

# *Whitewater Township*

## Short-Term Rental Community Input Workshop

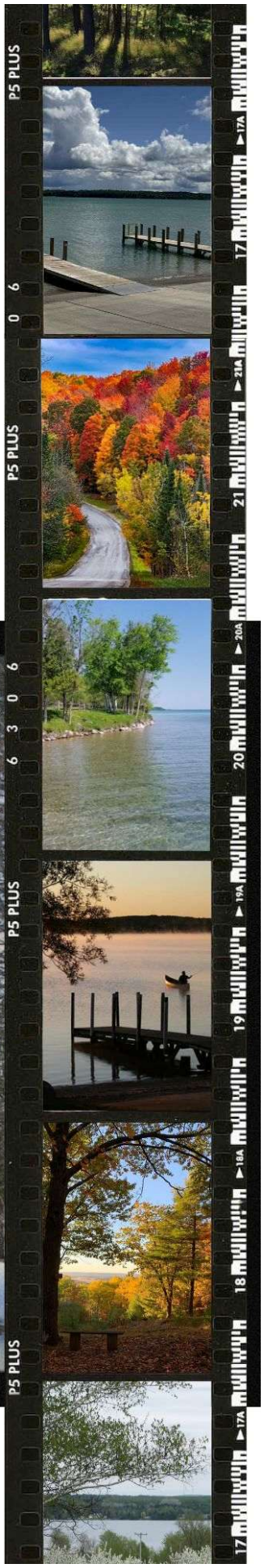
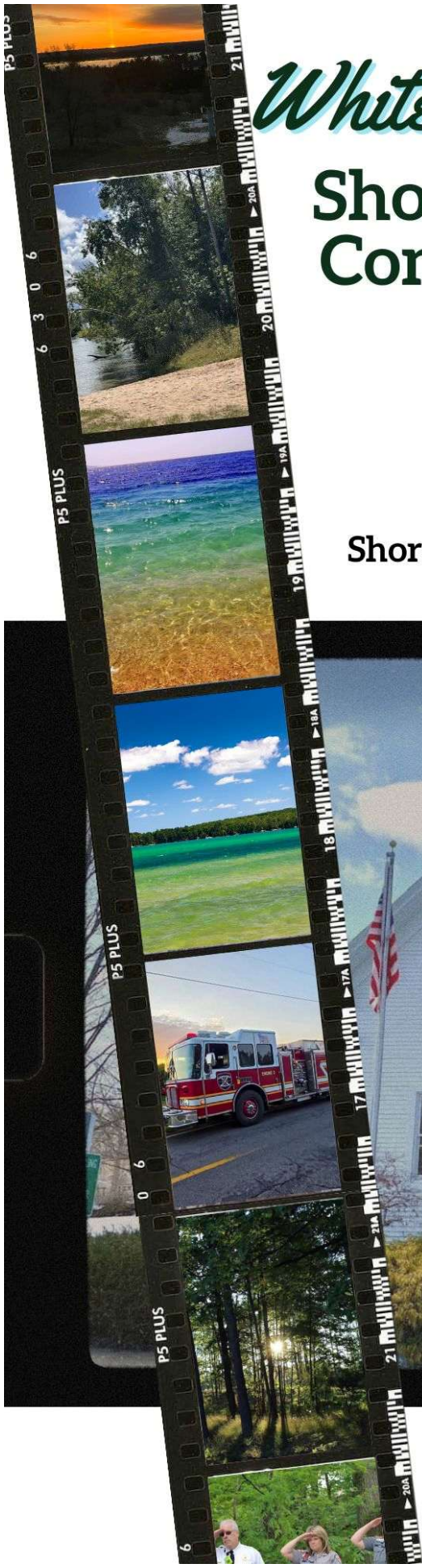
January 21, 2026

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension



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# Introduction

## Background

Whitewater Township's current zoning ordinance does not permit the short-term rental of a residential dwelling for any period of less than thirty (30) days. This interpretation of the ordinance was publicly clarified on November 17, 2022, to ensure residents and property owners had a clear and consistent understanding of how the ordinance is applied.

While short-term rentals within residential dwellings are prohibited, the zoning ordinance does allow certain lodging-type uses in designated zoning districts when specific requirements are met. These permitted uses include, but are not limited to, bed and breakfasts, hotels and motels, campgrounds, and other similar lodging facilities where expressly allowed by zoning. In this way, the ordinance establishes a clear distinction between residential use and lodging use, with short-term rentals in residential dwellings currently falling outside permitted residential activities.

Enforcement of the township's prohibition on short-term rentals follows a graduated code enforcement process that emphasizes education and voluntary compliance. Typically, this process begins with initial contact with the property owner to explain the ordinance and seek compliance. If necessary, this is followed by a written Notice to Correct, a second written Notice to Correct, and, only if violations persist, possible direction from the Township Board for further enforcement actions. Such actions may include involvement of the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Department or authorization to pursue enforcement through Circuit Court. The intent of this approach is to prioritize education and cooperation, with escalation occurring only when compliance cannot otherwise be achieved.

In recent years, short-term rentals have been a topic of significant discussion within the Whitewater Township community, generating a wide range of perspectives. In 2025, a proposed short-term rental ordinance was submitted on behalf of Residents for Responsible Short-Term Rentals. That proposal was reviewed by the township and ultimately denied in September. Additionally, input collected through the township's Master Plan survey revealed community opinion: approximately one-third of respondents supported short-term rentals with regulations, one-third supported short-term rentals without regulations, and one-third did not support short-term rentals.

The purpose of the current discussion is not to make decisions or enact changes to the zoning ordinance. Rather, it is intended to gather community input to better understand perceived impacts, concerns and benefits, community values, and potential approaches related to short-term rentals. Any future changes would require a formal review process, including Planning Commission consideration, Township Board action, and public hearings. This report and the associated public input serve as an important step in ensuring that any future discussions are informed by a broad understanding of community perspectives.

## Community Input Session Format and Methodology

The Whitewater Township Planning Commission held a community input session on short term rentals on January 21, 2026, at the Mill Creek Academy cafeteria (9039 Old M72 Highway, Williamsburg, Michigan). The purpose of the session was to gather structured community feedback to help inform any potential future discussions about short term rentals. No decisions or policy changes were considered or made during the meeting.

The session was facilitated by Michigan State University Extension to ensure a neutral, inclusive, and well-structured engagement process. Table facilitators included township officials, members of the planning and zoning departments, and representatives from the Planning Commission's Resident Outreach Work Group (ROWG). The ROWG was created by the Planning Commission to gather community input and research potential regulatory approaches related to short term rentals.

Participants were seated at tables, with approximately eight (8) participants planned per table to encourage balanced participation. Each table had a designated facilitator to guide discussion, ensure equitable participation, and document input. Facilitators did not advocate for positions or offer policy recommendations.

An option to participate in the meeting via Zoom was provided as an additional way to engage. A host moderated the Zoom chat so that it aligned with the question-and-response format occurring simultaneously in the in-person meeting. Twenty-four participants submitted responses through the Zoom chat, and these were included in the collected data.

At the beginning of the session, participants introduced themselves, shared a single word describing their current perspective on short term rentals, and identified the general location of their residence on a township map. These activities were designed to provide context for the discussion and illustrate the geographic diversity of viewpoints represented. Individual responses were not attributed to specific participants or recorded.

Participants also received background information on short-term rentals from Michigan State University Extension, including current trends, legal considerations, and common regulatory approaches used by Michigan communities. Following the presentation, a brief question-and-answer period allowed participants to clarify information and deepen their understanding.

After the informational overview, participants joined facilitated small-group discussions focused on perceived impacts, concerns, community values, and possible approaches related to short-term rentals. Input from these discussions was documented and later synthesized into the thematic summaries presented in this report. Full, deduplicated participant responses are provided in the appendices.

## Public Meeting Information

Whitewater Township Short-Term Rental Community Input Session

Date: January 21, 2026

Time: 7:00pm

Location: Mill Creek Academy

9039 Old M-72 Highway, Williamsburg, MI 49690

## Session Purpose

The purpose of this community input session was to gather public input to help inform future discussions related to short-term rentals in Whitewater Township. The session was designed as an information gathering opportunity only and was not intended to result in decisions or policy changes.

## Intended Outcomes

The intent of the session was to create a complete and inclusive record of community input, to identify shared community values and priorities, and to provide written feedback to township officials to help inform potential next steps.

## Agenda

1. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
  - Remarks from the Planning Commission
  - Overview of the evening's format and expectations
2. **Session Purpose, Working Agreements, and Table Introductions**
  - Explanation of the session's objectives
  - Review of working agreements for respectful and productive discussion
  - Participant introductions at tables
3. **Overview of Short-Term Rentals**
  - General overview of short-term rentals and current trends
  - Zoning considerations and distinctions between residential and lodging uses
  - Common regulatory approaches used by other communities
4. **Visioning Exercise**

- Reflection on community character, values, and priorities
  - Consideration of desired outcomes related to housing, neighborhood stability, and tourism
- 5. Small Group Discussions**
- Facilitated table discussions to gather perspectives, concerns, and perceived benefits
  - Opportunity for participants to share experiences and viewpoints
- 6. Group Reflection**
- Summary of small group themes
  - Opportunity for additional public comments
- 7. Next Steps and Closing**
- Explanation of how input will be documented and shared
  - Overview of any potential future processes
  - Closing remarks

### **Closing Note to Participants**

*Thank you for your time and input. Before leaving, participants were encouraged to review the materials and comments posted on the sticky walls to ensure their perspectives were accurately captured.*

## **Informational Overview: Short-Term Rentals**

As part of the community input session, participants received an informational presentation from Mary Reilly, AICP, Michigan State University Extension Educator, serving Northern Michigan. The purpose of the presentation was to provide shared background information on short-term rentals (STRs), including trends, impacts, zoning considerations, and common regulatory approaches used by Michigan communities. The presentation was informational in nature and was not intended to recommend specific policy actions for Whitewater Township.

