

# Short-Term Rental Task Force Recommendations Report

January 2025

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# Short-Term Rental Task Force Established

Short-term rentals are generally understood to be any home or part of a home that is rented for a period of less than 30 days. Over the last decade, the prevalence of short-term rentals has increased significantly, driven by the success of the two major marketplace facilitators Airbnb and VRBO. According to AirDNA<sup>1</sup>, the number of short-term rental listings in the United States increased by 30% from 2019 to 2023 with more than 1.5 million listings available.

The increased number of short-term rentals in Gwinnett has prompted some residents to share concerns with County staff and members of the Board of Commissioners that short-term rentals have driven increased crime, code violations, and a loss of community. In response to these concerns, the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution on November 14, 2023, establishing the Short-term Rental Task Force with the following responsibilities:

- Serve as Community Ambassadors
- Recommend outreach ideas and participate in public forums to gather feedback on short-term rentals
- Review data from County staff related to housing, the hospitality industry, and short-term rentals
- Review alternative models and best practices to regulate short-term rentals and address resident concerns
- Consider approaches to leverage short-term rental housing to provide transitional housing

The Task Force was created for a limited time, set to disband nine months after the initial meeting. Two task force members were appointed by the Chairwoman and each District Commissioner.

## Short-Term Rental Task Force Members

Carlene Bonit, Chairwoman's Appointment
William Diehl, Chairwoman's Appointment
Juan Estrada, District 1
Soniya Momin, District 1
Edward Keiley, District 2
Kevin Power, District 2
Kaylane Davis, District 3
Katrina Fellows, District 3
Steve Brown, District 4
James Bulot, District 4

<sup>1</sup> AirDNA is a private company that specializes in data and analytics related to short-term rentals.

# Short-Term Rental Landscape in Gwinnett

## Tourism Drives Economic Activity in Gwinnett

Gwinnett draws tourists from around the world who are interested in its vibrant food scene, parks and cultural amenities, natural attractions like Lake Lanier, and its location at the heart of metro Atlanta. The Gas South District attracts nearly 800,000 visitors annually at conferences hosted at the Convention Center and shows at the Gas South Arena and Theater. Signature events in Gwinnett like the Seoul of the South Food Tour, the Run the Reagan, and the Suwanee Beer Fest bring in thousands of visitors as well.

Tourism in Gwinnett helps local businesses thrive while contributing to its tax base through sales taxes and hotel/motel taxes. It is estimated that visitors to Gwinnett spend more than \$1 billion annually at local businesses while contributing \$94 million in state and local tax revenue. Visitors often stay at one of Gwinnett's local hotels, but increasingly individuals choose to stay at a short-term rental that may offer more space, a kitchen, or other features that some hotels lack.

Short-term rentals pay hotel/motel taxes to Gwinnett through their marketplace facilitator, such as Airbnb or VRBO, which helps fund Explore Gwinnett and support the expansion of the Gas South Convention Center. In 2024, Gwinnett received nearly \$1.9 million in hotel/motel tax revenue from short-term rentals.



Hotel/Motel Tax Collections		
	2023	2024
<b>Short-term rentals</b>	\$1,344,120 (10%)	\$1,882,669 (14%)
<b>Total collections</b>	\$13,713,859	\$13,627,613

## Supply and Demand Increasing for Short-Term Rentals Nationally and Locally

National data from AirDNA shows that available short-term rental listings have increased by a total of 38% over the last three years, while demand has increased by 22%.

Like national trends, short-term rental data in Gwinnett shows that the number of listings and occupancy rates are up since 2023, which indicates that supply and demand are increasing. At 54%, the average occupancy rate in Gwinnett is 3% lower than the national average, while the average stay of three and a half days is just short of the five-day national average.

## Short-Term Rentals Are Not an Affordable Housing Option

Short-term rentals in Gwinnett are not an affordable temporary housing solution for residents in need. At an average daily rental rate of \$174, staying a month in the average short-term rental in Gwinnett would cost \$5,220, which is significantly higher than the current average rent of \$1,717 for a four-bedroom apartment. Residents would not be able to use federal rental assistance programs to stay in most short-term rentals because the maximum eligible monthly rent is \$2,000. Additionally, short-term rentals are often located within neighborhoods and do not have access to transit or other resources needed for those with temporary housing needs.

