

Community Meeting Short Term Rentals

WATERTOWN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

FEBRUARY 21, 2018



Agenda

1. What is a Short Term Rental and why do we care?
2. Potential Impacts, both positive and negative
3. Current Situation: Watertown Zoning and Potential State Legislation
4. Examples of ways other municipalities deal with Short Term Rentals
5. Issues and Ideas: Brainstorming
6. Next Steps

The screenshot shows a news article from BBC News. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Video, News, World, Sport, Business, Money, Comment, Culture, Travel, and Life. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Apple, iPhone, Technology News, Technology Companies, Technology Reviews, and Video Games. The main content area features a large image of three women in elegant dresses, with a vertical text overlay on the left that reads "FREE SHIPPING \$79+". Below the image, the article title is "Airbnb: The story behind the \$1.3bn room-letting website". The sub-headline reads "The rise of the room-letting website Airbnb is testament to the growing popularity of 'collaborative consumption' – sharing, swapping and renting your possessions." The article is by Jessica Salter, dated 7:00AM BST 07 Sep 2012, and has 4,317 followers. To the right of the article, there is a sidebar with a "Technology News" section, a "The best tablets" section, and a "Mobile photography awards" section.

HOME » TECHNOLOGY » TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Airbnb: The story behind the \$1.3bn room-letting website

The rise of the room-letting website Airbnb is testament to the growing popularity of 'collaborative consumption' – sharing, swapping and renting your possessions.

By Jessica Salter
7:00AM BST 07 Sep 2012
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What is a Short Term Rental?

Short Term Rental (STR):

- Residential Property used for shorter than a month to month time period (less than 30 days)
- Can be an apartment or house, portions of buildings, or only a room
- Can be owner-occupied, investment property (not owner-occupied), or multi-unit with an onsite manager



Context: Boston, a Regional Destination

Watertown has many reasons to be a destination as part of this region.

- Tourists come to see the city and New England for its history, scenery, culture, etc.
- Hub for Hospitals and Universities (parents, patients, lecturers, etc.)
- Meetings and Conferences
- Family add on to work trips

Why does Watertown care?

Short term rentals are already here, for users and renters.

This has provide benefits to some in the community but have also created complaints and enforcement actions.

Positives

Potential Positives of the business and its regulation:

- Provides choices for local residents (extended family, guests, friends)
- Creates more options for business and other visitors
- Creates options for increased income for home owners
- Enhances the Town as a destination
- Potential for tax, application and inspection fee revenues
- Opportunity to bring regulation and predictability to customers
- Create a “level playing field” for those renting space

Negatives

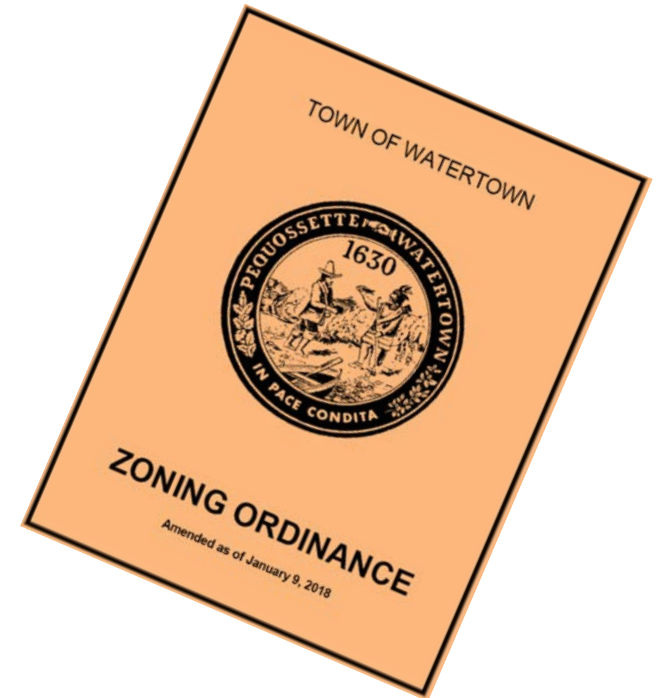
Potential/Perceived Impacts:

- May reduce number of available long-term housing units
- Can increase rents and reduce the amount of affordable housing
- Potential for increased traffic and parking issues
- Community character impacts: Noise, trash, transient use in residential areas
- Safety concerns: Egress, smoke alarms
- Increased staff resources for review and inspection

