



**LaBella**

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**SHORT TERM RENTAL  
TOOLKIT**

Best Practices for Local Governments

Prepared for Jefferson County Planning & Community Development

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Introduction

# The STR Challenge

# What Is a Short-Term Rental?

- A residential unit rented for fewer than 30 consecutive nights
- Platforms: Airbnb, VRBO, Hipcamp, direct booking
- Three main types:
  - Hosted primary residence — owner is present during the stay
  - Un-hosted primary residence — owner is away; entire unit rented
  - Vacation rental — non-primary residence or investment property
- Distinct from: hotels/motels, B&Bs, housekeeping cottages, dormitories



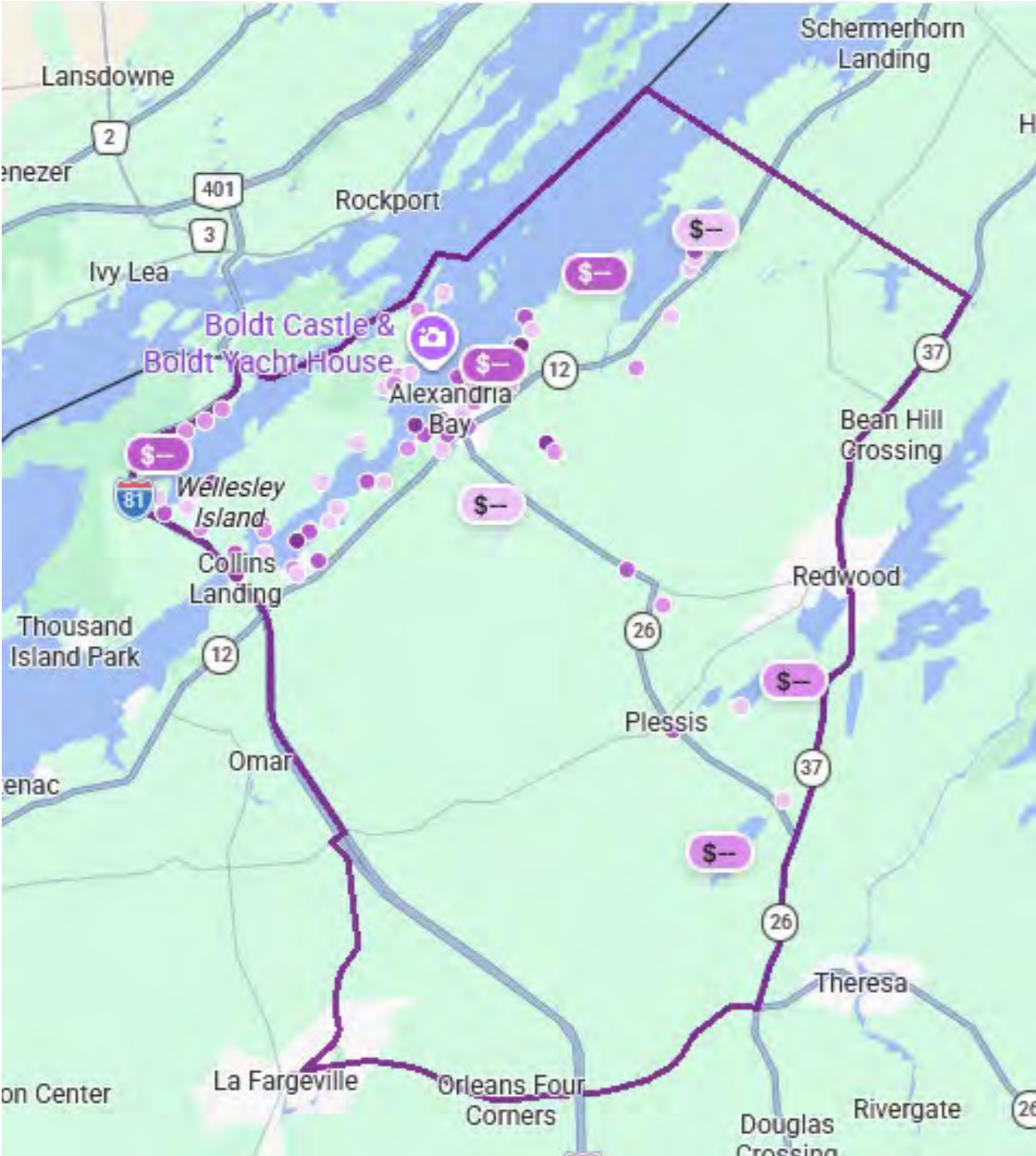
# Why This Matters Now: The Local Context

