



Permit Center

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FAQs for Bellingham's Short-term Rental Regulations Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC) Section 20.10.037

What is a Short-term Rental (STR)?

A lodging use, other than a hotel or motel, in which a dwelling unit or portion thereof is provided to guests by a short-term rental operator for a fee for fewer than 30 consecutive nights.

Where can an STR be located?

- STRs are allowed in legally-established dwelling units, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs) (when permitted), in residential, commercial and urban village zoning districts.
- Residential zones: STRs are only allowed in dwelling units (including ADUs when permitted) that serve as the primary residence of the applicant (an owner or long-term tenant) for at least 270 days/year.
- Single-family zones: STRs are not allowed in detached ADUs.

Note: See [BMC 20.10.037](#) for other exceptions

How many STRs can I operate?

- Residential zones: Only 1 STR per operator is allowed. If an owner agrees to let a long-term tenant have an STR, this counts as the 1 permitted STR for both the owner and tenant.
- Commercial and Urban Village zones: There is no cap on STRs per operator.
- All zones: On sites where an STR is permitted in an ADU, an STR permit may be obtained for either the primary dwelling unit or ADU—not both.

Do I need to live there?

- Residential zones: The dwelling unit (including an ADU when permitted) housing the STR must serve as the operator's (owner or long-term tenant) primary residence for at least 270 days/year.
- Commercial and Urban Village zones: Primary residency is not required.

How many days/year can an STR be operated?

- Residential zones: With primary residency at least 270 days/year, individual bedrooms can be rented year round. The whole unit can be rented for no more than 95 days/year.
- Commercial and Urban Village zones: There is no maximum number of days/year individual bedrooms or the entire unit can be rented.

What type of STR land use permit is required?

- Single-family zones: Up to 2 bedrooms—Type I; up to 5 bedrooms—Type II
- Multi-family zones: Up to 2 bedrooms—Type I; up to 5-bedrooms—Type II
- Condominiums in residential zones: Where STRs exceed the maximum of 1 unit or 25% of the units (whichever is greater)—Type III-A and condominium approval
- Commercial and Urban Village zones: Up to 5-bedrooms—Type I

How long is a permit valid?

The permit must be renewed on or before January 1 of every even-numbered year. Failure to comply with the BMC may result in permit revocation and/or a fine as per [BMC 20.52](#).

What are the fees?

See the [Land Use Fee Schedule](#)

Other Requirements:

- [City of Bellingham Business License](#)
- Federal, state, and local license & tax compliance
- Liability insurance
- City Inspection per [BMC 20.10.037.D.11](#)
- All other requirements outlined in [BMC 20.10.037](#)
- Other permits as required

This handout is intended as a guide only. Operators are responsible for compliance with all applicable regulations.