U.S Short-Term Industry Outlook*			
	2022	2023	2024
<b>Available Listings</b>	1,358,078	1,557,046	1,674,300
<b>Nights Listed (% Change)</b>	+22.3%	+8.5%	+7.3%
<b>Demand (% Change)</b>	+14.5%	+1.8%	+5.9%
<b>Occupancy</b>	58.2%	54.7%	54.0%

\*Data pulled from AirDNA with 2024 data forecast

## Gwinnett Short-Term Snapshot

1,318 Listings  
↑ 4.5%

\$174 Average  
Daily Rate  
↑ 8%

51% Occupancy Rate  
↑ 5.6%

3.5 Day  
Average Stay

# Public Input Was Critical to the Task Force Process

Short-Term Rental Task Force meetings occurred monthly and were open to the public, with two meetings advertised on social media and through County newsletters as public forums. Meetings covered the following topics:

- Presentations from Gwinnett Planning and Development, Gwinnett Police, and Explore Gwinnett related to the impact of short-term rentals in Gwinnett
- Policy approaches from cities and counties across the nation and the metro Atlanta region
- Public forums on July 24 and November 7 where residents were able to share their opinions about short-term rentals in Gwinnett and draft policy recommendations (more than 30 residents attended the first forum and more than 50 attended the second)
- Policy discussions where task force members were able to work collaboratively to identify their primary issues and policy recommendations

Task Force Meeting Schedule 2024 - 2025											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	
Kickoff Meeting – Overview											
Meeting 2 – Stakeholder Perspectives											
Meeting 3 – Intro to Regulatory Approaches											
Meeting 4 – Public Forum #1											
Meeting 5 – Discuss Policy Approaches											
Meeting 6 – Develop Draft Recommendations											
Meeting 7 – Public Forum #2											
Meeting 8 – Refine Draft Recommendations											
Meeting 9 – Review Draft Recommendations Report											
Meeting 10 – Finalize Recommendations Report and Send Report to Board of Commissioners											

# Primary Issues Identified by the Task Force

After hosting a public forum, hearing from County staff and external agencies, and reviewing available data on short-term rentals, the Task Force completed a collaborative exercise to identify the primary issues that they feel need to be addressed related to short-term rentals.

1. Commercial investors push out individual investors and are more likely to neglect properties
2. Lack of accountability for property owners and managers
3. Absentee owners neglect properties and are difficult to locate when problems arise
4. Ineffective property management of short-term rentals
5. Lack of reliable data on short-term rentals and their impact on Gwinnett
6. No process in place to proactively ensure the safety of guests
7. Community character is negatively impacted by transient neighbors through parking, noise, and other issues
8. Insufficient regulations to mitigate impacts on the community



# Task Force Policy Recommendations

Historically, Gwinnett has not regulated short-term rentals apart from conditional use standards that were adopted as part of a major update to the Unified Development Ordinance that went into effect on January 1, 2024. Current standards for short-term rentals require the following:

- Ensure there is no exterior evidence the home is being used as a short-term rental through signage or otherwise
- May only park on hard surfaces and not in the right-of-way
- Limit occupancy to no more than two adults per bedroom
- Maintain property owner or manager contact information on the premises

The Task Force considered the primary issues identified during the process related to short-term rentals, current County regulations, and the various codes and ordinances they reviewed from across the nation as they developed the following eight recommendations.

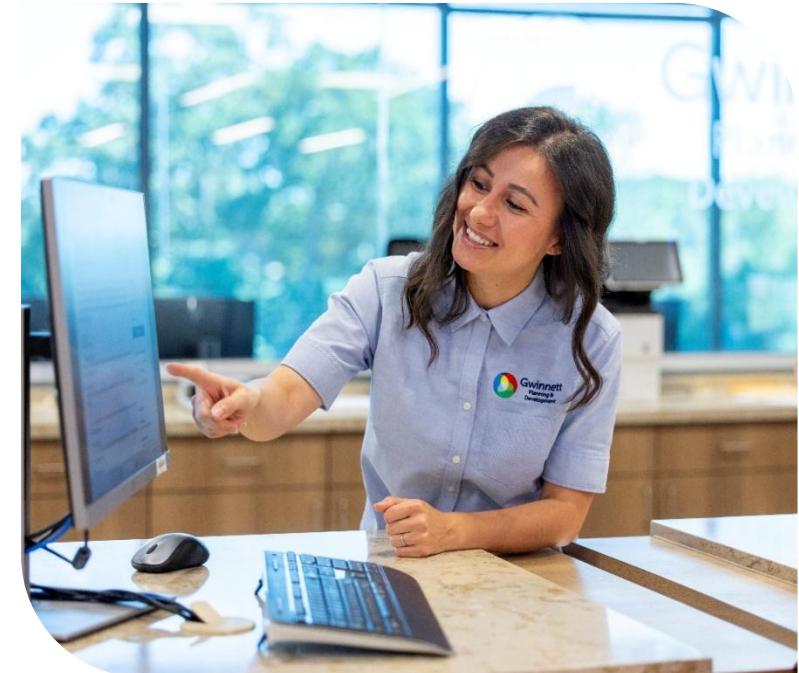
## Recommendation 1: Clearly Define Short-Term Rental