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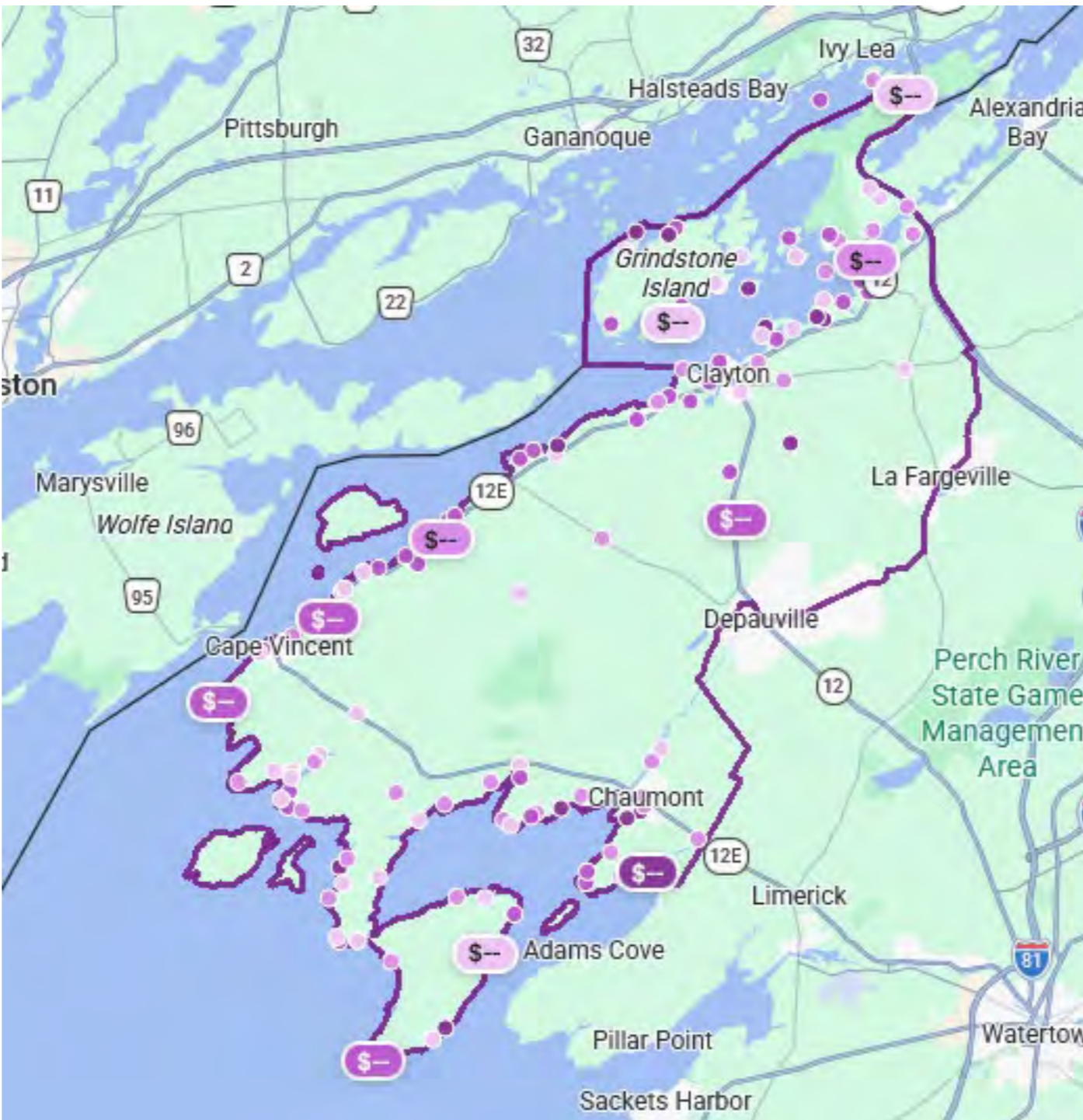
- Short-term rental regulation has become widespread across New York
- Many cities, towns, and villages have adopted local registration, permitting, zoning, or operational standards, and the number of municipalities regulating short-term rentals continues to grow, especially in tourist destinations
- Competing priorities:
  - Tourism and economic growth for residents and the local economy
  - Housing availability, affordability, and neighborhood character

