



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 3, 2026

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FROM: MARK CLISER, SENIOR PLANNER

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION FOR INLAND SHORT-TERM RENTAL (STR) ORDINANCE

This memorandum includes summarizations of the 2025 STR online survey and in-person stakeholder meetings as well as staff recommendations based on community input.

2025 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

2025 ONLINE SURVEY: Planning and Building Services conducted an online community survey to gather input on STRs (Attachments A, B, & C). The survey opened on March 18, 2025, and closed on May 15, 2025.

The majority of respondents expressed support for regulation. There are requests for a balanced approach to ordinance development that allows for local flexibility and responsiveness to community-specific needs such as noise and housing (Attachment D).

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS: The five STR stakeholder meetings generated a wide range of community input. Each session began with a staff-led PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the STR landscape and regulatory context (Attachment E). Following the presentation, attendees shared perspectives on key issues.

Across all public meetings, there was concern about the unchecked growth of STRs and their effects on long-term housing availability. Residents reported that STRs are reducing the local housing stock, especially for essential workers such as teachers, healthcare providers, and public safety staff. Many expressed frustration at the conversion of housing into transient rentals, citing their contribution to rising home prices and rental costs. STRs are also seen as degrading the character of residential neighborhoods, turning them into hotels and weakening community cohesion (Attachment F). At the same time, some residents acknowledged the economic benefits of STRs, particularly their contribution to tourism revenue and their role as supplemental income source for property owners.

SURVEY AND MEETINGS - SUMMARY: Public feedback shows support for stricter oversight of STRs, which, while contributing to tourism, may negatively affect housing, community identity, and well-being. Residents call for a balanced, location-sensitive approach that prioritizes long-term housing, protects neighborhoods, and ensures responsible STR operations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS & BOARD GUIDANCE: Based on community input, Staff has identified the most common concerns and prepared 19 recommendations. Staff suggests a

short-term rental (STR) ordinance that addresses five key areas: **neighborhood quality, housing protection, zoning restrictions, permit structure, and enforcement.**

Neighborhood Quality

Good Neighbor Requirements

1. Require each STR unit to provide a “Good Neighbor Guide” that addresses, for example, noise, trash, parking, and pet policies, local emergency contact, behavioral expectations, and how to file a complaint with the County.

Housing Protection

Housing Preservation Zones (see Attachments G, H, & I)

2. Consider designated zones (near schools, hospitals, essential services) where STRs are prohibited or capped to protect long-term housing for local workers. Consider limiting STRs east of coastal zone boundary to preserve workforce housing, especially near resorts, and town centers or in areas with high concentration of existing STRs.

Housing Offset Requirements

3. If the Board is interested in a housing offset requirement, the Department can consider some different options for later discussion. For example, create a local housing trust fund and require payment into it or, for every STR permit, require a deed-restricted long-term rental unit.

Ownership Restrictions

4. Consider limiting STR permits to individuals (no corporate/LLC ownership) if determined to be allowable after County Counsel review. Limit number of STRs an individual may have.
5. Consider requiring owner-occupancy in a dwelling unit on the property or a local property manager if no owner occupancy on-site.
6. Assess transferability of STR licenses/ permits.
 - o Example: ownership change results in permit termination

Zoning Restrictions

Regional Cap System

7. Consider limiting STRs to a percentage (5 percent, for example) of total housing stock per census tract or zip code or watershed (see Attachments G, H, & I)
8. Consider cap combining districts. Within designated areas of smaller parcels (1 acre or less, for example) limit total number of STRs in that area to a smaller percentage (4 percent, for example)
9. Consider STR exclusion districts if majority of neighbors initiate process

Permit Structure

Permit Differentiation

10. Provide a streamlined process for hosted STRs¹ accessed from a public road. For

¹ A hosted STR requires the host live on the property in the same or separate unit

example: business license and Good Neighbor Policy only.

11. Require discretionary review for all STRs which are accessed from a private road easement, even they are a hosted STR
12. Require discretionary review for all unhosted STRs to ensure proper fire and traffic safety practices are in place (evacuation plans, landline/ internet connection, defensible space, speed limits on private roads, fire extinguisher, etc.), and neighbor notification.

Permit Duration & Renewal

13. Assess time limits on STR permits. For example: Ten-year permit validity for discretionary permits and annual review for business license
14. Renewals based, for example, on complaint and violation history, property tax and TOT compliance, feedback from road associations (if applicable)

Enforcement

Monitoring

15. Weigh the pros and cons of using software or staff to track and enforce compliance with County Ordinance. Assess whether County Staff, i.e., Code Enforcement and/or Planning, shall be responsible for addressing and following up on complaints.

Penalties & Revocation

16. Graduated fines for violations such as operating without a permit, violating occupancy/noise/parking limits, or other operative requirements of final ordinance.
17. Consider a three-strike policy: Three verified violations result in permit revocation process being initiated by County.

Safety Requirements

18. Enforce safety standards such as smoke detectors, emergency exits, evacuation plans, and reliable communication (cell service or landline)
19. Consider requiring an enhanced fire safety and evacuation plan as part of permit process in very high fire-risk zones (Attachment M).

Attachments

- A. Online Survey Comments – Do You Own a Short-Term Rental (STR) Property in Mendocino County (page 16)
- B. Online Survey Comments – How Do You Perceive the Presence of Short-Term Rentals in Inland Mendocino County? (page 26)
- C. Online Survey Comments – Final Comments from Participants (page 37)
- D. Online Survey Summary
- E. Stakeholder Presentation Slides (page 44)
- F. Stakeholder Meetings Summary
- G. Number of Housing Units (page 64)
- H. Short Term Rental Map (page 65)
- I. Short Term Rental Map by Housing Units, Schools, and Healthcare Centers (page 66)
- J. Key Considerations from Housing Element (page 67)
- K. Mendocino County STR History, Previous Actions, and Current Practice (page 70)
- L. Ordinance Practices – Nearby Jurisdictions (page 72)
- M. Mendocino County Fire Severity Map (page 73)
- N. Mendocino Council of Governments - Final Regional Housing Need Determination (page

74)