Executive Summary

Issue Title: Department of Community Development: Short-Term Rental Ordinance

Meeting Date: January 5th, 2026

Time Required: 4:00-4:30pm, 30 minutes

Attendees: Rafe Wysham, Director
Cecilia Olsen, Assistant Director
David Lynam, Fire Marshal
Scott Diener, Planning Manager

Action Requested At This Meeting:

Provide guidance on proposed Short-Term Rental regulations

Background:

- DCD has met with the Board several times this year to discuss possible paths for developing short-term rental regulations. After the last meeting with the Board on August 11th, 2025, DCD worked to develop a draft ordinance and collect industry feedback.

Attachments:

- Draft ordinance for Short-Term Rentals
- Short-Term Rental presentation

SHORT-TERM RENTALS

6.50.010 Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide processes and rules for the certification and operation of short-term rentals in unincorporated Kitsap County. The standards adopted herein are intended to ensure a minimum level of fire and life safety protection for short-term rental tenants, reduce impacts of short-term rentals in existing neighborhoods, and ensure the owners of short-term rentals are licensed and pay taxes.

6.50.020 Applicability.

A. The provisions of this chapter apply to all properties containing a short-term rental with four or less sleeping rooms as otherwise defined in Kitsap County Code (KCC) 6.50.XXX. Short-term rentals do not include time-share properties, bed and breakfasts, hotels, motels, or other rental properties excluded by chapter 64.37 RCW, whether licensed or permitted. In addition to the provisions of this chapter, short-term rentals shall comply with all applicable provisions of KCC. For short-term rentals with five or more sleeping rooms, a land use application will be required as directed by KCC Titles 17 Zoning and 21 Land Use and Development Procedures.

6.50.030 Definitions.

As used in this chapter, the following terms have the meanings set forth below. Where definitions below conflict with definitions in RCW 64.37, the definitions in RCW 64.37 shall prevail.

A. “Agent” means any person or entity authorized to act on behalf of the owner of a short-term rental unit.

B. “Broker” means any person or entity that offers, lists, advertises, accepts reservations for, and/or collects whole or partial payment for a short-term rental unit, including but not limited to online websites, online travel agencies, and online booking agents.

C. “Department” means the Department of Community Development.

D. "Operator" or "short-term rental operator" means any person who receives payment for owning or operating a short-term rental.

E. "Owner" means any person who, alone or with others, has title or interest in any building, property, dwelling unit, or portion thereof, with or without accompanying actual possession thereof, and including any person who as agent, executor, administrator, trustee, or guardian of an estate has charge, care, or control of any building, dwelling unit, or portion

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thereof. A person whose sole interest in any building, dwelling unit, or portion thereof is solely that of a lessee under a lease agreement is not considered an owner.

F. “Short-term rental” means a structure of any type containing a dwelling, dwelling unit, or sleeping unit, including a single-family residence, attached or detached accessory dwelling, guest house, cottage house, apartment, condominium, room, cooperative unit, or similar that is rented or offered for rent by the owner or owner’s authorized agent to any person or group of persons through payment, transaction, barter, or other consideration of any kind for a period of less than thirty consecutive calendar days, counting portions of days as full days.

6.50.040 Certification Required.

No property shall be offered or used as a short-term rental without the property owner first applying for, obtaining, and possessing a valid Short-Term Rental Certification through the Department.

A. Certification shall be valid for 365 days after the date of issuance and shall be renewed annually.

B. Certification is non-transferable and becomes invalid upon sale of property or business.

C. Every short-term rental shall obtain and maintain a current, valid business license for transient accommodation issued by the State of Washington.

6.50.050 Application and Approval requirements.

A. Property owners or their authorized agents must apply to the Department for a Short-Term Rental Certification in such form and detail as may be required by the Department, including but not limited to:

1. The address and tax parcel number of the intended rental site.
2. The names, mailing addresses, email addresses, phone numbers and physical addresses of the owner(s) of the short-term rental.
3. The names, mailing addresses, email addresses, phone numbers and physical addresses of the agents and operator(s) of the short-term rental.
4. The business name and license number issued by the State of Washington.
5. The name of the short-term rental (if any).

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6. Maximum occupancy and number of sleeping rooms. Maximum occupancy shall be not more than two adults and accompanied minor children per sleeping room, plus an additional two persons.

7. Number of off-street parking spaces specifically dedicated to the short-term rental. Parking shall be provided at one dedicated space per sleeping room. No on-street parking spaces may be allowed, except as specifically authorized in writing by the Department. The parking provided for the ADU is in addition to the principal dwelling parking requirements.

8. All internet listing sites for the short-term rental and all listing numbers, as of the date of application.

9. Proof of liability insurance per RCW 64.37.050.

10. A statement that the vacation rental meets all applicable building, fire, land use, zoning and health codes.

11. Payment of fees.

B. No short-term rental may be certified in a structure or on a parcel where:

1. There is already a certified vacation rental on the parcel (except for when dwellings are a part of multi-family use).

