**Columbus Short-Term Rental Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **What is a Short-Term Rental (STR)?**
   A “short-term rental” is any dwelling in which five (5) or fewer guestrooms, is rented for fewer than thirty (30) consecutive days for monetary compensation. Typically short-term rentals are listed on websites, or hosting platforms, 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. Hosting short-term rentals has never been more popular, or easier, as a way for Columbus hosts to earn extra income. The City has a responsibility to provide rules and requirements that allow this popular practice to continue while ensuring hosts and guests are operating safely while protecting our neighborhoods and the availability of housing for residents.

3. **What do I need to operate a STR in Columbus?**
   **Step 1: Obtain a Letter of Good Standing from the Columbus Division of Taxation.**
   - Click [here](#) to learn more about obtaining this letter and opening your business account. You’ll need an account to pay the monthly lodging excise tax returns on your STR income.
   - For convenience, an applicant may voluntarily authorize the Tax Department to share tax information with the Licensing Section so the applicant does not have to travel to several locations. Such authorization is provided on the application with a checkbox approving or disapproving.
   - To expedite the process, you can register a new account before submitting your STR application. Permits cannot be issued until the License Section has received the Letter of Good Standing from the City’s Income Tax Division.

   **CITY OF COLUMBUS INCOME TAX DIVISION**
   77 N. Front Street, 2nd Floor
   Columbus, Ohio 43215
   **Phone:** (614) 645-7370
   **Fax:** (614) 645-7193
   **Office Hours:**
   Monday through Friday
   8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

   **Step 2: Obtain a BCI Background Check**
   - **Note:** A Columbus City Code 598 change went into effect on 02/27/2020 requiring:
     That a BCI background check be performed by a provider approved by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation be submitted by the applicant, the 24-hour emergency contact, and the property manager (if one is used).
For all business organization applicants, an individual who is either the statutory agent, a partner or the president must submit to and provide the results of a BCI background check. 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
Office: (614) 645-8366
Fax: (614) 645-8912
Office Hours:
Mon - Fri: 8:00AM - 3:30PM

- For your convenience a BCI background check can be completed at the License Section when the completed application and required paperwork are submitted to the License Section at a cost of $32.00 for each BCI Background completed.

- Or click here for a list of locations you can get a BCI background check in Franklin County.

Step 3: Fill out the STR application and submit in-person at the License Section.

- To obtain a STR application and checklist click here for the License Section’s website and click the Short Term Rental tab.

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Step 4: Include your Short-Term Rental permit number on any short-term rental platform where you short-term rental is listed, and display physically the permit somewhere visible to guests in your short-term rental.

Step 5: Collect and remit the proper taxes monthly to the City of Columbus.

- 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 at www.columbustax.net.

- Taxes are due on the 20th 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 20th of November.

4. What is the difference between a primary and secondary residence?
   A primary residence is your home (where you live more than 51% of the year). A secondary residence, or non-primary residence, is a property you own but don’t personally occupy such as a rental property.

5. What documents do I need to apply for a permit?
You will need to provide the following:

a. Short-Term Rental Application
b. Completed BCI Background Check
c. Proof of Identity
d. Primary Residency Requirement: Two of the Following Documents proving primary residence
   i. Motor Vehicle Registration
   ii. Tax Documents
   iii. Utility Bill
e. Proof of General Liability Insurance with a minimum of $300,000 coverage and must contain an endorsement providing a 10 day notice of cancellation or change to the City of Columbus - License Section, 4252 Groves Rd, Columbus, Ohio 43232. Such policy or certificate must be issued by an Insurance Company that is admitted to do business in the State of Ohio.
f. A Management Company that rents or leases the property cannot apply for a permit in the Management Company's name, because the Management Company is not an owner or permanent occupant of the property. If a Management Company comes in to apply, the Management Company must either own the property or apply on behalf of the Property Owner or Primary Resident as the Property Owner’s or Primary Resident’s duly authorized agent.
g. Duly Authorized Agent requirement.
The Management Company must produce a signed and notarized document from the Property Owner or Primary Resident authorizing the Management Company to act on the Property Owner’s or Primary Resident's behalf regarding Short Term Rental. The document must list the location(s) of the Short Term Rental(s). A lease agreement would not be sufficient for this document. Note: The Property Owner or Primary Resident must still submit to and provide the BCI Background Check Requirement that is listed on the first page under step #2.

h. Names and addresses of any other short-term rental located in the City of Columbus that the applicant or property owner has any interest in, including but not limited to ownership, licensure or management.

