

## **SHORT-TERM RENTAL FAQs**

### **1. What Is A Short-Term Rental (STR)?**

- A “short-term rental” is any dwelling in which five (5) or fewer guestrooms, is rented wholly or partly for fewer than thirty (30) consecutive days for a compensatory fee paid to a short-term rental host. Typically short-term rentals are listed on hosting platform website such as Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, Tripping, FlipKey, Expedia, etc.

### **2. Why Do I Need A Permit To Operate A STR In Columbus?**

- Tourism in the City of Columbus is growing every year and so is the demand for lodging for visitors/guests. The City has a responsibility to provide rules and requirements that balance the health, safety, and welfare interests between hosts, guests, and hosting platforms.

### **3. What Is Required To Operate Or List A Short-Term Rental In Columbus?**

#### Step 1: Open a Business Account with the Columbus Division of Taxation.

- Click [here](#) to learn about opening your business account. You’ll need an account to submit and pay the monthly lodging excise tax on any income earned from a short-term rental booking service.
- A Letter of Good Standing from the Columbus Division of Taxation must be provided to the License Section by the applicant at the time of application.

#### Step 2: Obtain a BCI Background Check

- At the time of application for a new permit or renewal, all of the following persons are required to provide the results of a fingerprint-based background check performed by a provider approved by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation:
  - The applicant
  - The short-term rental host, if different than the applicant
  - The 24-hour local emergency contact for the property, and
  - The property manager, if applicable
- This check may be performed at the Division of Licensing at the time of application.
- Completed background checks should be sent to the Columbus Department of Public Safety’s License Section at:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
Support Services- License Section  
4252 Groves Rd  
Columbus, OH 43232

- For all business entity applicants, an individual who is either the statutory agent, a partner, the president, or in the case of an LLC, a managing individual, must submit to and provide the results of a BCI background check.
- For your convenience a BCI background check application can be paid for and submitted at the License Section at a separate cost of \$32.00.

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- To expedite the process, or if you're using the drop box at the Division of Licensing at 4252 Groves Rd, you can submit your BCI background check application in advance at several locations.
  - Click [here](#) for a list of locations you can get a BCI background check in Franklin County.

### Step 3: Fill out and submit the short-term rental application in-person, or use the drop box, at the License Section.

- For your convenience, the License Section has installed a secure drop box at 4252 Groves Road which can be utilized to drop off applications, payments and any other documentation. It is located to the right side of the employee entrance, which is under the gray awning on the south side of the building. That box is checked every morning during the work week.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
Support Services- License Section  
4252 Groves Rd  
Columbus, OH 43232  
Office: (614) 645-8366 Fax: (614) 645-8912

Office Hours:

Mon 8:00a-3:30p  
Tue 8:00a-3:30p  
Wed 8:00a-3:30p  
Thu 8:00a-3:30p  
Fri 8:00a-3:30p

- An application can be found online or at the Licensing Section. For your convenience, to obtain a short-term rental application and helpful checklist, click [here](#) for the License Section's website and click the Short-Term Rental tab.
- There are two options for submitting your short term rental application:
  1. You may apply in person at the License Section during the hours listed above. If applying in person, during open hours, you may request a BCI background check at the Licensing Section, and there is no need to complete a background check at a separate location.
    - The application does *not* need to be notarized if applying at the Licensing Section during business hours.
  2. You may also submit your application in the Licensing Division drop box if you are not able to apply during the open hours. In this case, your BCI background check needs to be completed by one of the approved providers listed above and completed prior to application.
    - If using the drop box, your application must be notarized.

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Step 4: You must list your valid short-term rental permit number with each short-term rental on any hosting platform.

- You must also display the valid short-term rental permit inside the short-term rental so a guest can see it.

Step 5: Collect and remit the monthly excise taxes to the City of Columbus, Dept. of Taxation.

- The Columbus Division of Income Tax administers the 5.1% lodging excise tax collected on short-term rental lodging.
- All forms, resources, and further information can be found on the Division's [website](#).
- Taxes are due on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month for the previous month. For example, a short-term rental host would file taxes collected in the month of October by the 20<sup>th</sup> of November.
- To expedite the review process, you can register a new business account with the Division of Taxation before submitting your short-term rental application.

#### **4. What Is A Primary Residence?**

- A "primary residence" is the usual place of return for housing as documented by at least two of the following: motor vehicle registration, driver's license, tax documents, lease copy or a utility bill. An owner or permanent occupant can only have one primary residence.

#### **5. What Documentation Do I Need To Apply For A Short-Term Rental Permit?**

- You will need to provide the following:
  - Completed BCI Background Check
    - This check can be ordered at the License Division.
  - Short-Term Rental Application
  - Proof of Identity
  - Primary Residency Requirements (Rental Lease and two of the Following Documents):
    - Motor Vehicle Registration
    - Tax Documents
    - Utility Bill

#### **6. Is the Information on my Application a Public Record?**

- Yes. All information contained in application is subject to disclosure as a matter of public record.
- Applicants who believe they meet the definition of a "designated public service worker" as defined in ORC 149.43(A) (7)-(9) and/or would qualify to have their information redacted pursuant to ORC 149.43(A) (8), you shall notify the License Section at the time of application and shall provide sufficient supporting evidence/documentation to the License Officer with the application.