# Why This Matters Now: The Local Context

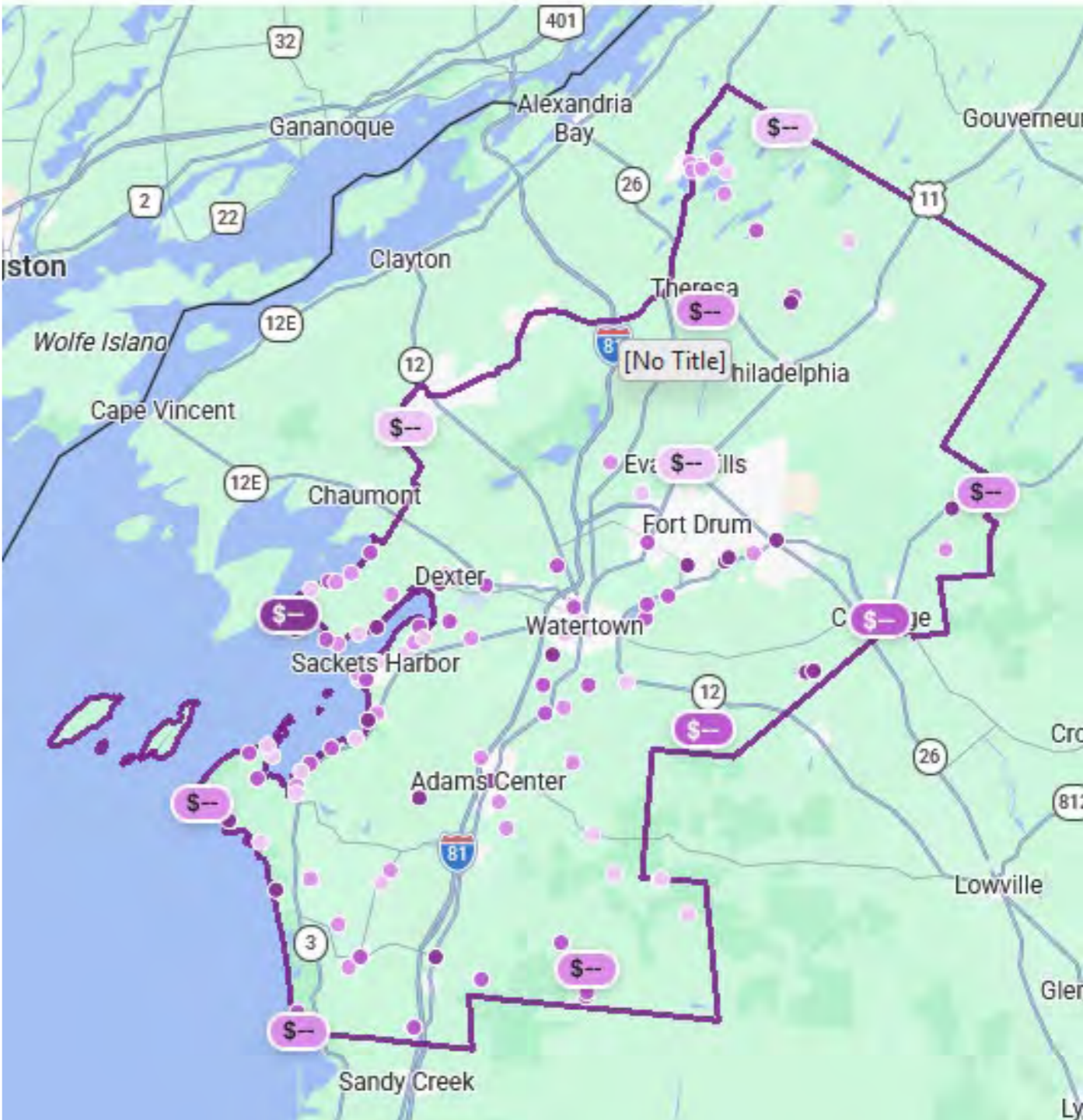
Alexandria Bay Submarket



Clayton Submarket



Watertown Submarket



	Alexandria Bay	Clayton	Watertown
Active Listings	16	75	105
Occupancy Rate	52%	49%	57%
Average Annual Revenue	\$47,114	\$29,465	\$27,725
Trends	-52%	-14%	-10%

# Short-Term Rentals: A Double-Edged Sword

## Benefits

- Additional income for residents; wealth-building opportunity
- Efficient use of underutilized residential space
- Can prevent economic hardship and help homeowners stay in their homes
- Spreads tourist dollars beyond traditional lodging districts
- Provides cultural exchange for hosts and guests

## Concerns

- Removes long-term rental units from the market; drives up housing costs
- Incentivizes keeping units vacant or evicting long-term tenants
- Unfair competition with regulated hotels, inns, and B&Bs
- Noise, traffic, parking, and nuisance complaints in residential zones
- Erosion of neighborhood cohesion with revolving transient occupants



