

## Frequently Asked Questions on Short-Term Rentals (STRs) & Homestays

### What is a short-term rental (STR)?

In general, a Short-Term Rental (STR) refers to a residential unit rented for less than 31 days. You may be familiar with online platforms like AirBnB or VRBO that coordinate renting STRs. Local governments may differ in how they define an STR. If you are interested in operating a STR in Lancaster City, then the unit must meet the City's Zoning Ordinance definition of STR, which was adopted on May 10, 2022. See the following definition below or read the new ordinance here

<https://ecode360.com/LA1674/laws/LF1558445.pdf>.

*"A fully furnished **single-family dwelling** that is rented on a short-term basis by written contract to registered guests visiting the Lancaster area and that is not occupied by an owner or manager. Guests have use of the facilities as provided for in any contract or agreement with the owner or management company, and no services, such as meals or house cleaning, are provided to the guests."*

Additional conditions apply (see below). The definition of single-family dwelling can be found in the definitions section of the Zoning Ordinance: <https://ecode360.com/27422914>.

### What is a homestay and how is it different from a STR?

While a STR is required to be a fully furnished single-family dwelling rented to a single party, a homestay allows homeowners to rent individual bedrooms within their single-family dwelling. Many STR platforms offer a mix of both options. If you are interested in operating a homestay in Lancaster City, then the unit must meet the City's Zoning Ordinance definition of Homestay, which was adopted on May 10, 2022.

*"A single-family dwelling unit wherein a maximum of two bedrooms are rented by written contract on a short-term basis and where the dwelling unit is concurrently occupied by a property owner."*

Additional conditions apply. See below.

### Does the City of Lancaster allow STRs, including homestays?

Yes, the City of Lancaster does permit STRs in specific zoning districts and under certain conditions. STRs are considered a commercial service, so they are not permitted in most residential districts. You can check to see what zoning district your property is in by visiting the [City's interactive Zoning Map](#). Alternatively, go to [cityoflanasterpa.com](http://cityoflanasterpa.com), scroll to the bottom, click on MAPS, and go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> page for the Zoning Map.

#### SHORT-TERM RENTAL ZONES, PARKING & OTHER CONDITIONS

STRs are permitted by right in zones RO, MU, CB1, CB, C1, and C2 provided they meet the below conditions and also meet the following parking requirement: 1 parking space per dwelling, except that dwellings with 4 or more bedrooms shall provide 1 additional space per bedroom. All parking spaces must be off-street parking.



Mandatory conditions for all STRs:

- (a) The dwelling must be registered with the City of Lancaster as a TRANSIENT DWELLING rental unit, with inspection of the property by a City Housing Inspector prior to registration approval.
- (b) A property manager must be identified, and the name and contact information shall be provided to the City's Housing Unit.
- (c) The maximum length of stay per registered party shall be 30 consecutive days.
- (d) The entire dwelling shall be rented in the name of one individual, who represents the entire family or group renting the dwelling during the reserved time period.
- (e) The number of guests in one party shall not exceed two adults per bedroom.
- (f) No exterior or interior sign intended to be seen by the public shall be permitted.

#### HOMESTAY ZONES & CONDITIONS

All homestays are permitted by right in zones R3, R4, RO, MU, CB1, CB, C1, and C2 provided they meet the below conditions and also meet the following parking requirement: 1 parking space per 2 bedrooms dedicated as Homestay. Fractions of 0.5 or more shall be interpreted as 1 parking space, effectively requiring 1 space per Homestay room.

Mandatory conditions for all STRs:

- (a) The homeowner shall serve as the sole property manager and provide contact information to the City's Housing Unit.
- (b) The property owner must be residing in the dwelling unit for the duration of the rental.
- (c) The maximum length of stay per registered party shall not exceed 30 consecutive days.
- (d) The number of guests in one party shall not exceed 2 adults per bedroom.
- (e) No exterior or interior sign intended to be seen by the public shall be permitted.
- (f) Guests must have use of a bathroom and kitchen for the duration of the rental.
- (g) Structures with only 2 bedrooms may only dedicate one bedroom as a homestay

#### **How do I apply for a STR or homestay in the City of Lancaster?**

If you're interested in registering a STR in the City, then you will need to obtain a Certificate of Zoning Compliance and a City-issued rental license.

If your unit is within a permitted zoning district (see above), then you'll need to submit an application for Zoning Compliance. Find the application on the City's Zoning website and go to Documents & Resources at the bottom of the page: [cityoflanasterpa.com/zoning-info/](http://cityoflanasterpa.com/zoning-info/)

If your unit is NOT within a permitted zoning district or if your unit cannot meet the conditions stated above, then you'll need to submit a request for a variance. The Zoning Hearing Board is a board of 3 city residents, and they have the authority to grant relief from requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Find the application on the City's Zoning website and go to Documents & Resources at the bottom of the page: [cityoflanasterpa.com/zoning-info/](http://cityoflanasterpa.com/zoning-info/)



In either case above, you'll also need to complete an application for rental property registration. Find the application on the City's Rental Property Licenses site and click on Application for Rental Property Registration: [cityoflanasterpa.com/rental-property-licenses/](http://cityoflanasterpa.com/rental-property-licenses/). Make sure you apply for a Transient Dwelling License.

If you still have questions about STRs and homestays, then please contact Zoning Officer Jameel Thrash to discuss: [JaThrash@CityofLancasterPA.com](mailto:JaThrash@CityofLancasterPA.com) or (717) 291-4736

**What if a STR or Homestay is not meeting the City's ordinance?**

If you continue to operate a non-compliant unit, then you may be subject to enforcement actions by the City, including fines, unit condemnation, and court proceedings. Please contact the City as soon as possible to discuss.

**What if I suspect an unpermitted STR or homestay is operating in my neighborhood?**

Please contact the City's Zoning Officer Jameel Thrash with details and documentation: [JaThrash@CityofLancasterPA.com](mailto:JaThrash@CityofLancasterPA.com) or (717) 291-4736. The City of Lancaster is using proprietary software to track STRs and homestays across the city.