- **Recommendation** – The Unified Development Ordinance should clearly define short-term rentals as homes, apartments, dwelling units, or parts of thereof that are rented out for a period of 29 days or less.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** – Short-term rentals are currently subject to conditional use requirements in the Unified Development Ordinance, but Short-term Rental is not a defined term and has been administratively interpreted, as authorized by the Unified Development Ordinance, to mean a property rented out for a period of less than 30 days, consistent with the industry standard.



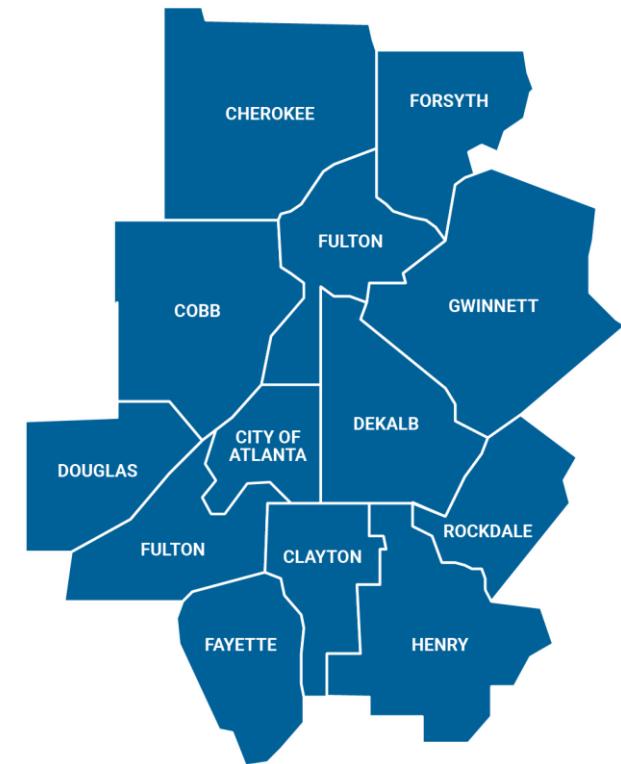
## Recommendation 2: Implement a Licensing Requirement for Short-Term Rentals

- **Recommendation** – Gwinnett should issue a license that must be renewed annually to all short-term rental owners and operators.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** – Issuing a license for short-term rentals would provide an additional enforcement mechanism for ordinance violations. It would also put short-term rental owners and operators on notice regarding County ordinances and provide reliable data on lawfully operated short-term rentals within Gwinnett.
- **Additional Policy Details:**
  - The property owner would be required to inform the County of all platforms they are listed on and to update that information regularly. They would also be required to post their license number as part of their listing on any online platform.
  - Licenses could be denied, suspended, or revoked if County ordinances are not consistently upheld.
  - The property owner should be informed in the application and on the website about short-term rental regulations in the UDO and other ordinances.
  - The property owner should be encouraged to use due diligence to determine whether their property is subject to homeowners' association covenants that restrict or prevent the use of short-term rentals.
- **Example from a Local Jurisdiction** – Cobb County and Hall County require a special short-term rental certificate or license prior to operating a short-term rental. The city of Atlanta charges an annual fee of \$150, while Hall County requires the owner to obtain a business license and pay applicable fees.



## Recommendation 3: Require a Local Agent

- **Recommendation** – Gwinnett should require that every short-term rental owner designates a local agent or operator who is responsible for managing the property and accepting citations and responsibility for code violations on the property.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** – It can be challenging to locate out-of-state and corporate owners and serve citations when code violations are found onsite. Having a local agent or operator present in Gwinnett County will help ensure timely resolution of property maintenance, nuisance, and public safety issues that may arise.
- **Additional Policy Details:**
  - The local agent's information would be required to be posted in a conspicuous place within the short-term rental so that it can be accessed by guests, law enforcement, or code enforcement.
  - Local agents should be required to maintain their business in one of the core metro Atlanta counties included in the Atlanta Regional Commission or any county that borders Gwinnett, to include Barrow, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, Henry, Rockdale, and Walton counties.
- **Local Jurisdiction Example** – Cobb County requires a local agent to be available 24/7 and customarily available within the county to conduct business and address any issues that arise.