2. There are building, land use, site development or other permits which have not received final approval.

3. Impact fees have been assessed and are unpaid.

4. An open code compliance case exists on a parcel, and a proposed short term rental application for certification is submitted for that parcel which may, in the Department's interpretation, impact or be impacted by the code compliance case. Certification may be suspended until the resolution of the code compliance case.

5. Certifying the short-term rental would be in violation of other code or law.

6. Certifying the short-term rental would increase the degree of non-conformity on an already existing non-conforming use.

C. Building Requirements. Short-term vacation rentals shall meet the minimum dwelling, dwelling unit, or sleeping unit room requirements of KCC Title 14 – Building and Fire Code in effect at the date of application. Consistent with the requirements of Title 14:

1. Each bedroom or other area used for sleeping shall have at least one emergency escape window or a door leading directly to the outside.

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2. Stairs in vacation rentals shall have handrails.
3. Decks and other elevated surfaces shall have guardrails.
4. There shall be at least one conforming exit and more if required by Title 14.
5. Approved and interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that receive principal power from the building wiring and equipped with battery backup shall be provided in sleeping areas, in hallways or other areas outside of sleeping areas, and on each level including basements and habitable attics.
6. Landings shall be provided at the base of stairs and outside of required exits.
7. Approved address signs shall be installed on the rental and at other locations to assure emergency responder access.
8. A portable fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 2A:10B:C shall be installed in a readily visible and accessible location.
9. A floor plan of the vacation rental shall be posted in an approved location identifying the maximum occupancy, sleeping areas, exit routes, fire extinguisher locations, gas, water, and electric shutoffs.
10. Swimming pools and spas shall be provided with signs, gates, fences, alarms, and/or locks consistent with current code requirements.

D. Listing Requirements. All listings and advertisements for the vacation rental shall include the Kitsap County Certification number.

6.50.060 Operational Requirements.

A. The owner or operator of each short-term rental shall prominently post the following information on the back of, or interior and within five feet of, the main door which accesses the short-term rental:

1. The physical address and phone number at the rental.
2. Instruction on how contact police, fire, and emergency medical personnel.
3. The name, phone number(s) and email of the property owner, agent, or other responsible party for the rental property.

B. Oversight. The owner, agent, or operator shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this chapter and other applicable regulations at all times.

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1. An owner, agent, operator or other responsible person who is at least 18 years old and designated as such in the Rules by the Conduct shall:

   a. Always be available for telephone contact, and capable of physically responding to the short-term rental site within 30 minutes of being requested to do so by emergency responders, licensing/certifying authorities, occupants of the rental, or in case of emergency.

   b. Take reasonable and timely steps to remedy any situation, conditions, noise violations, trespassing, or other behaviors out of compliance.

C. Events/assembly events. Short-term rentals that offer opportunities for events such as weddings, musical performances, parties, reunions, fairs, markets, bazaars, retreats, or conferences, or in conjunction with other business activities regardless of the number of attendees, will require separate review and approval per KCC Title 17.

6.50.070 Advertising requirements.

No short-term rental may be offered or advertised for rent by any owner, person, broker, agent or entity without including the Kitsap County Short-Term Rental Certification number in such offer or advertisement.

6.50.080 Taxes.

All owners or operators must pay all applicable federal, state, and local taxes either through a rental platform or other method consistent with RCW 64.37. This includes, but is not limited to occupancy, sales, lodging, and other taxes, fees, and assessments to which an owner or operator of a hotel or bed and breakfast is subject in the jurisdiction in which the short-term rental is located.

6.50.090 Liability insurance.

As required by RCW 64.37.050, as now or hereafter amended, owners or operators must maintain primary liability insurance to cover the rental in the aggregate of not less than one million dollars ($1,000,000) or conduct each rental transaction through a platform that provides equal or greater primary liability insurance coverage.

6.50.100 Enforcement.

A. The County shall provide a system for citizen complaints about short-term rentals to be submitted for review by the Department. Any such complaint must be accompanied by evidentiary material, including but not limited to time-stamped photos, recordings, or statements. All citizen complaints will be verified by the Department.

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B. The department may perform an on-site inspection to verify compliance with the provisions of this chapter and other applicable codes prior to issuing or renewing a Short-Term Rental Certification or in response to complaints received about a short-term rental.

C. Initial violation of any provision of this chapter shall result in the Department issuing a Notice of Violation to the owner and operator together with a warning that subsequent violations may result in additional enforcement action. Violation of any provision of this chapter within one year after receiving an initial Notice of Violation shall constitute a Class 1 Civil Infraction and may be enforced consistent with the provisions of KCC Chapter 2.116. In addition to the provisions of KCC 21.04.280 additional or repeated violations of any provision shall be grounds for revocation of the short-term rental certification.

