

Short-Term Rental Frequently Asked Questions

Overview of the District of Clearwater short-term rental framework

This FAQ is intended as a plain-language summary of the District's short-term rental framework. It does not replace the applicable bylaws, Council policy, permit conditions, business licence conditions, or provincial requirements. If there is a conflict, the applicable legislation, bylaw, policy, permit, or licence condition prevails. Provincial requirements may also change over time.

This document is designed to help Council, current operators, prospective operators, neighbours, and the public quickly understand the framework, why it was adopted, and what the practical steps are.

At a glance

Topic	Plain-language summary
Local approvals	The framework uses business licensing and, where required, a temporary use permit (TUP).
Provincial registration	Short-term rental hosts in B.C. generally must register with the Province unless a provincial exemption applies.
Principal residence rule	Clearwater is currently exempt from the provincial principal residence requirement, but local bylaws still apply.
Eligible accommodation	Short-term rentals may only be considered in lawful dwelling units.
Parcel limit	A maximum of 2 short-term rental dwelling units can be approved per parcel under the local framework.
R-3 lands	Land zoned R-3 Multiple Family Residential, including apartments and senior citizen housing, is excluded from eligibility under the framework.
Not allowed	Tents, yurts, recreational vehicles, trailers, boats, park model units, glamping structures, and other makeshift or unlawful accommodation forms are not allowed.
Occupancy limits	Maximum occupancy is the lesser of: 2 guests per approved room, 3 approved guest sleeping rooms per unit, 6 guests per unit, and 10 guests per parcel.
Wastewater	If a parcel is not connected to community sewer, qualified wastewater confirmation may be required.
Timeline	The District is targeting about 6 weeks for a complete routine file in the best-case scenario. Complex files will take longer.

Typical path for an operator

1. Check whether the property and proposed use appear eligible under the framework.
2. Gather the required local materials, such as plans, ownership or strata permissions, and servicing information, then contact the District.
3. Submit the local application materials for the required approvals, which may include a short-term rental business licence and a temporary use permit.
4. Complete provincial host registration and update listings with the required numbers once the local requirements for the unit are in place.
5. Operate within the approved limits and conditions, renew approvals as required, and keep information up to date.

1. Understanding the framework

Q1. What is a short-term rental (STR)?

For the purposes of the District framework, a short-term rental is temporary sleeping accommodation provided to the public for payment for a period of less than 90 consecutive days. The term is intended to cover nightly, weekly, and similar short stays. It is different from a long-term residential tenancy.

Q2. Who is this FAQ for?

This FAQ is written for people who may operate an STR, own property that may be used for an STR, rent a property and want to understand whether landlord consent is needed, live near a proposed STR, sit on Council, or simply want to understand the District framework.

Q3. Why did Clearwater adopt a new STR framework?

Provincial rules have changed significantly. Hosts are now expected to register with the Province, show required listing numbers, and comply with local bylaws. The District has established a clearer local pathway so willing operators can regularize existing or proposed STR activity through a structured process instead of relying on older bylaws that were not designed for the current provincial system.

Previous bylaws effectively made STRs illegal in Clearwater.

Q4. What approvals could be required under the framework?

Depending on the property and the proposed use, the framework may require a local business licence, a temporary use permit, and provincial host registration. Some accommodation types are regulated under other existing categories, such as hotels, motels, campgrounds, traveller accommodation uses, or bed and breakfasts, and are not the focus of this FAQ.

Q5. Is this the same as a hotel, motel, campground, traveller accommodation use, or bed and breakfast?

These are not all the same thing, and they are regulated differently.