### **Overview of Short-Term Rental Trends**

The presentation noted that short-term rentals have increased across many Michigan communities, particularly in rural and waterfront areas. Data from regional studies and industry sources indicate growth in STR listings in parts of northwest Michigan, including communities near Whitewater Township. While the STR market continues to expand in some areas, the presentation also noted that increased supply has coincided with declining revenue in certain regional markets, illustrating that STR impacts and market conditions vary by location.

## Economic Benefits and Potential Impacts

The presentation summarized commonly cited economic benefits associated with short-term rentals, including filling gaps in lodging capacity, supporting tourism, and providing supplemental income for property owners. STRs may also contribute to increased local spending on food, retail, and services, particularly in areas that attract visitors.

At the same time, the presentation reviewed potential challenges and negative externalities associated with STRs. These may include upward pressure on housing prices and rents, conversion of long-term rentals to short-term use, and neighborhood impacts such as increased noise, traffic, and transiency. Research cited in the presentation emphasized that these effects are often more pronounced in high-demand tourist areas and may affect communities differently depending on housing market conditions and ownership patterns.

## Legal and Zoning Considerations

The presentation explained that zoning ordinances in Michigan are written in a permissive manner. Meaning, if a use is not listed as an accessory use permitted, or special land use, it is considered prohibited. This framework is supported by Michigan case law.

The concept of nonconforming (or “grandfathered”) uses was also discussed. Legally established uses that later become nonconforming due to zoning changes may generally continue, provided they operate in the same manner and to the same extent as when they became nonconforming. Uses that were never legal under zoning are considered violations and do not gain nonconforming status.

Michigan courts have consistently ruled that short-term rentals are a distinct land use, separate from traditional residential use, and that zoning does not enforce private deed restrictions or homeowners’ association rules.

## Regulatory Approaches Used by Michigan Communities

The presentation reviewed common regulatory approaches used by Michigan communities, including zoning ordinances, and police power (regulatory) ordinances, or a combination of both. In general, zoning ordinances regulate land use, while police power ordinances regulate activities such as blight, noise, or fireworks ordinances.

Examples from other Michigan townships and cities were shared to illustrate how communities have adopted different STR regulatory approaches based on local priorities, including preserving housing inventory, protecting neighborhood character, addressing health and safety concerns, and balancing private property rights with the public interest.

## Purpose of Information Provided

The information presented was intended to help participants understand the broader context surrounding short-term rentals, including trends, potential impacts, and regulatory tools available to local governments. This 20-minute presentation shared information to

support informed discussion and shared understanding during the visioning and small-group portions of the session.

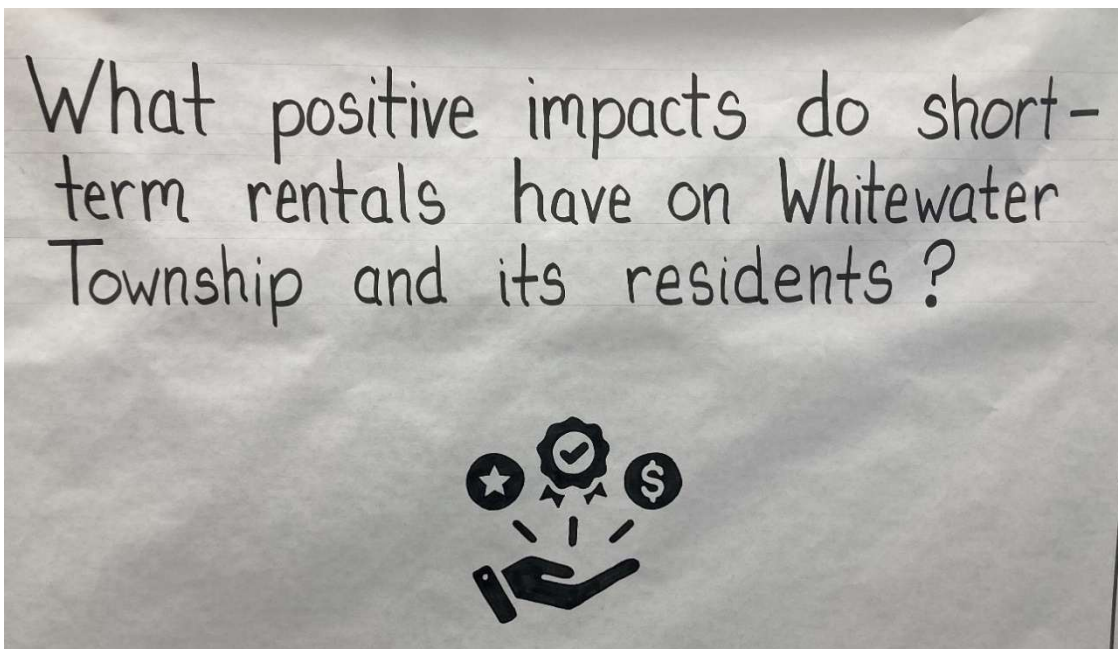
## Public Input Responses Collected:

Within this document, responses are grouped into thematic categories to identify common participant values and priorities.

- The following categories capture the diversity of perspectives shared and are presented without weighting or ranking.
- Identical responses were counted only once (or de-duplicated).
- Participant comments appear verbatim to accurately reflect their input, including any original spelling or grammatical errors.

### Question 1: Perceived Positive Impacts of Short-Term Rentals-Term Rentals

This section summarizes community input collected in response to the question:



#### 1-1) Housing & lodging options (for workers, families, visitors)

- Increased housing for healthcare workers, Coast Guard, etc.

- Provides service as a place to stay which would otherwise go to another township if we do not provide
  - Fills a housing need – families can stay together better than they can in hotels
  - Allows families to vacation together
  - Second homes can be utilized versus left vacant
  - Keeps houses from sitting empty
  - Provides local lodging for family and friends
  - STR's enable families to participate due to sustainable options
  - Housing for GLEF – 120-million-dollar economic impact
- 

### 1-2) Income & financial stability for local property owners (including retirees/families)

- Income for township residents
  - Produces income for owner of property (income for local residents)
  - Supplemental income for private property owners
  - Extra income for retired residents
  - Great 2nd/3rd income for homeowners
  - Owner occupied STR's could help owner
  - Owner fulfillment of hospitality hobby (owner occupied)
  - Supports owners who need help with real estate tax bills through 'longer term' STR
  - Having an STR empowers my family to keep and sustain our favorite place to gather
  - Help historical family preserve property in face of increased taxes and costs
  - Can allow residents to retain ownership that otherwise might transfer out of the area
  - Keep homes in families for generations
- 

### 1-3) Local jobs, services, trades & business activity

- Jobs/revenue for service providers (cleaners, managers, maintenance, home improvement contractors)
- Keeps money local – farmers, orchards, cleaners, maintenance versus surrounding communities
- There is no industry in Whitewater Township, STR's support local trades & businesses
- Economic – visitors may provide boost to businesses within the township, also for families
- Helps expose and market local businesses to out of town visitors
- More money to the area
- Community asset – brings in tourists to boost economy, memories made creates repeat visitors for years to come
- STR's bring people from other states to experience our area
- Introduce outside visitors to our community (tourism)
- Attracts quality visitors (horse show \$\$\$)
- Creates desire for others to live here

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#### 1-4) Township revenue / tax base / public reinvestment

- Non-homestead taxes are 40% higher (money to township)
  - Increased revenue to the township from licensing and permits which can be reinvested in infrastructure
  - STR's by investors increases school tax base
  - Increased property value creates income possibilities for township
- 

#### 1-5) Property upkeep, reinvestment, blight reduction, neighborhood appearance

- Income stays in the township to improve the property (rental)
  - Improves blighted properties, increasing values
  - Improved home upkeep and renovation of depressed value homes
  - Reduces non-taken care of properties (i.e., trash, non-working vehicles)
  - More pride in home ownership
  - I know of several homes that can afford to plant flowers and landscaping to enhance their property that they otherwise would not be able to afford without the additional income. Hence increases the beauty of the neighborhood and community.
- 

#### 1-6) Property values & housing market dynamics

- Lower "For Sale" inventory = higher property values for owners
  - Improves blighted properties, increasing values (*also fits "Property upkeep"*)
  - Helps young families afford a home
  - Housing affordability – younger families and rising taxes, provides path to home ownership
  - Support growth of single-family homes (as opposed to apartments)
- 

#### 1-7) Rural character, community culture, and positive social experiences

- Maintains rural character versus hotels and motels going in
  - Reciprocates local established values of cabin summers
  - Introduce kids from other locations to "the lake"
  - We met many strangers, got to know new people
  - Increases diversity in the area
  - We had a cottage next door to friends who rented for 20 years with no problems and a great relationship with our neighbors, so it can be done!
- 

#### 1-8) Rights, autonomy, and views on regulation

- Allowing STR's promotes homeowner autonomy, indicates choice is valued
- Supports property ownership rights

- Over regulation = stifling businesses
- 

### 1-9) Responsible hosting / neighborhood compatibility (examples of “it can work”)

- How many who have had renters near them would say they are noisy and increase traffic? Our family brings 1 car and is gone most of the stay since we sight-see. We basically sleep at a location. We are not hanging out at the house for the majority of the vacation. My experience is most guests are gone 70% of the time spending money and time in the community.
  - As a great host with zero complaints I have implemented: no parties, quiet hours, no street parking, bon fires only after approval from DNR website, no fireworks, smoke & carbon monoxide detectors, fire blankets, the house address listed with my phone number, I am 20 minutes away in the event of emergency, my neighbors have my phone number (and in 7 years, they have never needed to call me), first aid kits, etc.
- 