**Start with Planning  
Objectives**

# Why Planning Objectives Must Come First

- Regulations that start from complaints tend to be **reactive and hard to enforce**
- Frame STRs as a **planning issue** — not a yes-or-no political debate
- Anchor decisions to your **comprehensive plan goals** and **community values**
- Ask: what problems are STRs actively causing in our community?
- Ask: how can STRs help us support our goals?
- Ask: what regulations can we realistically enforce with our current resources?
- Policy **follows objectives** — not the other way around



# Common Planning Objectives

Planning Objective	Description
Housing availability	prevent conversion of long-term rental stock to STRs
Neighborhood preservation	maintain residential character and quality of life
Quality of life	parking, noise, trash, emergency access, safety
Economic development	support tourism and resident income opportunities
Safety	health, habitability, and emergency preparedness for guests and neighbors
Revenue	level playing field; capture taxes and permit fees
Preventing speculation	ensure STRs are cost-sharing tools, not purely profit-making investments



# Know Your Enforcement Capacity

- Policies are shaped by what can realistically be enforced with available resources
- Don't publicly propose regulations you can't enforce — undermines credibility
- Inventory what you have: code enforcement staff, complaint systems, software
- Key questions to ask before drafting:
  - What types of regulations can we enforce with current staff?
  - What are we willing to invest in new resources?
  - What is the input from those responsible for enforcement?
- Jefferson County's Granicus platform can assist with monitoring and compliance



# The Spectrum of Regulatory Options

# Step 1: Clear Definitions Are the Foundation

- Define 'short-term rental': most ordinances use fewer than 30 consecutive nights
- Specify who may host: property owners, renters, management companies?
- Specify eligible unit types: homes, individual bedrooms, ADUs, RVs?
- Clearly distinguish from excluded uses: hotel, motel, B&B, housekeeping cottage

## **SHORT-TERM RENTAL (STR)**

The use of a lot for the rental or lease of any, or part of any, residential use dwelling unit, for a period less than 30 days. The STR may occur within an entire dwelling, in rooms within a dwelling, or in a separate attached or detached dwelling unit or units on the parcel.

The term "short-term rental" shall not include **hotels, motels, resorts, inns, bed-and-breakfast establishments, boarding houses, rooming houses, campgrounds**, or other lodging uses specifically defined and regulated elsewhere in this Code.

# Quantitative & Location Restrictions

- **Allow by zoning district:** by-right vs. special use permit from planning board
- **Geographic limits:** restrict STRs to certain neighborhoods or commercial zones
- **Permit caps:** limit total number of permits issued in a given area or district
- **Density/separation:** no STR unit within X feet of another
- **Cap annual rental nights per unit**
- **Distinguish owner-occupied vs. non-owner-occupied;** different approval levels
- **Primary residence requirements:** host must occupy for majority of the year

# Operational Requirements

- Mandatory local contact person (reachable 24/7 during guest stays)
- Occupancy limits — commonly 2 adults per bedroom
- Parking requirements tailored to unit size and location
- Noise and event restrictions; 'Good Neighbor Guide' provided to all guests
- Trash, recycling, and nuisance compliance
- Limits on advertising and signage
- Rental period minimums (e.g., minimum 2-night stay)

## BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR.

### WELCOME

Thank you for deciding to spend some time with us, and we hope you enjoy your stay in Lake Placid and the Adirondack region. Our region certainly has much to offer. While you are here you may be staying in one of our residential neighborhoods. We ask you to be considerate of your neighbors, just as you are at home.

The accommodation you are staying in is referred to as a short-term rental (STR). The local governments of the Town of North Elba and Village of Lake Placid have laws that govern the use of these properties. The rules for these properties are detailed below. Every STR is required to obtain a permit through the local Code Enforcement Office.

You can find information regarding all of the unique activities associated with our area at [www.LakePlacid.com](http://www.LakePlacid.com).

### WHO TO CONTACT

If you have any concerns or questions about your rental, the workings of appliances, or the details of your stay, please call the 24-hour contact number listed on the posted STR permit or consult the Owner's Welcome Information.

9-1-1 calls should be limited to medical or police emergencies.

### OCCUPANCY

Please adhere to the occupancy limits indicated in the chart to the right.

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS	OVERNIGHT OCCUPANCY
1	4
2	6
3	8
4	10
5	12
6 or more	2 per bedroom +2

### PARKING

Please adhere to the map and description of the parking plan as provided by the owner/operator of your rental. The maximum number of motor vehicles allowed overnight at a STR is one vehicle per bedroom. Parking spaces may not be located on any part of the lawn or on any part of a sidewalk. Like any other community, we ask you to obey all regulations when parking in public. From November 1 to April 30, on-street parking is prohibited. Vehicles parked on the street will be ticketed and/or towed at your expense.