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SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Department of Community Development

Cecilia Olsen, Assistant Director
Scott Diener, Planning Manager
David Lynam, Fire Marshal

January 5, 2026

KitsapCounty



HISTORY

2016

- STR regulation incorporated into Title 17 Zoning code

2018

- BoCC deferred enforcement of STR code, pending code updates

2019

- Public survey of STR concerns conducted

2024

- STR code added to 2025 docket

2025

- BoCC direction, draft code developed, outreach to industry professionals



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Certification Program
The STR certifies basic fire and life safety, and neighborhood compatibility through a standardized annual administrative process—one that relies on STR certification of code compliance. Enforcement will be complaint-based.

Title 6: Businesses, Licenses and Registrations
The certification is not a permit and does not involve land use review or multi-discipline approvals, nor does it trigger ongoing inspections. DCD chose to develop the draft ordinance as an additional chapter to Title 6 rather than incorporating changes into development regulations.

Title 17: Zoning
2026 administrative code updates will address changes in the Use Table that currently requires ACUP for vacation rentals of 1-4 rooms. DCD will also evaluate reducing CUP requirements for 5+ rooms to an ACUP.

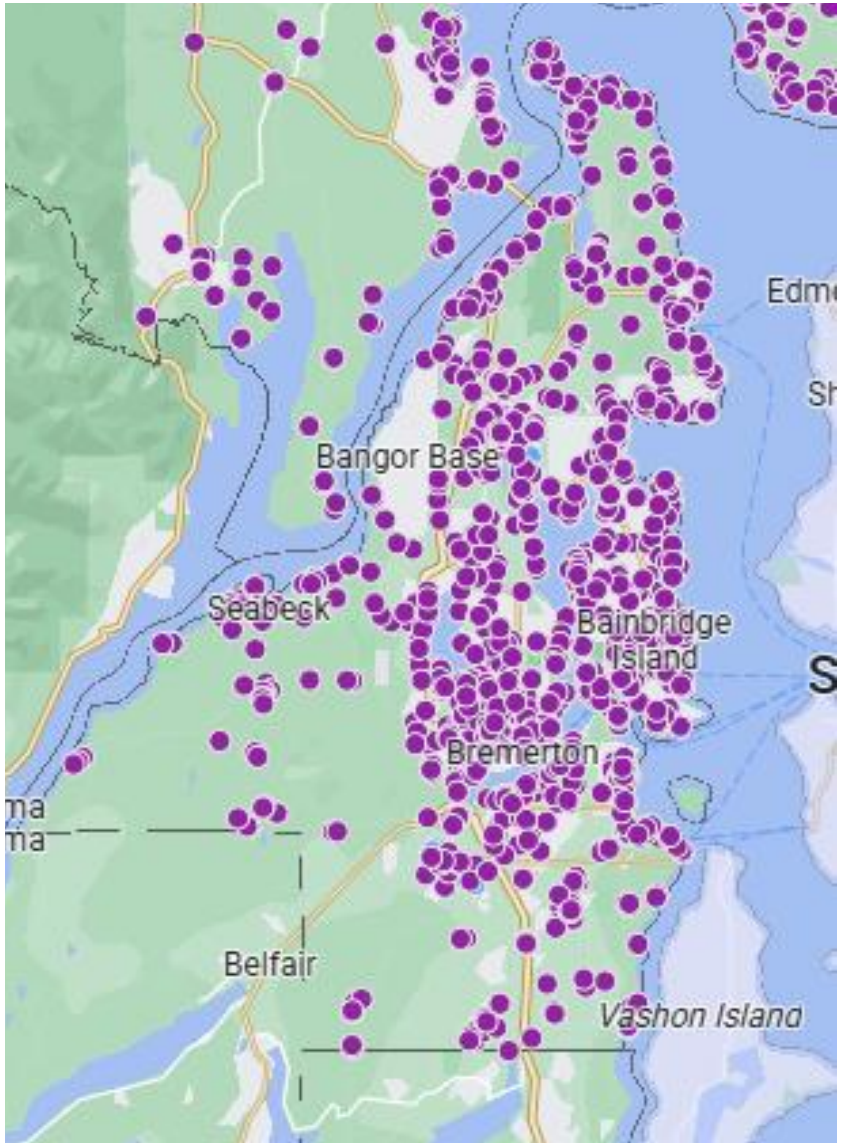
INDUSTRY FEEDBACK

AIRBNB

- Comments indicated draft code is standard and AirBnB has no major issues

VRBO

- Comments indicated draft code is solid. Appreciative of the approach to require a local contact, as they have found this to be an effective way to address or even prevent on-site issues. Supportive of including registration number on listings. Open to coordination.



NEXT STEPS

- [x] Confirm direction with BoCC
- [x] Complete legal review of any changes to draft code
- [x] Schedule Public Hearing
- [x] Open comment period
- [x] Goal of adoption by April 1st