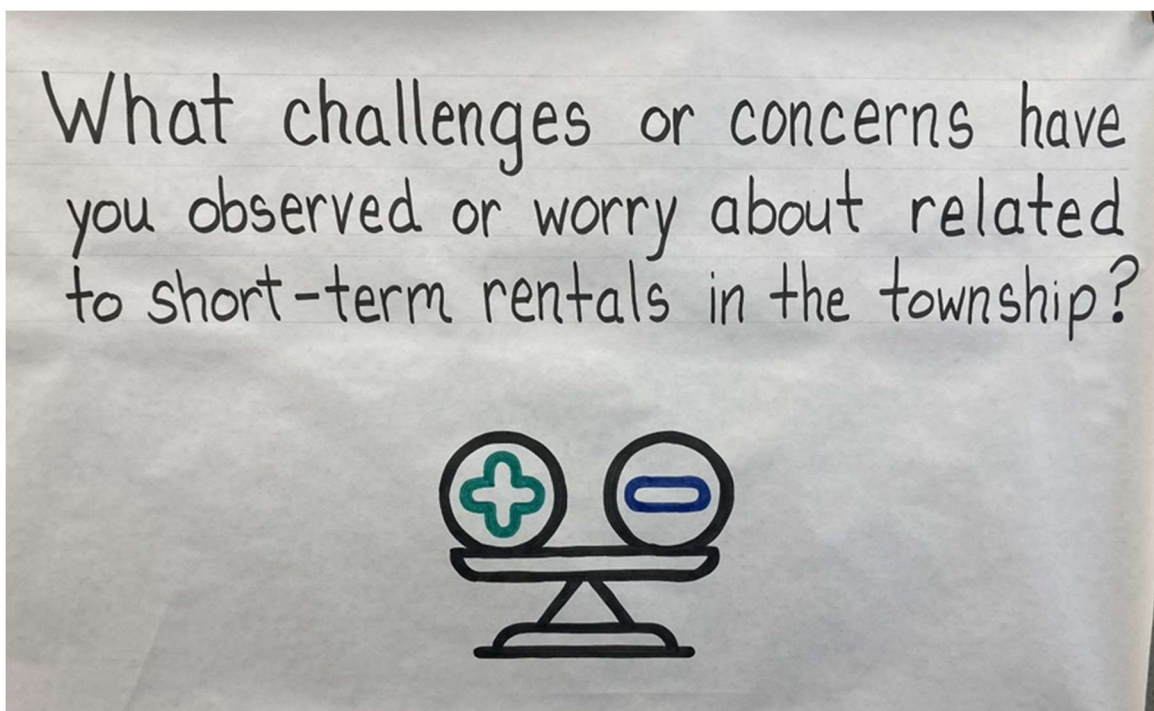
### 1-10) Conditional/qualified “positives” (participants noted limits or preferences)

*(These were shared in response to “positive impacts,” but include conditions or cautions. They were kept as written.)*

- If on a lake setting, there is little benefit, but for rural setting, there is an economy increase
- Impact depends on where they are allowed. If allowed in single-family residences, only benefit is to the STR property owner. If allowed in commercial or mixed-use areas, it increases lodging, which provides more tourists for the local economy.
- Positive would be limiting STR to Whitewater Township residents and not corporate entities
- Benefits private equity investors, no benefit to Whitewater residents

## Question 2: Challenges or Concerns Related to Short-Term Rentals-Term Rentals

This section summarizes community input collected in response to the question:



### 2-1) Noise, parties, behavior, and quality-of-life impacts

- Bad renters, party noise, garbage, lake traffic, invasive species, drunk driving, pollution
- Good neighbor concerns (noise, fireworks, parties, bonfires, lack of manners)
- Party noise late at night
- Visitors could be loud and disrespectful
- Renters who don't follow rules, poor or unruly behavior
- Large groups unaware of existing peace and quiet
- Theft, late nights, dangerous acts, neighborhood disruption
- Noise complaints to non-renting families
- Staging events such as weddings or bachelor parties

- Concerned about lack of noise and safety assurances if STR's are allowed
  - Being part of a family cottage and knowing the excitement of our groups, does not cause me ANY concerns
- 

## 2-2) Overcrowding, density, traffic, and vehicle concerns

- Too many guests/over-crowding in a house
  - Overcrowding in tight neighborhoods, excessive occupancy on lake front or large properties
  - Density of STR's, how to regulate
  - Too many STR's concentrated in specific areas
  - 100 lots on Island Lake and already 2-3 rentals on Union Lake
  - More vehicles on our back roads
  - Driving faster than posted in neighborhood
  - Traffic from horse show
  - Renters not staying on the rental property
- 

## 2-3) Housing availability, affordability, and market impacts

- Less housing available for younger families
  - STR's can negatively impact housing prices and rents
  - Limits local housing availability
  - STR's incentivizes landlords to remove properties from long-term rental market...causing rents for long-term to increase
  - Concern for my ability to afford to live here if STR is banned
  - Concern about lack of affordable housing is not individual property owner responsibility, that is township responsibility
- 

## 2-4) Lakes, environmental impacts, and infrastructure strain

- Over occupancy effect on septic
- Septic on lakes unable to handle
- Fire danger
- Drain on emergency services, especially seasonally
- Over taxed emergency services
- Stress on community infrastructure
- Concerned about increased use of recreational land and how it will be affected
- I believe it would be a detriment to the lakes in many forms.
- On a small lake, every voice and noise carries throughout the area
- On small lakes, even small changes make big echoes and disturbances
- Renters don't know boating and waterfront laws/rules
- Boating safety – lack of education, experience, carelessness on the lake
- Bringing invasive species on transient boats

- There is public access to Elk Lake, a campground, etc. The lake is accessible to everyone, so I don't understand some of the responses regarding the lake.
- 

## 2-5) Enforcement, regulation, and township capacity

- Too many regulations
  - Over regulation – we already have rules for fire, parking, noise, etc.
  - No middle ground for regulation
  - 30 days is too restrictive
  - Adherence to regulations
  - Concerned about lack of enforcement if overwhelmed
  - Ordinances that allow STR's are time-sensitive to enforce. Concerns that Whitewater township does not have the capacity to administer and enforce.
  - Township residents will be required to foot the bill for increased enforcement
  - Our general ordinances are NOT in order
  - Concerned about unfair license distribution and licenses set in stone for those who get in early
  - Concerned if there is not a plan for STR's, people are incentivized to come up with games or workarounds that are not to anyone's benefit
- 

## 2-6) Property rights, fairness, and discrimination concerns

- Township would be taking away ownership rights
  - Limiting or taking away property rights in the township
  - Restrictive STR regulations can be discriminatory
  - Economic discrimination against visitors
  - Community applying different rules to "visitors" than "locals"
  - That the township bans STR's completely (too many township rules)
  - I am concerned with STR's being banned. I have hosted 122 bookings with zero complaints. As a great host I should not lose my income.
  - Concerned about lack of subdivisions or HOA's to choose their own limitations or lack thereof
- 

## 2-7) Community cohesion, neighborhood culture, and social impacts

- You may not know your neighbors, strangers staying next door or in the neighborhood
- It's where people live versus people on vacation (different motives)
- Increase in community division, neighbor against neighbor
- Loss of neighborhood feeling
- Breaks up neighborhood "culture"
- Impacts community cohesion and stability
- Revolving door of strangers impacting neighborhood safety and community fabric
- No sense of community, owners are in it for money

- Perception of community is negative (largely)(loudest voice)
  - You bought in a summer tourist area, now you want to make it a subdivision?
- 

## 2-8) Ownership type, absentee owners, and commercialization

- Non-resident STR owners are often disrespectful of communities
  - Corporate absentee owners
  - Too many non-resident or private equity owners
  - Large institutional investors buying numerous properties and crowding out locals
  - Attracting commercial owners who don't care
  - Commercial operations are not compatible in residential neighborhoods
  - In Traverse City, 75% of STR's are now commercially operated
  - Increase wealth for a few at the expense of neighbors and community
- 

## 2-9) Neighbor complaints, conflict, and misuse of rules

- What if STR's are a problem for your neighbors?
  - Opportunity to falsely target personally disliked community members
  - Worry that one or two residents will over-report issues, neighbors simply complain for STR existing, not due to actual issues
  - Heavy focus on concerns from a small number of complaints versus the large number of STR's which are successful and not an issue
  - Abuse of rules and regulations by neighbors and township officials, used as a hassle factor
  - No recourse for unfounded and repeated harassment/complaints by owners against complaining party
  - Neighbors end up monitoring and managing the guest behaviors
  - Non STR neighbors should not deal with issues if they occur, it is unfair to the entire neighborhood
- 

## 2-10) Management, hosting quality, and accountability

- Owners unable to regulate parties
  - Bad hosts
  - Management too far away to deal with issues
  - Concerned about lack of noise and safety assurances if STR's are allowed
  - Both neighbors and renters be respectful
- 

## 2-11) Safety, crime, and perception of risk

- How many STR crimes are in the news? Is a statistic available?
  - Concerned about lack of noise and safety assurances if STR's are allowed
  - Fire danger
-