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### **7. How Much Does A Permit Cost? Other Fees?**

- An initial \$20 application fee.
- A short-term rental permit to list your primary residence costs \$75.00 per year.
- A short-term rental permit to list your non-primary residence costs \$150.00 per year.
- A BCI background check is \$32 per individual

### **8. Do I Have To Have A Permit Before I Can List My Rental Online?**

- Yes. No person or entity shall offer, list, advertise or market a dwelling on any hosting platform operation located within the City of Columbus without registering and listing a valid short-term rental permit number associated with the dwelling.

### **9. How Long Does It Take To Get A New or Renewal Permit?**

- Due to a change in the Columbus City Code, Short Term Rental licenses will no longer be issued on the day of application.
- As the License Section and its employees physically return to workstations after more than a year away, the time frame for reviewing, investigating, and approving a new or renewal short-term rental permit may take longer due to the backlog of data entry.
- If you submit your BCI background check prior to submitting your STR Permit application, and the application is supported by all necessary information as required, it is possible you could receive your short-term rental permit in a more expedited timeline. However, more than likely, it may take a few days to a week to move through the entire process.
- Keep in mind a BCI background check is NOT performed or conducted by the License Section. However, BCI often completes such checks within a few days, but some record checks can take several weeks.

### **10. Is There Anything I Need To Complete Prior To Renewing A Short-Term Rental Permit?**

- Yes. Make sure you are in good standing with the Division of Taxation and resubmit another BCI background check application (this can be done at the License Division when applying for renewal). Additionally, make sure any required documents submitted with the application for renewal are current and updated to reflect primary residence.

### **11. How Long Does My Short-Term Rental Permit or Renewal Permit Last?**

- A new permit shall take effect on the date of issuance and shall expire one calendar year. If the permit is issued with a lease agreement, the permit shall take effect on the date of issuance and shall expire upon the last day of the lease or at the end of one calendar year, whichever occurs first.
- A renewal short-term rental permit shall take effect upon the expiration of the previous permit and lasts one year.

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### **12. Do I Need To Display My Short-Term Rental Permit Number Online/At The Property?**

- Yes. You must also display the valid short-term rental permit inside the short-term rental so a guest can see it.

### **13. Do I Need To Have My Listing Inspected By The City?**

- No. However, by signing your short-term rental application, you confirm that you have read, understand, and are in compliance with the all local, state, and federal laws.
- You can find more information about compliance by visiting the [Columbus Code of Ordinances](#) online or by clicking the links below:

[HEALTH, SANITATION, AND SAFETY CODE \(Title 7\)](#)

[FIRE PREVENTION CODE \(Title 25\)](#)

[ZONING CODE \(Title 33\)](#)

[BUILDING CODE \(Title 41\)](#)

[HOUSING CODE \(Title 45\)](#)

### **14. Do I Need To Collect And Submit Taxes To The City Of Columbus? How Do I Do That?**

- Yes. The Columbus Division of Income Tax administers the 5.1% lodging excise tax collected on short-term rental lodging. All forms, resources, payment options and further information can be found on the City Income Tax Division's [website](#).

### **15. Do I Need Insurance For My Listing?**

- No. The city does not require proof of insurance to obtain a short-term rental permit. Certain hosting platforms may provide a host with individual insurance policies.

### **16. Do I Need A Permit For Each Listing I Own?**

- Yes, each short-term rental property requires an individual permit. For example, if you host 4 short-term rental units you would need 4 separate short-term rental permits.

### **17. How Many Guests Can Stay In My STR?**

- This depends on the size of your short-term rental unit. The maximum number of guestrooms for a short-term rental is five (5). To determine the number of guests legally allowed to occupy your short-term rental see [Columbus Housing Code Chapter 4541.01](#) addressing sleeping area requirements.
  - Every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one occupant shall contain at least seventy (70) square feet of floor space, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one person shall contain at least fifty (50) square feet of floor space for each occupant thereof.

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### **18. What Information Do I Need To Disclose To Guests?**

- A host must provide written notice to guests informing them about the following:
- Any known, non-obvious, or concealed condition, whether man-made or artificial, which may present a danger to the short-term rental guest
- A local 24-hour emergency contact for the short-term rental
- The valid short-term rental permit number
- Any indoor/outdoor surveillance equipment on the property
- Any known, non-obvious or concealed surveillance equipment, including, but not limited to, digital video cameras/recorders/monitors, streaming video security cameras, audio recorders/monitors, or any other electronic means of secretly watching, listening, or recording.
- In the event the short-term rental guest does not consent to the short-term rental host utilizing an indoor interception device(s) for the either in-part or the entire duration of the short-term rental guest's stay, the short-term rental host shall immediately deactivate the indoor interception device(s) and shall not intercept, listen, monitor, record, or like thereof, any activity inside the short-term rental.

### **19. Are There Penalties For Violating Columbus City Codes Related to Short-Term Rentals?**

- Yes. Columbus City Code Section 598.20 provides for criminal penalties for violating the short-term rental laws. Please review for specific criminal penalties.

### **20. Where Can I Learn More Information?**

- You can visit the City's by visiting <https://www.columbus.gov/str/> or email the City at [ShortTermRentals@columbus.gov](mailto:ShortTermRentals@columbus.gov)