### SMOKING

The Village of Lake Placid is proud to be a smoke-free village. Please do not smoke cigarettes, cannabis, or any other substances on village sidewalks, streets or public areas.

# Health & Safety Requirements

- Fire safety equipment, smoke detectors, and carbon monoxide detectors
- Emergency evacuation plan and diagram — now required by NYS law
- Sanitary conditions and habitability standards
- Provide guests with emergency contact information and local rules
- Right of inspection if sufficient cause exists
- Insurance requirements for hosts
- Permit revocation for failure to maintain safety standards



# Building a Permit System

# Choosing Your Regulatory Vehicle

## Option A: Standalone STR Local Law (separate from zoning code)

- Faster to adopt; simpler to administer; good starting point

## Option B: Amendment to the zoning law (incorporate STR as a land use)

- Ties STR allowances directly to zoning districts; stronger integration with comprehensive plan

## Option C: Combination – local law for operations + zoning amendment for location / use

- Most comprehensive; used by communities like North Elba/Lake Placid

**Consider:** your existing code, policy objectives, staff capacity, and timeline

# Permit Design: Key Decisions

- Simple registration vs. planning board approval vs. combination
- Annual renewable permit (best practice) — allows annual review and compliance check
- Differentiate permit types by category: owner-occupied, non-owner-occupied, hosted vs. un-hosted
- Online application and payment portal — essential for efficiency
- Required documentation: proof of ownership or residency, insurance, safety compliance
- Inspection requirements: mandatory on application, periodic, or for-cause only
- Application denials and appeals process

# Permit Design: Key Decisions

- Permit fees: flat fee or sliding scale by number of bedrooms
- Fees should recover the full cost of administration and enforcement
- Fines must exceed economic gain from non-compliance; escalate for repeat violators
- Consider levying unpaid fines against the property's tax bill
- Permit revocation: 'three strikes' rule for verified complaints is widely used
- Staffing: designate a liaison, one-stop webpage, online portal
- Third-party platform (e.g., Granicus): STR identification, permit tracking, compliance monitoring
- Establish a complaint hotline and an appeals process



# Regional Examples & Trends



## NORTH ELBA/LAKE PLACID

- Comprehensive registration and licensing ordinance
- Recognizes historical owner-occupied resort character
- Balances STR rights with neighbor protections



## LAKE GEORGE

- Purpose-driven ordinance
- Promotes tourism accommodations in harmony with neighborhood and natural environment
- Built-in flexibility for redevelopment



## SKANEATELES

- Definition-based approach
- Dwelling' explicitly excludes transient occupancy
- Transient uses addressed separately by zoning district



## SARANAC LAKE

- Combines special use permit and annual STR permit
- Permit caps by neighborhood
- Residency requirement
- Distinguishes between hosted and unhosted STRs for permit caps



EMERGING

# REGULATORY TRENDS

- Annual renewable STR permits — now the dominant model nationally
- Planning board special use permit + annual STR permit for non-owner-occupied units
- Amortization provisions for pre-existing STRs to come into compliance
- Distinguishing full-time resident, part-time resident, and non-resident owners
- Prohibiting corporate ownership of STR properties
- Prohibiting STRs in accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Prohibiting STRs in temporary structures (tents, RVs, yurts)
- Outright prohibition in residential districts, with amortization period

# Legal Landscape to Know

- NYS requirement: emergency evacuation plan and diagram now mandatory for all STRs
- NYS Municipal Home Rule Law: municipalities have broad authority to regulate land use including STRs
- Review current NYS statutes and any recent court decisions before drafting
- Stay focused on what communities are clearly authorized to regulate:
  - Location and use (geographic limits, commercial vs. residential distinctions)
  - Timing (primary residence requirements, annual rental limits)
  - Manner of rental (registration, occupancy, health & safety, noise)



**Resources &  
Technical Assistance**

# Resources Available to Your Municipality

- **Jefferson County Planning & Community Development** — direct technical assistance to municipalities
- **Jefferson County STR Registry**— data sharing, registration tracking
- **Tug Hill Commission Issue Paper Series: Short-Term Rentals**
- **NYS Department of State**, Division of Local Government Services —training, technical assistance
- **Short-Term Rental Regulations: A Guide for Local Governments** (National League of Cities, 2022)
- **A Guide to Smart Airbnb Regulation for Local Governments** (Host Compliance / Viewpoint Cloud)
- **AirDNA** ([airdna.co](https://airdna.co)) — local STR market data and analytics

# Questions & Discussion

- What are your municipality's top STR concerns?
- What resources do you need to move forward?