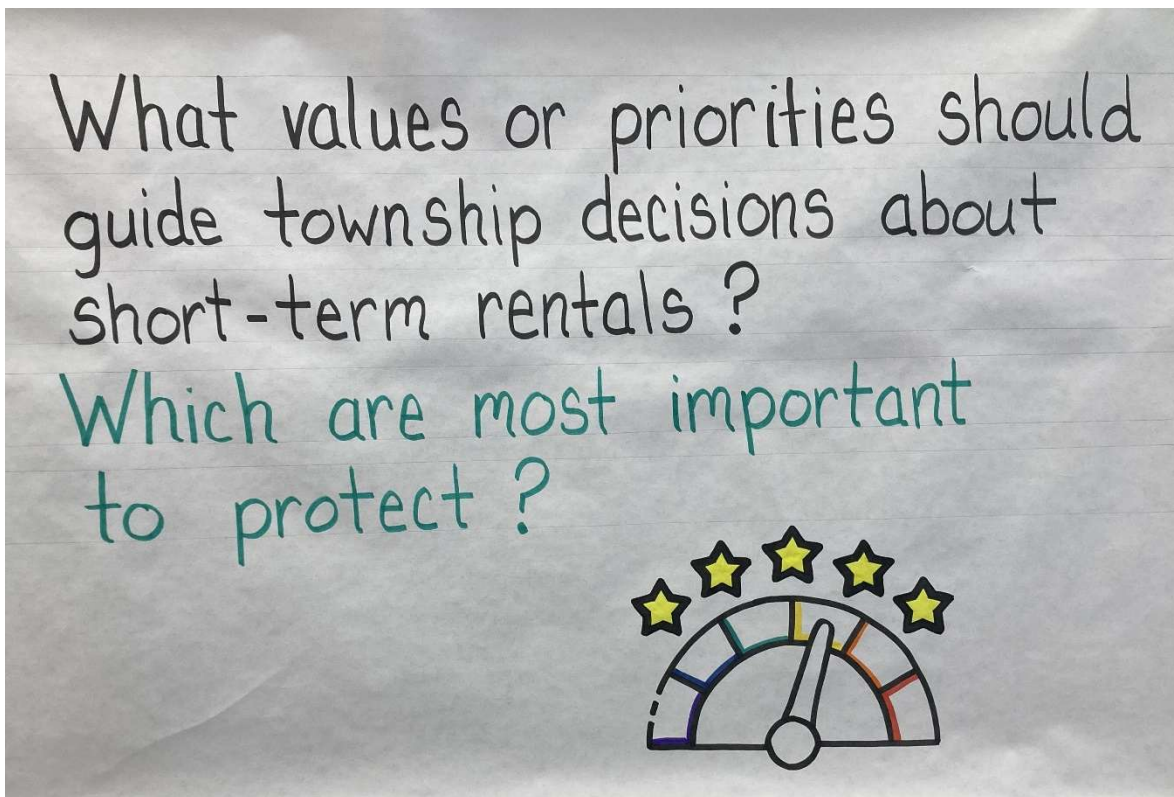
## 2-12) Views minimizing or rejecting concerns

*(Included as expressed by participants)*

- N/A – there are no concerns or challenges
  - Heavy focus on concerns from a small number of complaints versus the large number of STR's which are successful and not an issue
- 

## Question 3: What values or priorities should guide township decisions about short-term rentals? Which are most important to protect?

This section summarizes community input collected in response to the question:



## 3-1) Respect, neighbor relations, and peaceful enjoyment

- Respect for neighbors
- Keeping peaceful neighborhoods
- Quiet time
- Right to privacy and peace of neighbors
- Kindness given to each other and reciprocated
- Promote neighbor talking to neighbor, not authorities

- Preserve neighborhood character. Ensure owner accountability to neighbors and set limits on activities
  - Protect quiet enjoyment for year-round residents
  - Minimize risks related to overcrowding, noise, and nuisance behavior
  - Safety and noise complaints
  - Enforcement mechanism, definitions and plan for what to do about noise
  - Differing from offenses and preferences and opinions
- 

### 3-2) Property rights, individual liberty, and homeowner autonomy

- Resident's rights, rights of ALL property owners
  - Freedom of property owners to have the option to make money from their property
  - Property rights – no more rules
  - Private property rights on both sides of the STR issue
  - Individual liberty – freedom for people to do with their property as they wish
  - Property owner's rights to use within guidelines – inclusive guidelines
  - Error on the side of freedom
  - Future right to vacation rent. Not interested today, but may need to in 10 years.
  - Balance between property rights and community impact
  - Whitewater township must keep full control to regulate if needed
  - Township would be taking away ownership rights
- 

### 3-3) Protect full-time / permanent residents and community quality of life

- Protect the permanent residents
  - Community quality of life should be protected
  - Maintain township's residential feel, neighborhood stability, and sense of place
  - Error toward protection of Whitewater township
  - Who do you want to live here? Who do you want to leave?
  - Respect and priority should be given for those residents who are full time and purchased property BECAUSE there were no STR's allowed.
  - Protect single-family neighborhoods from an intrusive and difficult to regulate commercial tourist use
- 

### 3-4) Housing availability & affordability for residents (especially families/workers)

- Can families still live here or does it become out of area owners? Limits.
- Provide affordable housing for blue collar workers and young families
- Keep R-Zone housing available for families or schools will wither
- Avoid disproportionate impacts on long-term housing availability
- Preserve housing for actual residents, keep lodging in commercial zones
- Money that can be made for young families
- Homeowners ability to afford their homes

- Affordability for adaptable families in obtaining waterfront
- 

### 3-5) Local ownership, limiting absentee/corporate investors, and accountability

- Limit non-local ownership
  - Prioritize local ownership, not absent landlords
  - Limiting large, institutional investors
  - Limitations on corporate groups purchasing homes with no connection to the area or accountability
  - Prevent over-commercialization of residential areas
  - Limiting certain areas for STR
  - Low concentration of STR's
  - Saturation of rentals to ownership and input on small lake living
  - Distance between rentals
  - Local contact person
- 

### 3-6) Environmental protection, water quality, septic, and infrastructure capacity

- Lake water quality
  - Sustainability and water quality
  - Protection of natural resources
  - Natural resources preservation (especially water)
  - Protect our waterways
  - Gateway to beautiful waters – needs saving!
  - Environmental quality of water, septic, and land
  - Environmental and infrastructure preservation
  - Lake water quality, septic checks
  - Align occupancy limits with infrastructure capacity
  - Encourage responsible use of natural resources
  - Need stricter regulations for lake properties
  - Maintaining quality of living: water quality, noise, population, home prices, etc.
- 

### 3-7) Rural character, master plan alignment, and zoning consistency

- Rural character
  - Community – Rural integrity master plan
  - Aligning to the master plan
  - Respect current zoning
  - Honor the rules in play when the home was purchased
  - Single-family tourism over large apartment buildings
-

### 3-8) Fairness, consistency, and equal treatment

- Fairness – Fair rules, consistent rules, simple rules, basic courtesy, and respect
  - Equal rules and respect for all neighbors, not only STR's
  - Equal treatment of all – not more rights for some
  - Fairness – no inside tracks
  - What is good for all people impacted (compromise)
  - Community – how we collectively bring value to our community
- 

### 3-9) Regulation design: reasonable, minimal, enforceable, and not duplicative

- Balancing regulation with realistic compliance
  - Being able to enforce the rules
  - Local control and enforceability
  - Establish clear, understandable rules
  - Ensure regulations can be realistically enforced with available resources
  - Avoid overly complex requirements that create compliance challenges
  - Limited regulations of STR's that are easy to enforce and fair to all
  - Reasonableness – cost benefit, is it doable?
  - Start with minimum regulations
  - If it's not a problem, we don't need enforcement
  - Don't re-create rules and regulations that already exist (parking, noise, fire, fireworks)
  - Balance the solution to the problem. What percent of STR's are an issue?
  - Significant negative impact if regulations are too restrictive
- 

### 3-10) Safety standards, health/welfare, and accountability

- Health, safety, and welfare
  - Legitimate health and safety and enforcement of related regulations
  - Require basic safety standards (egress, smoke detectors, occupancy limits, emergency access, compliance with fire & building codes)
  - Safety of neighbors and guests (physical, emotional, mental, accountability)
  - Minimize risks related to overcrowding, noise, and nuisance behavior
- 

### 3-11) Economic benefits, local business support, and tourism needs

- Jobs and economics
- Economic community benefit
- Boost of local economy
- Support trade and commercial business in the township
- Benefit of income potential through STR's
- Consider the income (taxes) that STR's would bring into the township
- The benefit of those coming to enjoy Whitewater township

- Ensuring there are enough rentals for the horse shows
- 

### 3-12) Licensing/fees/taxes and cost burden to township and residents

- Licenses to pay for township expense
  - Township income for licensing
  - Administrative cost to township and impact on neighbors of STR's
  - Township should work to ease tax burdens, not increase them under the guise of "licensing" and "inspections"
- 

### 3-13) Process values: community input, information-based decision-making, tone

- Community input should help guide decisions. Listen to what your community has to say.
  - Neighbor input on allowing or not allowing a STR, "How to build this into the STR process"
  - Information gathering should guide township decisions (not forceful personalities)
  - Stop punitive statements and action while actively researching STR ordinance
- 

