



Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board

City of Bemidji Northern Township

317 4th Street NW Bemidji, MN 56601 Office (218) 759-3579 Fax (218) 759-3591

Short Term Rentals (STR)– FAQs

What defines a STR?

A dwelling unit, guest cottage, a structure designated or used for residential occupancy, or portion of said structure, rented for a period of less than thirty (30) consecutive days...

Where are STRs allowed?

Any R-1 through R-6 (e.g. strictly residential) zoning district. Short term rentals must provide on-site parking for guests, and thus are not allowed in the Urban Renaissance.

Does a STR need a permit?

Statewide, anyone who operates a STR needs a *lodging license* for each establishment, which is issued by the MN Department of Health (MDH). However, some local governments have banned STRs, and without a permit or written permission from the local government the MDH will not issue a license. In the Greater Bemidji Area (City of Bemidji and Northern Township), STRs are allowable if the owner obtains an annual STR *Permit* from the JPB.

Why does the JPB require a separate permit?

As of 2021 the JPB has allowed STRs following a period in which they were banned outright. The ban was to ensure public health, safety, general welfare, and neighborhood character of property in the Greater Bemidji Area, per Policy set forth in the JPB Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance. In order to lift the ban while meeting the stated policy goals in the Ordinance, the JPB determined that a rigorous set of standards must be met. Those standards go above and beyond MDH requirements, with a number of additional items added to the plan review and inspection list.

What is the general process for approval?

- 1- Applicants contact JPB staff (sometimes the City rental inspector) to discuss the permit process, which depends on the details of the rental (short term only, long and short term mixed, owner on-site)
- 2- Initially, the applicant provides basic information on the location or address of the property and a general summary of the intended operation.
- 3- If allowable in that zoning district and upon a suitable property, the applicant then fills out an STR application with information such as the number of rooms, allowable guests, available parking, utility and sanitary services, and other factors of the overall site plan. Supporting documentation, such as septic system compliance reports and well testing data must be submitted if applicable, and a designated local manager must be identified. The initial application fee of \$1000 is paid at this time.
- 4- Once the site plan is approved by JPB, staff sends notice of plan approval to the MDH. The applicant then consults with MDH regarding the state plan review process and fees.
- 5- MDH and JPB staff schedule a joint inspection of the property with the applicant. If corrective action is needed, the applicant is given time to remedy. Upon a passing inspection, JPB issue the full STR permit and MDH issue the lodging license. Staff then send notices to neighboring property owners containing the designated contact's (manager) name and phone number
- 6- Renewal applications are submitted to the JPB before the end of the calendar year. If no major changes to the site are proposed, then a renewal permit fee is \$500 and is issued for another calendar year.



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What are some of the rules a STR applicant should know about?

- 1) The dwelling must not be modified to accommodate the lodging use. In practice, this means that if a dwelling used as a STR is transferred in ownership (sold), the new owners shall not be subject to major renovations to utilize the dwelling as a typical residential home. No vested right is granted to a STR permit holder that allows conversion of the dwelling into a use not allowed in its zoning district.
- 2) Maximum guest occupancy is the number of bedrooms available for rental multiplied by two. A guest record must be maintained by the STR manager
- 3) A local manager must be designated that can respond to complaints or issues 24 hours a day, and said manager must be within thirty minutes driving time of the rental
- 4) All guests must be given disclosures that contain the local manager's contact information, information on the property necessary to maintain order and cleanliness, and limitations such as parking and the prohibition of special events hosting - as defined in §109 of the ordinance (e.g. more than four un-registered guests on site)
- 5) All typical property performance standards found in the Planning and Subdivision Ordinance must be followed

Refer to GBAJPB Ordinance §1020 for full explanation of rules.