- **A short-term rental (STR)** is generally the short-term rental of a dwelling unit, or part of a dwelling unit, to paying guests for periods of less than 90 consecutive days. Under the District framework, STRs are addressed through a combination of business licensing and, where required, a temporary use permit.
- **A bed and breakfast** is different from an STR. Under Clearwater's current bylaws, a bed and breakfast means a business operation carried on by a member of a resident family to provide temporary sleeping accommodation, with or without meals, within the same dwelling unit occupied by the operator. In other words, a bed and breakfast is owner- or resident-hosted accommodation within the host's own home. It is already defined in both the Business Licensing and Zoning bylaws and is not the same as renting out a separate self-contained suite, a second dwelling unit, or a whole house as an STR.
- **A hotel or motel** is a more conventional commercial accommodation business. These uses are typically purpose-built or commercially operated visitor accommodation and are regulated separately through zoning and business licensing. They are not authorized through the District's STR temporary use permit process. Clearwater's Zoning Bylaw treats these more traditional accommodation forms under traveller accommodation use, not as residential STRs.
- **A traveller accommodation use** is a zoning term in Clearwater's Zoning Bylaw. It means accommodation provided primarily for temporary tourist lodging in motels, hotels, hostels, or cabins, and may include accessory uses such as restaurants, entertainment uses, and other services normally associated with commercial tourist accommodation. This is distinct from an STR because it is a recognized commercial land use category in the Zoning Bylaw rather than a residential-based rental use being considered through a TUP framework.
- **A campground** is also different. Clearwater's Zoning Bylaw defines a campground as a site used for the temporary or seasonal accommodation of persons in recreational vehicles or tents, and it may include washrooms, showers, laundry, convenience retail, and similar supporting facilities. Campgrounds are separately defined and regulated and are not part of the District's STR pathway.

Q6. Is Clearwater subject to the provincial principal residence requirement?

At present, Clearwater is listed by the Province as an exempt community, which means the provincial principal residence requirement does not automatically apply here right now. Even so, provincial registration and local bylaw compliance still matter, and the Province can change its rules or exemption lists over time.

Q7. Is the District replacing the Zoning Bylaw right now?

No. The framework uses the District's current Official Community Plan, temporary use permit authority, business licensing tools, and notice procedures to create a workable approval path now. The broader zoning review is a separate exercise coming later in 2026.

Q8. What is a temporary use permit and why is the District using it?

A temporary use permit is a site-specific approval tool that can allow a use for a limited term and subject it to conditions. The District is using it because it is flexible, allows site-by-site review, supports notice to nearby properties, and lets the District set operating conditions for issues such as occupancy, parking, local contact information, wastewater servicing, noise, and waste management.

Q9. Does this FAQ replace the actual bylaws or policy?

No. This FAQ is only a plain-language guide. The actual bylaws, Council policy, permit conditions, business licence conditions, and provincial rules govern.

2. Where STRs may and may not be allowed

Q10. Are all properties automatically eligible for an STR?

No. The framework is not an automatic approval system. Eligibility depends on the property, the proposed use, whether the unit is lawful, whether required servicing and safety information can be provided, whether required approvals are obtained, and whether the application fits the bylaw and policy criteria.

Q11. What is a lawful dwelling unit?

In simple terms, a lawful dwelling unit is one that has been properly established and is lawfully occupiable under the District's bylaws, permits, and other applicable rules. If building permits or occupancy approvals were required for the unit, the District will expect them to have been obtained or otherwise confirmed to the District's satisfaction.

Q12. Could an STR operate in a principal dwelling, secondary suite, basement suite, carriage suite, or garden suite?

Potentially yes, but only if the unit is a lawful dwelling unit, the parcel and proposed use meet the criteria, and the required local and provincial approvals are obtained. The framework is intended to focus on lawful dwelling units, not makeshift or temporary sleeping arrangements.

Q13. How many STR units could be approved on one parcel?

Under the framework, the maximum is 2 lawful dwelling units per parcel. A separate application is still required for each proposed short-term rental dwelling unit.

Q14. Are R-3 Multiple Family Residential properties eligible?

No. Land zoned R-3 Multiple Family Residential, including apartments and senior citizen housing, is not eligible for short-term rental temporary use permits under the current framework. This is intended to make the exclusion clear rather than leave it uncertain.

Q15. Can an STR operate in an RV, tent, yurt, trailer, boat, park model unit, or glamping structure?

No. The framework prohibits those accommodation forms for STR use. It also prohibits lock-off units that are not lawful dwelling units, accessory buildings that are not lawfully established as dwelling units, and other temporary, makeshift, or unlawful accommodation forms.

Q16. What if I rent for more than 90 days at a time?

A booking over 90 consecutive days is generally not treated as a short-term rental under the provincial framework. That type of arrangement may engage different rules, including residential tenancy and other land use considerations.

Q17. Do I need owner, landlord, or strata approval?