### 3-14) Long-term resilience, generational wealth, and future adaptability

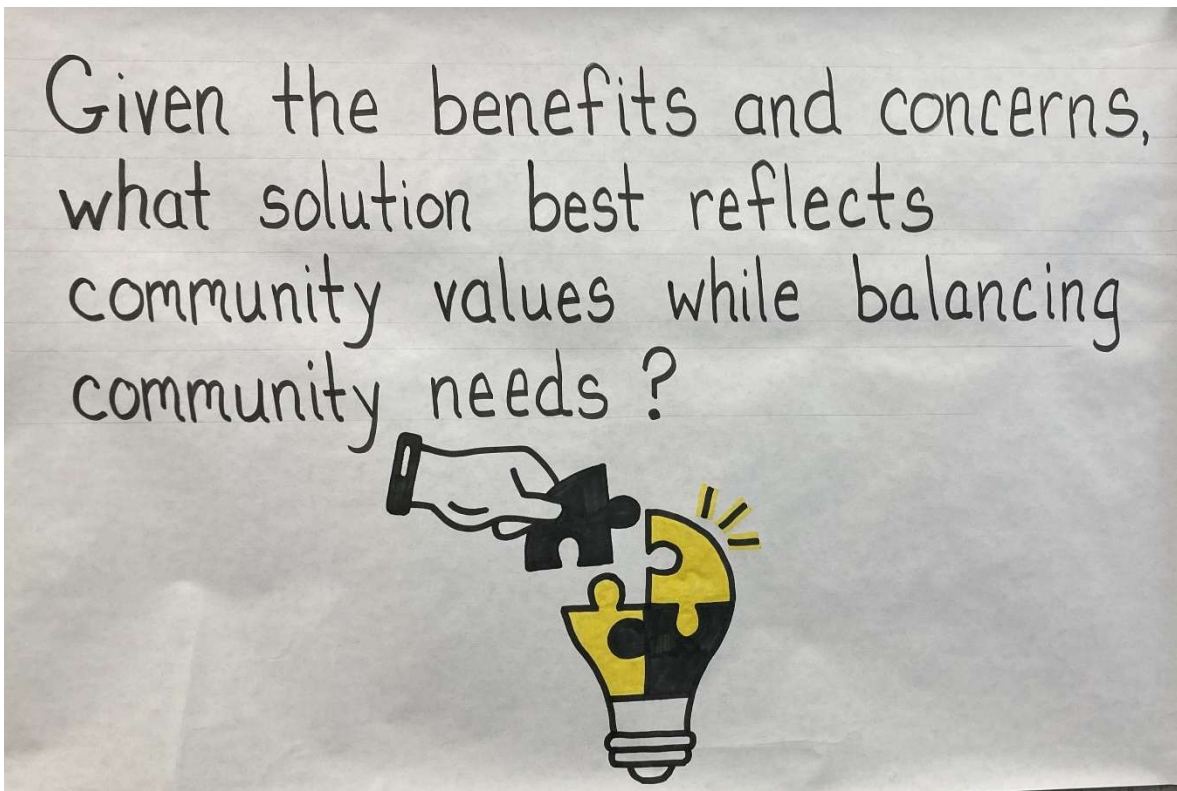
- Maintaining generational wealth during inheritance
  - Adaptability to future generations and economic states
  - Economic struggles of owning a property
  - Individual uses supporting financial independence and retirement
- 

### 3-15) Property value considerations

- What will be the potential negative/positive impact on the value of STR property and adjacent properties
-

Question 4: Given the benefits and concerns, what solution best reflects community values while balancing community needs?

This section summarizes community input collected in response to the question:



4-1) Allow STRs with “reasonable,” clear, enforceable rules (balanced approach)

- Allow STR’s, but with very good boundaries and parameters (but not bureaucratic)
- STR’s allowed with reasonable restrictions and parameters
- Allow STR’s with regulations (if necessary)

- Balanced solution that allows STR's with reasonable, achievable, and enforceable rules
  - Well-regulated and well-enforced STR policy
  - Reasonable STR ordinance in writing
  - Reasonable, limited STR regulations focused on health and safety
  - Balanced, reasonable approach that recognizes reality: the need exists for STR's and STR's are already here
  - Allow STRs by passing a strong, but simple ordinance that respects neighbors while giving property owners the ability to use their property as they see fit
  - Ordinance that respects homeowner's rights to have STR's while ensuring there are guidelines
  - Allow STR's, but address problems – noise, enforcement, crowding, size limits, number of people, etc.
  - Regulations to control STR's and limit poorly managed ones
  - Start with a minimum of well-researched regulations
- 

#### 4-2) Zoning/location-based solutions (where STRs should/shouldn't be)

- No STR's in residential districts – capped number elsewhere
  - Continue to not allow in R1 zone.
  - Zoning is a commercial activity. It should only be in commercial district. If I wanted to buy a home in commercial area, I would have. STR's are not allowed and it was a decision to live here.
  - Only allow STRs in commercial/mixed use zones. IF WWT decides to allow them in other zones, require that the property owner must be onsite during the rental period (a "hosted" STR).
  - Zoning for R1 should remain residential...not commercial. 30 day or more rentals could still continue to benefit people who want to rent for horse show etc.
  - Limiting certain areas for STR
  - Restrict locations depending on lake front versus open areas versus commercial areas
  - Encourage STR's to specific areas as overlay
  - Limited STR's in R1 and R2 with regulations. Higher concentration in Ag and Rec districts with regulations.
  - Limited permits in R1 districts to empower families, but prevent crowding
- 

#### 4-3) Caps, concentration limits, and "quantity controls"

- Limit concentration of STR's in any one geographic area
- Limit total number of STR's
- Employ licensing/regulations and location specific controls (quantity)
- Limit number of STR's, owner occupied or on property
- Allow percentage of STR's based on housing inventory
- Limit number of rentals for family community

- No limit on STR's, leave it to the economy
  - Let market forces determine number, locations, minimum length instead of regulations
  - Let capitalism have its way. Regulate occupancy and contact persons known to neighbors.
  - No limits on total number, locations, or minimum length of stay (discriminatory)
- 

#### 4-4) Quiet hours, noise standards, “good neighbor” expectations

- If STR's are allowed, have enforced quiet hours to ensure neighborhood peace
  - Enforce regulations and quiet hours to ensure community safety and peace
  - Create guideline rules for quiet time, number people, and resident rights
  - Standard noise and safety ordinance for renters and residents alike
  - Enforce good general health and safety ordinances for ALL properties equally. Make STR's use by right.
  - Owners – make a rule to respect the neighbors if STR
  - Expect “good neighbor” approach, don't over regulate
  - Heavy reliance on self-policing and “good neighbor” approach
  - Create good neighbor guide
  - Provide guidelines for owners to enforce to their renters
  - Create owner accountability to neighbors
  - Consistent simple rules and substantial fines for repeat offenders
- 

#### 4-5) Occupancy, parties/events, minimum stay, and behavior controls

- Too many guests/overcrowding controls
  - Strong restrictions for STR's (hours, noise, occupancy, septic, local contact)
  - Imposing reasonable length of stay, 3-7 days
  - No less than 1-week rental (helps eliminate bachelor parties)
  - Employ a 3-night minimum to encourage families and prevent one-night parties
  - Occupancy limits – limited number of STR's, manager must be on site or nearby, minimum 7-night stay, limit total nights per year can be rented
  - Limit staging events such as weddings or bachelor parties
- 

#### 4-6) Registration, licensing, fees, taxes (who pays / how it's administered)

- Establishing a licensing mechanism to manage STR's
- Have clear reporting, breaching of the rule's metrics, and enforcement mechanisms
- Create a clear plan with a clear feedback loop
- If STR's are allowed, it must have a feedback mechanism and metrics to evaluate how it's working and how it is not.
- Cleanly defined and stringent enforcement policies
- License fees to help facilitate regulation and improve community

- Cost of STR's must be borne by the landlords, and by extension, the STR tenants, not residents.
  - Make sure STR's pay state sales tax
  - Register all STR's with an emergency contact in case of any problem
  - STR approval/license tied to safety, septic, and occupancy
- 

#### 4-7) Enforcement tools and penalties (including “3 strikes” approaches)

- Need civil infraction ordinance to enforce
  - Enforce ordinances
  - Regulate and enforce
  - Regulations and loss of ability to rent if rules are not followed. (3 strikes and you are out)
  - Repeat offenders should be fined a percentage
  - Strong regulations that reward responsible and neighborly behavior and punish bad behavior
  - Consistent simple rules and substantial fines for repeat offenders
- 

#### 4-8) Local contact, nearby management, and accountability structures

- Resident owned, local contact. I am a responsible host. My rules are strictly enforced and have never had complaints.
  - In one area, the city requires neighbors of STR's to have the owner/property manager's phone number so that things can be resolved without taking police time for noise or parties
  - Better transparency of STR owner and contact number for open communication as needed
  - STR manager not necessarily on site, but a responsible party that can be easily contacted
  - Good, available management
  - Owners of STR's need to live locally during their renting season
- 

#### 4-9) Limit corporate/institutional ownership; prioritize locals

- Stay within the private sector and not the corporate sector
  - Not allowing corporations to purchase homes for STR use and over take the market.
  - Prioritizing resident STR options over outside influence
  - Not allowing big corporations to buy homes to rent STR
  - Cap institutional ownership
  - Minor regulation – registration with inspection, enforcement of current ordinances, make STR ownership easier for local owners than for huge corporations
  - Understand “corporate ownership” for asset protection versus large investors
-

#### 4-10) Lakefront-specific rules, septic/water protections

- Lakefront STR's generate the majority of the problems
  - Monitor septic systems on STR units
  - Water front rules for septic
  - STR approval/license tied to safety, septic, and occupancy
- 

#### 4-11) Communication-first / conflict resolution approaches

- The best solution is open communication. Whether it is a renter being too loud, inappropriate, or a family member doing so, open communication between neighbor/owners is the best way to resolve the situation. Ordinances should reflect that.
  - Talk to your neighbors first
  - Any committees created should have balanced input, previous boards were weighted to have a specific outcome
  - Leave STR rules "restrictive", but allow variances that include neighbor input (this might help neighbor communication)
  - Issues handled on a case by case basis, NOT blanket regulation
- 

#### 4-12) Process & decision-making: vote/ballot, research, best practices, timing

- Put it on the ballot
  - Bring it to a vote so the zoning board knows the will of property owners
  - Putting it on ballot is unfair. Summer owners cannot vote but yet are taxed the highest
  - Seek out best practices from many areas where this has worked well. Quality drafting of any rules, ordinances, and zoning to be clear.
  - Research and education and discussion before decision
  - Have an open mind for STR
  - No prosecution for active STR's until decision finalized
  - Pass ordinance proposed last summer
- 

#### 4-13) Cost/capacity concerns about enforceability

- WAYYY too difficult to enforce. We would need to hire and spend more to enforce...and even then, it would be extremely difficult.
  - Assess if there really is a strain on infrastructure/fire/police services due to STR's
- 

