registration

- Proof of primary residence required.
- Condo association approval required, when applicable.
- ISD inspection required before registration.
- Registration is tied to both the Operator and the unit.
- Operators must update applications within 30 days of material changes.
- Registration cannot be transferred to another person.

Highlight of New Requirements for Booking Agents/Platforms

- Must register with ISD before collecting a fee for booking services in Cambridge
- Cannot collect a fee for a booking transaction unless the unit is listed on the City's registry
- Must confirm compliance with City Ordinance and regulations annually
- Must verify registration status before charging or collecting a fee
- Liable for civil penalty of up to **\$300 per violation** per day

Procedural Requirements

- Waste and recycling instructions.
- Emergency exit diagrams.
- Emergency contact information.
- Certificate of Registration posted within the unit.

Enforcement & Violations

- ISD may investigate complaints and enforce ordinance requirements.
- Violations may be enforced through civil fines or court action.
- Violations are subject to fines of up to \$300 per violation, per day.
- Each day a violation continues constitutes a separate offense.

Local Room Occupancy Excise & Community Impact Fees

Language now reflects that:

- City may impose local room occupancy excise taxes.
- City may adopt community impact fees as authorized by state law.
- Short-term rentals remain subject to applicable state and local taxes.

Questions