Watertown's Current Situation

Watertown Zoning

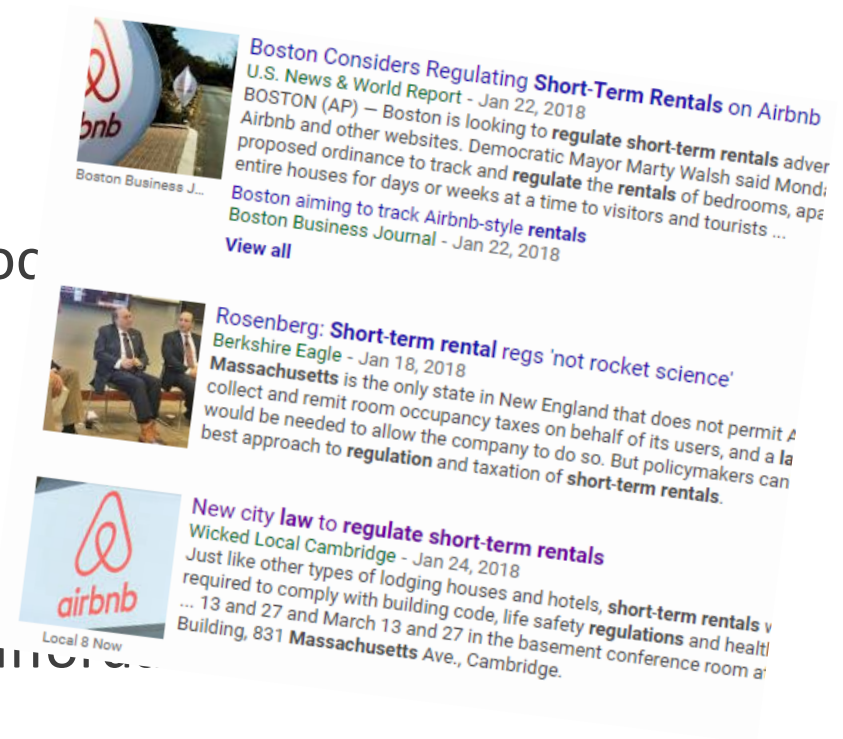
- Short-term rental is not defined in Watertown's Zoning Ordinance
- The most similar use would be under Section 5.02.a the *Table of Accessory Uses* “a dwelling unit that is owner occupied, renting of not more than two rooms as a lodging without separate cooking facilities and for not more than two **lodgers**”
- Planning Board found this option does not fit short term rentals directly enough, and so needs to be addressed. Until the Town addresses this use directly, they are not permitted.



Potential State Legislation

House Bill #3454

- Would define a “Short-term Rental”
- Maximum of 60 transient use days per year
- Distinction between various types of rentals, based on owner occupancy versus investor owned, and number of units
- New sliding scale Excise Tax
- Municipalities can restrict number of units, days utilized
- Municipalities must designate 50% of the new tax revenue to affordable housing
- Requires an annual safety inspection of units and insurance

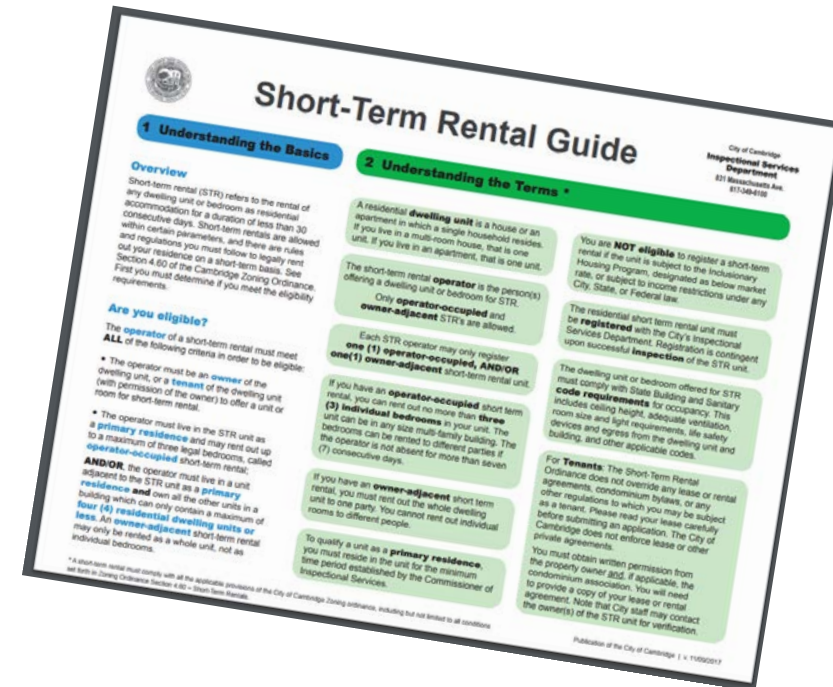


What Communities are Doing

1. Some communities do not allow short-term rentals (is an enforcement issue, may be complaint driven)
2. Others have developed registration/permitting processes:
 - a. Define Short Term Rentals
 - b. Health and Safety requirement for:
 - i. Noise and trash collection
 - ii. Registration or a license requirement, and inspections (Fire, Building, Health)
 - c. More specific restrictive options can include:
 - i. Limiting the duration of stay or the total number of days in a year
 - ii. Number of people or number of rentals in a dwelling unit
 - iii. Requiring owner-occupancy or as an accessory use
 - iv. Defining where to allow the use, parking, and other Zoning requirements

What Communities are Doing

Municipality	Regulating	Currently not allowed
Boston	X	
Cambridge	X	
Belmont	X	
Brookline	X	
Newton	X	
San Diego		X
New York City		X



Brainstorm

What Ideas

Issues

Concerns

Benefits

or other thoughts... do you have?

Next Steps

And Thank You!