#### 4-14) Support for STRs as economic help / income stability

- Folks should be permitted to supplement their income to live here.
- Owners pay taxes, should be allowed to rent or whatever with their property
- Economic benefits of having STR's in the community is too great, for many reasons

- Allowing quality STR's boosts community income (needs)
  - A lakeshore community typically has the last 2 weeks of June rented, all of July, and 2 weeks in August before schools start. So, essentially 2 months of business. Supporting cottage businesses for 2 months should be welcomed as these homeowners support the local economy by buying groceries, restaurants, healthcare, etc. We should care in this challenging economy for the families that are trying to keep their head above water like most.
  - STR Hosts with ZERO complaints should not be penalized by the very small minority that have received complaints. Let's teach the home owners how to be better neighbors and hosts with an ordinance with clear and simple guidelines.
  - Realize that 1/3 for STR's without regulations and 1/3 for STR's with some regulations is still 2/3 in favor of STR's
- 

#### 4-15) No STRs / keep STRs out of residential districts (prohibition viewpoint)

- Do not permit STR's. The residents receive no benefit from STR's. The vast majority of residents do not need or want STR's. The add nothing to my value of residing in Whitewater.
  - Continue to not allow in R1 zone.
  - No STR's in residential districts – capped number elsewhere
  - Preserve housing for actual residents, keep lodging in commercial zones
- 

#### 4-16) Minimal/no STR-specific regulations (use existing ordinances / market solutions)

- Allow STR's with no regulations. Use general ordinances for noise, parking, etc.
  - Don't re-create rules and regulations that already exist (parking, noise, fire, fireworks)
  - People move here to seek rural – then demand and change just like cities they escaped. Allow owners to use property as rural communities always have – any way they wish.
  - Let market forces determine number, locations, minimum length instead of regulations
  - No limit on STR's, leave it to the economy
  - No limits on total number, locations, or minimum length of stay (discriminatory)
- 

#### 4-17) Fairness / equal application of rules / anti-harassment

- Any regulation set should be required by ALL residents, not just STR's. example: neighbor's dog that barks constantly, resident kids dangerously riding down street at high speeds on motor bikes. Dislike that this seems to pit neighbor against neighbor. Township will have to enforce ordinance on everyone.
- Standard noise and safety ordinance for renters and residents alike

- Individual accountability outside of existing regulations. (Noise, etc. – not a “blanket” approach)
  - Heavily penalize “rule” harassment
  - Best solution would be to truly monitor whether there ARE any issues. Most times it’s one complainer with no real disturbances/problems
- 

#### 4-18) Safety standards, inspections, and education resources

- Inspections to ensure proper management and usage of STR
  - Verify “safety equipment” yearly
  - Leverage known safety resources to support goals (Breezeway Justin Ford)
  - Testing decibels for sound violations
  - STR approval/license tied to safety, septic, and occupancy
  - Balance traveler behavior with regulations (retirees like to travel during the week to save money) – affects minimum stay and number of guests
- 

#### 4-19) Neighborhood-by-neighborhood flexibility / “pockets choose”

- Let pockets of communities choose their own destiny. Some neighborhoods might not want them at all, that should be acceptable; some do, that's okay too. But allow for a variety of options within WWT, as much as can be allowed.
- 

#### 4-20) Unique / less common proposals (captured as stated)

- Share rental income with adjacent owners
  - Keep Whitewater rural, simple, and humble with respect
-

## Conclusion

This report documents the input shared during the Whitewater Township Short-Term Rental Community Input Session held on January 21, 2026. The session was designed to provide an inclusive, well-structured opportunity for residents and property owners to share their perspectives, concerns, values, and ideas related to short-term rentals.

Community input reflected a wide range of viewpoints. Participants identified both potential benefits and challenges associated with short-term rentals, emphasizing different priorities based on personal experience, location within the township, and perspectives on property rights, housing, environmental protection, and community character. No single viewpoint or approach received universal support, underscoring the complexity of the issue and the diversity of values within the community.

This report does not offer recommendations or policy changes. Instead, it serves as a factual record of the input and themes expressed during the session. The information presented is intended to support informed discussion and thoughtful consideration should the township choose to explore this issue further.

## Key Takeaways from Community Input

While perspectives varied, several recurring themes emerged across participant input:

- Strong interest in protecting neighborhood character, peace, and quality of life, particularly in residential and lakefront areas
- Ongoing tension between private property rights and community-wide impacts

- Concern for housing availability and affordability, especially for families and local workers
- Emphasis on environmental protection, including water quality, septic capacity, and infrastructure strain
- Desire for fair, clear, and enforceable rules if regulations are considered, with caution about township enforcement capacity
- Broad agreement that responsible hosting and accountability matter, and that negative impacts are often associated with poorly managed properties rather than all short-term rentals-term rentals

These themes reflected participants' shared values and areas of disagreement, and they were expressed across multiple questions and discussion groups.

## Next Steps

The completion of this report concludes the community input session and documentation phase. Community input documented in this report is intended to inform—not predetermine—any future discussions or decisions. No decisions regarding short-term rentals were made as part of this process.

If the Whitewater Township Planning Commission or Township Board chooses to continue exploring the issue of short-term rentals, potential- next steps may include:

- Review of this report by the Planning Commission and Township Board
- Additional research or data collection to better understand local housing and STR conditions and related policy implications
- Consult with a municipal attorney to review legal questions, and any zoning and/or regulatory ordinance construction (if applicable),
- Work with the Township board and staff to explore administrative and enforcement costs and policies (if applicable)

Any future changes to township policy or ordinances would require action by the Planning Commission and Township Board and would follow applicable public notice and hearing requirements.

## Appendix A

### Community Input – Question 1

#### What positive impacts do short-term rentals have on Whitewater Township and its residents?

The following responses reflect participant input collected during the January 21, 2026, community input session. Responses are presented as provided by participants. Duplicate responses were removed for clarity. No responses were edited for content.

#### **Raw Responses:**

- Increased housing for healthcare workers, Coast Guard, etc.
- Income for township residents
- Jobs/revenue for service providers (cleaners, managers, maintenance, home improvement contractors)
- Non-homestead taxes are 40% higher (money to township)
- Introduce outside visitors to our community (tourism)
- Produces income for owner of property (income for local residents)
- Income stays in the township to improve the property (rental)
- Provides service as a place to stay which would otherwise go to another township if we do not provide
- Housing affordability – younger families and rising taxes, provides path to home ownership
- More money to the area
- Extra income for retired residents
- Allowing STR's promotes homeowner autonomy, indicates choice is valued
- Fills a housing need – families can stay together better than they can in hotels

- Keeps money local – farmers, orchards, cleaners, maintenance versus surrounding communities
- Introduce kids from other locations to “the lake”
- Keeps houses from sitting empty
- Helps young families afford a home
- Improves blighted properties, increasing values
- Attracts quality visitors (horse show \$\$\$)
- Lower “For Sale” inventory = higher property values for owners
- Maintains rural character versus hotels and motels going in
- Economic – visitors may provide boost to businesses within the township, also for families
- Allows families to vacation together
- Supplemental income for private property owners
- Second homes can be utilized versus left vacant
- STR’s bring people from other states to experience our area
- Community asset – brings in tourists to boost economy, memories made creates repeat visitors for years to come
- Over regulation = stifling businesses
- Increased property value creates income possibilities for township
- Supports property ownership rights
- STR’s by investors increases school tax base
- Can allow residents to retain ownership that otherwise might transfer out of the area
- Improved home upkeep and renovation of depressed value homes
- Creates desire for others to live here
- Great 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> income for home owners
- Keep homes in families for generations
- There is no industry in Whitewater Township, STR’s support local trades & businesses
- Owner occupied STR’s could help owner
- Provides local lodging for family and friends
- Help historical family preserve property in face of increased taxes and costs
- We met many strangers, got know new people
- STR’s enable families to participate due to sustainable options
- Increases diversity in the area
- Owner fulfillment of hospitality hobby (owner occupied)
- If on a lake setting, there is little benefit, but for rural setting, there is an economy increase
- Reciprocates local established values of cabin summers
- Support growth of single-family homes (as opposed to apartments)
- Helps expose and market local businesses to out of town visitors
- More pride in home ownership
- Housing for GLEF – 120-million-dollar economic impact

- I know of several homes that can afford to plant flowers and landscaping to enhance their property that they otherwise would not be able to afford without the additional income. Hence increases the beauty of the neighborhood and community.
- Impact depends on where they are allowed. If allowed in single-family residences, only benefit is to the STR property owner. If allowed in commercial or mixed-use areas, it increases lodging, which provides more tourists for the local economy.
- Benefits private equity investors, no benefit to Whitewater residents
- Supports owners who need help with real estate tax bills through 'longer term' STR
- Increased revenue to the township from licensing and permits which can be reinvested in infrastructure
- Positive would be limiting STR to Whitewater Township residents and not corporate entities
- We had a cottage next door to friends who rented for 20 years with no problems and a great relationship with our neighbors, so it can be done!
- How many who have had renters near them would say they are noisy and increase traffic? Our family brings 1 car and is gone most of the stay since we sight-see. We basically sleep at a location. We are not hanging out at the house for the majority of the vacation. My experience is most guests are gone 70% of the time spending money and time in the community.
- As a great host with zero complaints I have implemented: no parties, quiet hours, no street parking, bon fires only after approval from DNR website, no fireworks, smoke & carbon monoxide detectors, fire blankets, the house address listed with my phone number, I am 20 minutes away in the event of emergency, my neighbors have my phone number (and in 7 years, they have never needed to call me), first aid kits, etc.
- Having an STR empowers my family to keep and sustain our favorite place to gather
- Reduces non-taken care of properties (i.e. trash, non-working vehicles)

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## Appendix B

### Community Input – Question 2

#### What challenges or concerns have you observed or worry about related to short-term rentals in the township?

The following responses reflect participant input collected during the January 21, 2026, community input session. Responses are presented verbatim. Duplicate responses were removed for clarity. Responses reflect a wide range of viewpoints, including differing and opposing perspectives.