Yes, where applicable. If the operator is not the registered owner, owner authorization is required. If the operator is a tenant, written landlord consent is required. If the property is in a strata, strata confirmation or consent is required where the strata rules require it. District approval does not override private restrictions such as strata bylaws, covenants, insurance conditions, or lender requirements.

Q18. What if my parcel or unit has unresolved building, safety, or compliance problems?

The framework is not meant to bypass unresolved problems. If a property has significant building history issues, life-safety concerns, unresolved enforcement matters, or misleading or incomplete information, the application may not be eligible for delegated approval until those issues are resolved to the District's satisfaction.

3. Applying for approval

Q19. Should I start with the Province or with the District?

The practical starting point will usually be the District. Local staff can help identify whether the proposed use appears eligible, whether a temporary use permit will be required, and what supporting information will be needed. Provincial registration is still required for most hosts, but the Province also expects local compliance and, where applicable, a valid business licence.

Q20. Will every STR need a temporary use permit?

Under the current Zoning Bylaw, yes. The need for a temporary use permit depends on the property and how the proposed use fits within the District's land use framework. The framework is primarily intended to create a clear pathway for STRs that need local land use approval.

Q21. What information would I likely need to submit?

Applicants should expect to provide core information about the parcel, the operator, the local contact person, the proposed number of guests and vehicles, and the proposed guest sleeping rooms. They should also expect to provide a site plan, floor plan, parking plan, fire safety plan, owner or strata permissions where needed, and supporting information about safe operation and site servicing.

Q22. Why does the District need site plans, floor plans, and fire safety information?

These materials help the District understand how the STR would actually function on the ground. They support review of access, parking, guest sleeping rooms, exits, life-safety features, outdoor use areas, local servicing, and whether the use is supportable on the parcel.

Q23. Do I need a wastewater or septic capacity letter?

Where the parcel is not connected to the District community sanitary sewer system, onsite wastewater confirmation may be required from an Authorized Person, such as a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner, qualified Professional Engineer, or another qualified professional acceptable to the District. Applicants should expect this issue to be reviewed early because wastewater capacity may affect whether the proposed use is supportable.

Q24. Will neighbours be notified?

Yes. For delegated STR temporary use permits, the process includes public notice and direct notice to the owners and occupiers of land within 100 metres. The District also makes the proposed permit available for inspection and receives written submissions before making a delegated decision.

Q25. Will there be a public hearing?

Not ordinarily for a standard delegated STR temporary use permit. The framework uses public notice and a written comment process instead. However, some applications may still be referred to Council if they raise significant issues or fall outside the delegated criteria.

Q26. Can an application still go to Council?

Yes. The framework allows staff to refer files to Council when there are significant land use, neighbourhood, access, servicing, safety, environmental, or enforcement concerns, or when the application does not fit the delegated approval criteria.

Q27. Can an applicant ask Council to reconsider a delegated decision?

Yes. The framework preserves a reconsideration pathway for owners affected by a delegated decision, as required by the Local Government Act.

4. Operating rules if approved

Q28. What occupancy limits would apply?

Under the policy, the maximum permitted occupancy for each short-term rental dwelling unit is the lesser of: 2 guests per approved guest sleeping room, 3 approved guest sleeping rooms per unit, 6 guests per short-term rental dwelling unit, and 10 guests per parcel across all short-term rental dwelling units.

Q29. How many bedrooms or sleeping rooms could be used?

The framework limits each short-term rental dwelling unit to a maximum of 3 approved guest sleeping rooms. The District identifies the approved rooms based on the submitted plans and the permit or licence conditions.

Q30. What about parking?

Guest parking would normally be expected to provide at least 1 off-street guest parking space for every 2 approved guest sleeping rooms, to a maximum of 3 guest parking spaces per parcel, unless the District accepts a different site-specific arrangement.

Q31. Do I need a local contact person?

Yes. The framework requires a local contact person who is at least 19 years old, available at all times while guests are present, and able to attend the property within 60 minutes if contacted by the District or emergency responders.

Q32. What information would have to be posted inside the STR?

The framework contemplates posting practical operating information in a conspicuous location inside the unit. That would typically include the emergency contact, the civic address, parking instructions, waste and recycling arrangements, quiet hours, fire safety information, and maximum guest occupancy.