6. How much does a permit cost? Other fees?
   • A permit to list your primary residence costs $75.00 per year.
   • To rent out a secondary residence the permit costs $150.00 per year.
   • There is a $20 application fee.
   • It costs $32 to obtain a BCI background check at the License Section.

7. Do I have to have a permit before I can list my rental online?
   Yes. You cannot legally operate a short-term rental in the City of Columbus without a valid permit.

8. How long does it take to get a permit?
   If you have all of your paperwork in order (a letter of good standing from the Tax Division, completed background check, and application) you can receive your short-term rental permit the same day you apply in person at the License Section.

Updated February 27, 2020
Keep in mind a BCI background check is often completed within a few days, but can take several weeks.

9. **Is there anything I need to complete prior to renewing a permit?**
   Yes. Contact the Tax Division for an updated letter of good standing. Additionally, be sure the required documents you submit with the application are all up-to-date.

10. **How long does it take to get a renewal permit?**
    If all of your paperwork is in order, and the background checks of the applicant, owner, and if applicable, property manager have been completed within the past year, you can receive your permit the same day you apply in person at the License Section. However, if background checks are needed, the permit will be issued once all necessary checks are received by the License Section. BCI background checks are often completed and received by the License Section within a few days, but can take up to 45 days to be received.

11. **How long does my permit last?**
    A short-term rental permit is valid for one year from the date it is issued. If you obtain your permit on November 17, 2020 that permit will be valid through November 17, 2021.

    You will need to renew your permit annually before your permit expires to continue to list your short-term rental in the City of Columbus.

12. **Do I need to display my permit number online/on the property?**
    Yes. Most online hosting websites require you to enter a valid permit number before being allowed to post your short-term rental. You will also need to have a copy of your permit visible inside the property, such as near the front door or the refrigerator.

13. **Do I need to have my listing inspected by the City?**
    No, but by signing your short-term rental application you confirm that you have read, and conformed your property to comply with the City’s Fire, Health, Safety, Housing and Zoning requirements as well as all Ohio Building Code and all relevant 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.

Updated February 27, 2020
15. Do I need insurance for my listing?
Yes. You will need to provide proof of General Liability Insurance with a minimum of $300,000 coverage when you apply for your permit. If the hosting platform you use provides this level of insurance, that would meet the requirement, as long as you are able to submit proof that the residence is being listed on the appropriate platform(s).

16. Do I need a permit for each listing I own?
Yes, each short-term rental property requires the host to have an individual permit. If you host 4 short-term rental units you would need 4 separate short-term rental permits.

   If you have multiple units in a single building, each unit would require an individual permit. If your building has 8 apartments you would need 8 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 sleeping rooms for short-term rentals 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.

18. What information do I need to disclose to guests?
As a host you must provide written notice to guests informing them about the following:
  • Any known conditions on the property which may be dangerous
  • All relevant local laws and regulations
  • Your valid short-term rental permit number
  • Information for a local 24 hour emergency contact for the property
  • Any indoor/outdoor surveillance equipment on the property
    o In the event the guest does not consent to the short-term rental host operating surveillance equipment during their stay the host must deactivate the equipment.

19. What are the penalties for violating Columbus’ STR codes?
Violating the short-term rental laws will result in an unclassified minor misdemeanor and a max fine of $250.00. Subsequent violations will result in a third degree misdemeanor and a max fine of $500.00 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

   All revenue generated by operating a short-term rental illegally will be subject to forfeiture.

20. Who do I contact for more information?
You can visit the City’s short-term rental website by visiting https://www.columbus.gov/str/ or email the City at ShortTermRentals@columbus.gov.