Counties served by the Atlanta Regional Commission

## Recommendation 4: Require Interior Property Maintenance Inspections

- **Recommendation** — Gwinnett should require documentation that a certified third-party inspector has verified that the home meets IPMC standards before issuing or renewing a short-term rental license.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** — Gwinnett has adopted the International Property Maintenance Code for all rental properties, but properties are only inspected when a tenant files a complaint. Hotels and other commercial tourist accommodations are inspected regularly by the Health Department and Fire Department. To ensure short-term rental properties are safe for tenants, Gwinnett should verify that the properties are inspected for compliance with International Property Maintenance Code standards before issuing or renewing a short-term rental license.
- **Local Jurisdiction Example** — Hall County requires an inspection of the premises prior to obtaining a short-term rental license. A checklist is available on their website for hosts to review in advance of the inspection.



## Recommendation 5: Use Licensing to Ensure Compliance with County Codes

- **Recommendation** — Gwinnett should leverage the proposed short-term rental license to ensure the property and guests comply with property maintenance, zoning, noise, parking, and other county codes and ordinances.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** — Yard parking and excessive on-street parking can be an eyesore and a hazard for residents in the community. Additionally, the use of short-term rentals by large parties can be disruptive to the community. By tying limits on parking, occupancy, and other codes for short-term rentals to the owner's license, Gwinnett can limit the impact that short-term rentals have on the neighborhood.
- **Additional Policy Details**
  - Gwinnett should establish an escalating enforcement mechanism that provides for license suspensions and revocations if the property has repeat ordinance violations within a year. A "three strikes and you're out" approach could be an effective model to ensure hosts are actively maintaining their properties and proactively addressing issues with guests.

- **Local Jurisdiction Example** – Cobb County assesses escalating minimum fines of \$500 and \$750 for short-term rental ordinance violations, while the city of Atlanta assesses a minimum fine of \$500. Cobb and Atlanta revoke a short-term rental license after three violations within a year, after which the owner must wait one year to obtain a new license.

## Recommendation 6: Limit Corporate Ownership

- **Recommendation** – Gwinnett should explore legal and enforceable means to limit the number of short-term rental properties owned by corporate entities such as corporations and LLCs.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** – Corporations, LLCs, and other corporate entities can be challenging to reach and serve citations when there are issues at a property they own. Additionally, fines assessed by the Recorder's Court may not always provide a sufficient deterrent to compel appropriate maintenance, management, and controls onsite.
- **Local Jurisdiction Example** – The city of Atlanta limits any individual or corporate entity from owning more than two short-term rentals within the city.



## Recommendation 7: Enhance Short-Term Rental Data

- **Recommendation** – Gwinnett should contract with a third-party vendor to obtain regular or real-time data on the location of short-term rentals. This data can be used to ensure all short-term rentals in the County obtain the proposed short-term rental license.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** – The County currently lacks a consistent and reliable data source on the number and location of short-term rentals, making it difficult to know how many operate in Gwinnett and how they impact the surrounding community.

## Recommendation 8: Increase Enforcement and Accountability

- **Recommendation** – Gwinnett should explore operational approaches to improve enforcement of code violations at short-term rentals.
- **Additional Policy Details**
  - When property owners are non-responsive, the County should continue to pursue nuisance abatement actions and civil suits as appropriate to compel compliance.
  - Code Enforcement currently works on weekends once monthly and for special assignments. The County should assess the costs and benefits of expanding operating hours into the evenings and on weekends.
  - Gwinnett should proactively inform short-term rental hosting platforms when code violations and citations are issued.
  - The County should actively enforce when a short-term rental operates without a license, especially when that license is suspended or revoked.
- **Reason for the Policy Change** – Issuing notices of violation and citations to the Recorder's Court effectively compels most property owners to address code violations promptly. However, some absentee and/or non-responsive property owners choose not to bring their property into compliance with County codes. Using additional tools can help compel otherwise reluctant property owners to address code violations promptly.



## Report Adoption and Next Steps

This report was formally adopted by the Task Force on January 24, 2025, and the task force was dissolved effective January 25, 2025, consistent with the establishing resolution adopted by the Board of Commissioners. Going forward, Planning and Development will work with the Law Department to thoroughly vet these recommendations and draft code amendments or new ordinances, as appropriate, to implement the recommendations.