Q33. Are parties, events, or outdoor amplified sound allowed?

The framework is not designed to support party-house operations. Parties, events, and outdoor amplified sound are not contemplated by delegated approval unless they are expressly authorized, which staff are not recommending as the normal approach.

Q34. Can the District impose site-specific conditions?

Yes. The framework allows conditions about matters including but not limited to occupancy, approved sleeping rooms, parking, access, screening or privacy mitigation where required, wastewater, water supply, drainage, waste management, noise, security, local contact information, and compliance monitoring.

Q35. Do I need to keep my information current after approval?

Yes. Operators should expect to keep local contact information, business licence information, provincial registration information, and any other required compliance information current throughout the approval period.

5. Fees, timelines, and provincial registration**Q36. What are the local fees?**

The local fee schedule is summarized below. Additional costs for professional reports, title documents, insurance review, septic assessment, legal review, or required repairs remain the applicant's responsibility.

Local fee	Amount
Delegated short-term rental temporary use permit	\$750
Additional fee if an STR temporary use permit application is referred to Council	\$750
STR temporary use permit renewal	\$250
Annual short-term rental business licence	\$150
Provisional short-term rental business licence	\$75

Q37. What is a provisional business licence?

Under the bylaw, the District may issue a provisional short-term rental business licence for up to 6 months while a required temporary use permit application is being processed, provided the application is complete and the District is satisfied it is reasonable to do so. A provisional licence is temporary, may be suspended or revoked, and does not guarantee approval of the temporary use permit.

Q38. How long would the process take?

The District is targeting a best-case turnaround of about 6 weeks for complete, routine, uncomplicated applications that remain eligible for delegated issuance. Files will take longer if they are incomplete, generate significant public concern, require professional servicing review, raise safety or lawful dwelling issues, or need to be referred to Council.

Q39. Do I still need to register with the Province?

Yes, in most cases. Provincial host registration is a separate requirement from local approval. Operators should expect to meet both provincial and local requirements unless a specific provincial exemption applies.

Q40. Do I need to show licence and registration numbers on listings?

Yes. Under the current provincial framework, hosts must display their provincial registration number on listings, and in areas where the local government requires a business licence, hosts must also display a valid business licence number on the listing.

Q41. What if I use my own website instead of a third-party platform?

Local approvals and provincial host registration still matter. Provincial platform rules also become relevant if a website is facilitating both the promotion of and transactions for reservations and payments for short-term

rentals. If a website only advertises and does not process reservation transactions or payments, it may not be treated as a platform under provincial rules, but the host still remains responsible for complying with the host rules.

6. Compliance, complaints, and future changes

Q42. What should existing operators do?

Existing operators should contact the District early, review whether their unit appears eligible, gather the needed documents, and begin the compliance process. Operators should not assume that past operation, past local inaction, or existing bookings create an automatic right to continue. Provincial legal non-conforming use protections no longer apply to short-term rentals.

Q43. Can I keep operating while my application is under review?

The framework includes a possible provisional business licence pathway in some cases, but it is not a blanket approval to operate without the approvals required for a particular parcel and use. Operators should not assume that simply filing an application automatically authorizes continued operation.

Q44. What happens if someone operates without approvals or breaks conditions?

The package includes STR-specific enforcement tools, including ticket offences for operating without a valid business licence, operating without a required temporary use permit, failing to display required listing numbers, failing to maintain a local contact person, operating contrary to conditions, or exceeding authorized guest or vehicle limits. The District could also use other enforcement tools where appropriate.

Q45. How can neighbours raise concerns?

Neighbours are able to provide written comments during the notice stage for delegated temporary use permit applications. After approval, concerns about the operation of an STR should be directed to the local contact person and to the District through the normal bylaw or administrative channels, depending on the issue.

Q46. Will these rules be in place long term?

The District should monitor application volumes, timelines, complaints, referral burdens, and actual staff costs after launch. Council may decide to refine the program later, and the Province may also change its own registration or principal residence rules over time.

Q47. Where can I get help or ask questions?

For local questions, applicants and residents can contact the District of Clearwater office. The District has prepared application forms, checklists, and public information for the launch and may update these materials as implementation issues are identified.

District contact information

Contact	Details
Phone	250-674-2257
Email / Website	admin@docbc.ca www.districtofclearwater.com