### Raw Responses:

- More vehicles on our back roads
- Too many guests/overcrowding in a house
- Less housing available for younger families
- Bad renters, party noise, garbage, lake traffic, invasive species, drunk driving, pollution
- Heavy focus on concerns from a small number of complaints versus the large number of STR's which are successful and not an issue
- What if STR's are a problem for your neighbors?
- Too many regulations
- Good neighbor concerns (noise, fireworks, parties, bonfires, lack of manners)
- Our general ordinances are NOT in order
- Over occupancy effect on septic
- Concerned the value of my property will decrease
- STR's can negatively impact housing prices and rents
- Restrictive STR regulations can be discriminatory
- N/A – there are no concerns or challenges
- Renters don't know boating and waterfront laws/rules
- Township would be taking away ownership rights
- You may not know your neighbors, strangers staying next door or in the neighborhood
- 100 lots on Island Lake and already 2-3 rentals on Union Lake
- Driving faster than posted in neighborhood
- Visitors could be loud and disrespectful
- Renters may not respect homes and neighbors like an owner
- It's where people live versus people on vacation (different motives)
- Bringing invasive species on transient boats
- Community applying different rules to "visitors" than "locals"
- Increase in community division, neighbor against neighbor
- No middle ground for regulation
- Limiting or taking away property rights in the township
- Density of STR's, how to regulate
- Renters who don't follow rules, poor or unruly behavior
- On a small lake, every voice and noise carries throughout the area
- Party noise late at night
- Economic discrimination against visitors
- Being part of a family cottage and knowing the excitement of our groups, does not cause me ANY concerns
- Opportunity to falsely target personally disliked community members
- Worry that one or two residents will over-report issues, neighbors simply complain for STR existing, not due to actual issues
- Owners unable to regulate parties
- Non-resident STR owners are often disrespectful of communities
- Disregard for personal property (not always, but sometimes)

- No recourse for unfounded and repeated harassment/complaints by owners against complaining party
- Corporate absentee owners
- Traffic from horse show
- Large groups unaware of existing peace and quiet
- Management too far away to deal with issues
- Septic on lakes unable to handle
- Concern about lack of affordable housing is not individual property owner responsibility, that is township responsibility
- Too many non-resident or private equity owners
- 30 day is too restrictive
- Bad hosts
- Overcrowding in tight neighborhoods, excessive occupancy on lake front or large properties
- Drain on emergency services, especially seasonally
- Stress on community infrastructure
- Noise complaints to non-renting families
- On small lakes, even small changes make big echoes and disturbances
- Neighbors end up monitoring and managing the guest behaviors
- Theft, late nights, dangerous acts, neighborhood disruption
- Noise after quiet hours
- Perception of community is negative (largely)(loudest voice)
- Loss of neighborhood feeling
- Too many STR's concentrated in specific areas
- Renters not staying on the rental property
- Over regulation – we already have rules for fire, parking, noise, etc.
- Both neighbors and renters be respectful
- Adherence to regulations
- Large institutional investors buying numerous properties and crowding out locals
- Abuse of rules and regulations by neighbors and township officials, used as a hassle factor
- Limits local housing availability
- Breaks up neighborhood “culture”
- Causes people to love the township, start buying/looking to buy properties
- Fire danger
- No sense of community, owners are in it for money
- Attracting commercial owners who don't care
- That the township bans STR's completely (too many township rules)
- You bought in a summer tourist area, now you want to make it a subdivision?
- Over taxed emergency services
- Revolving door of strangers impacting neighborhood safety and community fabric
- STR's incentivizes landlords to remove properties from long-term rental market...causing rents for long-term to increase
- In Traverse City, 75% of STR's are now commercially operated

- I am concerned with STR's being banned. I have hosted 122 bookings with zero complaints. As a great host I should not lose my income.
  - Staging events such as weddings or bachelor parties
  - Boating safety - lack of education, experience, carelessness on the lake
  - Commercial operations are not compatible in residential neighborhoods
  - Concern for my ability to afford to live here if STR is banned
  - How many STR crimes are in the news? Is a statistic available?
  - Lose our benefit that Elk Lake is the best kept secret in northern Michigan by showing others how amazing it is
  - Impacts community cohesion and stability
  - Increase wealth for a few at the expense of neighbors and community
  - Township residents will be required to foot the bill for increased enforcement
  - Concerned about lack of noise and safety assurances if STR's are allowed
  - Lack of subdivisions or HOA's to choose their own limitations or lack thereof
  - Concerned about lack of enforcement if overwhelmed
  - Concerned about unfair license distribution and licenses set in stone for those who get in early
  - Concerned about increased use of recreational land and how it will be affected
  - Concerned if there is not a plan for STR's, people are incentivized to come up with games or workarounds that are not to anyone's benefit
  - I believe it would be a detriment to the lakes in many forms.
  - There is public access to Elk Lake, a campground, etc. The lake is accessible to everyone, so I don't understand some of the responses regarding the lake.
  - Non STR neighbors should not deal with issues if they occur, it is unfair to the entire neighborhood
  - Ordinances that allow STR's are time-sensitive to enforce. Concerns that Whitewater township does not have the capacity to administer and enforce.
- 

## Appendix C

### Community Input – Question 3

#### What values or priorities should guide township decisions about short-term rentals?

The following responses reflect participant input collected during the January 21, 2026, community input session. Responses are presented verbatim and reflect individual perspectives and priorities.

#### **Raw Responses:**

- Respect for neighbors

- Resident's rights, rights of ALL property owners
- Low concentration of STR's
- Limit non-local ownership
- Money that can be made for young families
- Licenses to pay for township expense
- Ensuring there are enough rentals for the horse shows
- Distance between rentals
- Lake water quality
- Keeping peaceful neighborhoods
- Local contact person
- Neighbor input on allowing or now allowing a STR, "How to build this into the STR process"
- Can families still live here or does it become out of area owners? Limits.
- Quiet time
- Community – how we collectively bring value to our community
- Sustainability and water quality
- Balancing regulation with realistic compliance
- Fairness – Fair rules, consistent rules, simple rules, basic courtesy, and respect
- Freedom of property owners to have the option to make money from their property
- Stop punitive statements and action while actively researching STR ordinance
- Being able to enforce the rules
- Community input should help guide decisions. Listen to what your community has to say.
- Community quality of life should be protected
- Safety and noise complaints
- Protection of natural resources
- Who do you want to live here? Who do you want to leave?
- Environmental quality of water, septic, and land
- Safety of neighbors and guests (physical, emotional, mental, accountability)
- Information gathering should guide township decisions (not forceful personalities)
- Aligning to the master plan
- Prioritize local ownership, not absent landlords
- To honor the rules in play when the home was purchased
- The benefit of those coming to enjoy Whitewater township
- What is good for all people impacted (compromise)
- Respect current zoning
- Community – Rural integrity master plan
- Maintaining quality of living: water quality, noise, population, home prices, etc.
- Saturation of rentals to ownership and input on small lake living
- Need stricter regulations for lake properties
- Protect the permanent residents
- Rural character
- Natural resources preservation (especially water)
- Property rights – no more rules

- Protect our waterways
- Provide affordable housing for blue collar workers and young families
- Private property rights on both sides of the STR issue
- Consider the income (taxes) that STR's would bring into the township
- Support trade and commercial business in the township
- Equal rules and respect for all neighbors, not only STR's
- Gateway to beautiful waters – needs saving!
- Future right to vacation rent. Not interested today, but may need to in 10 years.
- Individual liberty – freedom for people to do with their property as they wish
- Property owner's rights to use within guidelines – inclusive guidelines
- What will be the potential negative/positive impact on the value of STR property and adjacent properties
- Equal treatment of all – not more rights for some
- Right to privacy and peace of neighbors
- Kindness given to each other and reciprocated
- Differing from offenses and preferences and opinions
- Preserve neighborhood character. Ensure owner accountability to neighbors and set limits on activities
- Reasonableness – cost benefit, is it doable?
- Error on the side of freedom
- Limited regulates of STR's that are easy to enforce and fair to all
- Lake water quality, septic checks
- Maintaining generational wealth during inheritance
- Single-family tourism over large apartment buildings
- Jobs and economics
- Homeowners ability to afford their homes
- Limiting large, institutional investors
- Limiting certain areas for STR
- Significant negative impact if regulations are too restrictive
- Economic community benefit
- Limited, reasonable STR restrictions that all residents and owners can support
- Don't re-create rules and regulations that already exist (parking, noise, fire, fireworks)
- Affordability for adaptable families in obtaining waterfront
- Individual uses supporting financial independence and retirement
- If it's not a problem, we don't need enforcement
- Should work to ease tax burdens, not increase them under the guise of "licensing" and "inspections"
- Start with minimum regulations
- Legitimate health and safety and enforcement of related regulations
- Balance the solution to the problem. What percent of STR's are an issue?
- Township income for licensing
- Adaptability to future generations and economic states
- Promote neighbor talking to neighbor, not authorities

- Balanced, reasonable approach that recognizes reality: the need exists for STR's and STR's are already here
  - Boost of local economy
  - Economic struggles of owning a property
  - Maintain township's residential feel, neighborhood stability, and sense of place
  - Prevent over-commercialization of residential areas
  - Protect quiet enjoyment for year-round residents
  - Keep R-Zone housing available for families or schools will wither
  - Balance between property rights and community impact
  - Avoid disproportionate impacts on long-term housing availability
  - Health, safety, and welfare
  - Require basic safety standards (egress, smoke detectors, occupancy limits, emergency access, compliance with fire & building codes)
  - Minimize risks related to overcrowding, noise, and nuisance behavior
  - Local control and enforceability
  - Establish clear, understandable rules
  - Ensure regulations can be realistically enforced with available resources
  - Avoid overly complex requirements that create compliance challenges
  - Benefit of income potential through STR's
  - Respect and priority should be given for those residents who are full time and purchased property BECAUSE there were no STR's allowed.
  - Protect single-family neighborhoods from an intrusive and difficult to regulate commercial tourist use
  - Preserve housing for actual residents, keep lodging in commercial zones
  - Individual liberty
  - Administrative cost to township and impact on neighbors of STR's
  - Environmental and infrastructure preservation
  - Align occupancy limits with infrastructure capacity
  - Encourage responsible use of natural resources
  - Fairness – no inside tracks
  - Error toward protection of Whitewater township
  - Enforcement mechanism, definitions and plan for what to do about noise
  - Limitations on corporate groups purchasing homes with no connection to the area or accountability
  - Whitewater township must keep full control to regulate if needed
-

## Appendix D

### Community Input – Question 4

#### Given the benefits and concerns, what solution best reflects community values while balancing community needs?

The following responses reflect participant input collected during the January 21, 2026, community input session. Responses are presented verbatim and include a wide range of suggested approaches.

#### **Raw Responses:**

- Resident owned, local contact. I am a responsible host. My rules are strictly enforced and have never had complaints.
- If STR's are allowed, it must have a feedback mechanism and metrics to evaluate how it's working and how it is not.
- If STR's are allowed, have enforced quiet hours to ensure neighborhood peace
- Put it on the ballot
- Seek out best practices from many areas where this has worked well. Quality drafting of any rules, ordinances, zoning to be clear.
- In one area, the city requires neighbors of STR's to have the owner/property manager's phone number so that things can be resolved without taking police time for noise or parties
- Putting it on ballot is unfair. Summer owners cannot vote but yet are taxed the highest
- Enforce regulations and quiet hours to ensure community safety and peace
- No STR's in residential districts – capped number elsewhere
- The best solution is open communication. Whether it is a renter being too loud, inappropriate, or a family member doing so, open communication between neighbor/owners is the best way to resolve the situation. Ordinances should reflect that.
- Stay within the private sector and not the corporate sector
- Not allowing corporations to purchase homes for STR use and over take the market.
- Prioritizing resident STR options over outside influence
- Any regulation set should be required by ALL residents, not just STR's. example: neighbor's dog that barks constantly, resident kids dangerously riding down street at high speeds on motor bikes. Dislike that this seems to pit neighbor against neighbor. Township will have to enforce ordinance on everyone.
- Ordinance that respects home owner's rights to have STR's while ensuring there are guidelines
- Allow STR's, but with very good boundaries and parameters (but not bureaucratic)
- Have clear reporting, breaching of the rule's metrics, and enforcement mechanisms
- Create a clear plan with a clear feedback loop

- Cost of STR's must be borne by the landlords, and by extension, the STR tenants, not residents.
- Do not permit STR's. The residents receive no benefit from STR's. The vast majority of residents do not need or want STR's. The add nothing to my value of residing in Whitewater.
- Continue to not allow in R1 zone.
- Cleanly defined and stringent enforcement policies
- Not allowing big corporations to buy homes to rent STR
- Zoning is a commercial activity. It should only be in commercial district. If I wanted to buy a home in commercial area, I would have. STR's are not allow and was decision to live here.
- Better transparency of STR owner and contact number for open communication as needed
- A lakeshore community typically has the last 2 weeks of June rented, all of July, and 2 weeks in August before schools start. So, essentially 2 months of business. Supporting cottage businesses for 2 months should be welcomed as these homeowners support the local economy by buying groceries, restaurants, healthcare, etc. We should care in this challenging economy for the families that are trying to keep their head above water like most.
- STR Hosts with ZERO complaints should not be penalized by the very small minority that have received complaints. Let's teach the home owners how to be better neighbors and hosts with an ordinance with clear and simple guidelines.
- Make sure STR's pay state sales taxes
- WAYYY too difficult to enforce. We would need to hire and spend more to enforce...and even then, it would be extremely difficult.
- Folks should be permitted to supplement their income to live here.
- Let pockets of communities choose their own destiny. Some neighborhoods might not want them at all, that should be acceptable; some do, that's okay too. But allow for a variety of options within WWT, as much as can be allowed.
- Only allow STRs in commercial/mixed use zones. IF WWT decides to allow them in other zones, require that the property owner must be onsite during the rental period (a "hosted" STR).
- Allow STRs by passing a strong, but simple ordinance that respects neighbors while giving property owners the ability to use their property as they see fit
- Zoning for R1 should remain residential...not commercial. 30 day or more rentals could still continue to benefit people who want to rent for horse show etc.
- Well-regulated and well-enforced STR policy
- Limit concentration of STR's in any one geographic area
- Create guideline rules for quiet time, number people, and resident rights
- STR's allowed with reasonable restrictions and parameters
- All STR's with no regulations. Use general ordinances for noise, parking, etc.
- People move here to seek rural – then demand and change just like cities they escaped. Allow owners to use property as rural communities always have – any way they wish.

- Limit total number of STR's
- Owners pay taxes, should be allowed to rent or whatever with their property
- Enforce ordinances
- Lakefront STR's generate the majority of the problems
- Owners – make a rule to respect the neighbors if STR
- Monitor septic systems on STR units
- Water front rules for septic
- Need civil infraction ordinance to enforce
- Limit number of STR according to areas
- Strong restrictions for STR's (hours, noise, occupancy, septic, local contact)
- Economic benefits of having STR's in the community is too great, for many reasons
- Allow STR's, but address problems – noise, enforcement, crowding, size limits, number of people, etc.
- Register all STR's with an emergency contact in case of any problem
- Create good neighbor guide
- No limit on STR's, leave it to the economy
- Repeat offenders be fined a percentage
- STR approval/license tied to safety, septic, and occupancy
- Allow STR's with regulations (if necessary)
- Impose reasonable length of stay, 3-7 days
- No prosecution for active STR's until decision finalized
- Standard noise and safety ordinance for renters and residents alike
- Cap institutional ownership
- Allow ADR's (Average Daily Rates) and STR's with owners on site
- Let capitalism have its way. Regulate occupancy and contact persons known to neighbors.
- Allowing quality STR's boosts community income (needs)
- Minimalistic restrictions supporting healthy growth
- Testing decibels for sound violations
- Enforce good general health and safety ordinances for ALL properties equally. Make STR's use by right.
- Keep Whitewater rural, simple, and humble with respect
- Pass ordinance proposed last summer
- Verify "safety equipment" yearly
- No less than 1-week rental (helps eliminate bachelor parties)
- Reasonable STR ordinance in writing
- Good available management
- Reasonable, limited STR regulations focused on health and safety
- Let market forces determine number, locations, minimum length instead of regulations
- Owners of STR's need to live locally during their renting season
- Employ a 3-night minimum to encourage families and prevent one-night parties
- Leverage known safety resources to support goals (Breezeway Justin Ford)

- Balance traveler behavior with regulations (retirees like to travel during the week to save money) – affects minimum stay and number of guests
- Leave STR rules “restrictive”, but allow variances that include neighbor input (this might help neighbor communication)
- Understand “corporate ownership” for asset protection versus large investors
- No limits on total number, locations, or minimum length of stay (discriminatory)
- Restrict Location
- Employ licensing/regulations and location specific controls (quantity)
- Share rental income with adjacent owners
- Limit number of STR’s, owner occupied or on property
- Restrict locations depending on lake front versus open areas versus commercial areas
- Have an open mind for STR
- Bring it to a vote so the zoning board knows the will of property owners
- Create owner accountability to neighbors
- Consistent simple rules and substantial fines for repeat offenders
- Regulations and loss of ability to rent if rules are not followed. (3 strikes and you are out)
- Limit number of rentals for family community
- Allow percentage of STR’s based on housing inventory
- Regulate and enforce
- Research and education and discussion before decision
- Start with a minimum of well-researched regulations
- Inspections to ensure proper management and usage of STR
- Regulations to control STR’s and limit poorly managed ones
- License fees to help facilitate regulation and improve community
- Individual accountability outside of existing regulations. (Noise, etc. – not a “blanket” approach)
- Expect “good neighbor” approach, don’ over regulate
- Heavy reliance on self-policing and “good neighbor” approach
- Occupancy limits – limited number of STR’s, manager must be on site or nearby, minimum 7-night stay, limit total nights per year can be rented
- Strong regulations that reward responsible and neighborly behavior and punish bad behavior
- Limited permits in R1 districts to empower families, but prevent crowding
- Talk to your neighbors first
- Provide guidelines for owners to enforce to their renters
- Balanced solution that allows STR’s with reasonable, achievable and enforceable rules
- Any committees created should have balanced input, previous boards were weighted to have a specific outcome
- Heavily penalize “rule” harassment
- Minor regulation – registration with inspection, enforcement of current ordinances, make STR ownership easier for local owners than for huge corporations

- Realize that 1/3 for STR's without regulations and 1/3 for STR's with some regulations is still 2/3 in favor of STR's
- Assess if there really is a strain on infrastructure/fire/police services due to STR's
- Best solution would be to truly monitor whether there ARE any issues. Most times it's one complainer with no real disturbances/problems
- STR manager not necessarily on site, but a responsible party that can be easily contacted
- Establishing a licensing mechanism to manage STR's
- Limited STR's in R1 and R2 with regulations. Higher concentration in Ag and Rec districts with regulations.
- Issues handled on a case by case basis, NOT blanket regulation
- Encourage STR's to specific areas as overlay

Report submitted by Bethany Prykucki, Facilitator

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