

A tropical beach scene with turquoise water in the foreground, a dense line of palm trees in the middle ground, and a clear blue sky with light clouds in the background.

Whitewater Township Short-Term Rental Ordinance

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Regulating STRs for Community Safety and Harmony

Presented by - Rachel Steelman & Eric Johnson

A black and white photograph of two hands shaking, symbolizing agreement or partnership. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with fingers interlaced. The background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient.

Purpose of the Ordinance - Balancing Community and Property Rights

Regulate Short-Term Rentals to:

- Protect peace, safety, and quality of life**
- Preserve rural character of Whitewater**
- Respect ALL property owners' rights**

Registration and Permitting - Compliance and Transparency

- All STRs must register with Township
- Permit renewal every 5 years
- Fee collected to cover administrative costs
- Application requirements:
 - STR address, owner/operator contact info
 - Local Contact Person details
 - Maximum occupancy, site plan (parking, trash)
 - Agreement to comply with ordinance
- Permits non-transferable

General Operating Standards - Community-Friendly Operations

- **Maximum Occupancy :**
 - Under 5 acres: 2 persons/bedroom + 2 additional
 - 5+ acres: 2 persons/bedroom + 4 additional
 - Recreational Vehicles (RV's): Not for STR use
 - Events require Temporary Use Permit per Article 5.06
- **Noise :** No excessive noise 10:00 PM–7:00 AM; Noise Ordinance 39 provided
- **Parking :** Off-street only, no road obstruction per Article 9
- **Waste Management :** Secure trash/recycling receptacles per Ordinance 38
- **Lighting & Signage :** Comply with Township regulations per Article 11 & 14
- **Nuisances :** No excessive traffic, odors, or disturbances per Article 2

Safety Requirements - Guest and Community Safety

- **Smoke detectors per building code**
- **Carbon monoxide detectors per building code**
- **At least one Class B fire extinguisher**
- **Emergency info pamphlet:**
 - **911 contact**
 - **Local Contact Person**
 - **STR address**

Local Contact Person Responsibilities - Accountability and Responsiveness

- Available 24/7 for complaints/emergencies
- Authorized to resolve issues
- Contact info to neighbors within 300 feet
- Residing within 30 miles of STR property

Enforcement and Penalties - Fair and Firm

- Enforced by Zoning Administrator
- Violation process:
 1. Informal written warning
 2. Formal written warning
 3. One-year probation
 4. Hearing; possible permit suspension/revocation
- Legal action for ongoing violations



Application

- Contact Information
 - Property Owner
 - Operator/Manager
 - Local Contact 24/7 Person
- Occupancy
- Site Plan (parking and trash)
- Acknowledgement and acceptance of ordinances associated with owning and operating an STR
- Official Use Space

Whitewater Township Short Term Rental (STR) Application

Date of Application: _____

Address of STR: _____

Name, Address, and
Contact info of the Owner _____

Name, Address, and
Contact info of Operator
(If different) _____

Contact Information for
the designated Local
Contact Person: _____

Maximum Occupancy: _____

Have you included a site plan showing parking areas and trash receptacles?	YES or NO	You may draw or write the site plan on the back of this application.
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By signing below you acknowledge that you have read and agree to the requirements outlined in Article XX - Short Term Rentals, and all other applicable and referenced Articles within the Whitewater Township Ordinances (General Ordinances and Zoning Ordinances).

Signature: _____

For Whitewater Township Official Use:

Permit Number (#) _____

Issuance Date: _____

Renewal Date: _____

Short Term Rental Permits are valid for 5 years from issuance.
Allow up to 30 days processing of renewals.

Whitewater Township Officials Signature: _____

Signed Copy Sent to: _____

On date: _____

Via (mail, electronically, etc): _____

Brochure

Required to:

- **Inform Guests**
 - Including being required to depart for excessive noise
- **Build Relationships**
 - Local Contact Person
 - Our Community
 - Our Township Rules
- **Safety**

Whitewater Township Short-Term Rental Guide



Welcome, Guest!

Thank you for choosing our beautiful Whitewater Township for your stay. We hope you enjoy the peace and tranquility of our community.

Your Local Contact:

For any non-emergency issues, questions about the property, or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact your Local Contact Person at the number listed on the front. They are available to assist you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Keeping Our Community Peaceful: Noise Guidelines

We cherish the quiet nature of Whitewater Township, and so do our long-term residents. Please be aware that the **Whitewater Township Noise Ordinance** is strictly enforced.

Quiet Hours: 10:00 PM - 7:00 AM

During these hours, please be especially mindful of noise levels. Amplified sound that can be heard beyond the property boundaries is prohibited at all times, but particularly during quiet hours.

Thank you for your courtesy and respect towards your neighbors. Excessive noise can unfortunately lead to a request for departure by the following business day. Let's work together to ensure a pleasant stay for everyone!



Quick Reference:

Property Address:

Your Local Contact (Available 24/7)

Name

Phone

Email

- **Trash Day:**

- **Trash Receptacle Location:**

Emergency Contacts:

In Case of Emergency: Dial **911**

- **Emergency (Police, Fire, Ambulance): 911**
- **Grand Traverse County Non-Emergency (Sheriff):**
(231) 995-5000
- **Local Hospital Information:**
Munson Medical Center
(231) 935-5000

We hope you have a wonderful and relaxing stay in Whitewater Township!

Brochure Continued

- Noise Ordinance
- Welcoming while encouraging respect for our community
- Area photos

Enjoy Our Rural Charm:

Whitewater Township offers a unique blend of natural beauty and peaceful living. We encourage you to explore responsibly and respect private property and our environment.

Thank You for Being a Considerate neighbor!

Your cooperation in following these guidelines helps us maintain the special character of our community for everyone to enjoy. We hope to welcome you back again soon!



WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP NOISE ORDINANCE ORDINANCE #39

Adopted: November 22, 2008

THE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF WHITEWATER, GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY,
MICHIGAN ORDAINS:

Section 1

No person within the township shall cause a noise disturbance, which is defined as sound created by human activity with or without the use of any device, which by reason of its volume, intensity, location, or time of day impairs the health, welfare, or peace of another person of normal human sensibilities.

Section 2 Prohibited Acts

The following acts and activities are declared to be noise disturbances and are prohibited. This enumeration shall not be deemed exclusive.

- The playing of any radio, television, phonograph, other sound reproduction device, or musical instrument in such a manner or at such a volume as to be sufficiently audible to annoy or disturb the quiet, comfort, or repose of persons in the vicinity.
- The keeping of any animal or bird which, by causing frequent or long continued noise, shall disturb the comfort and repose of any person in the vicinity.
- The use of any motor vehicle, including motorcycles, in such a manner as to create a disturbing noise, including, but not limited to, the screeching of tires and the discharge into the open air of exhaust from the engine without a sufficient muffler.
- Blowing or other raucous or boisterous behavior for an unreasonable length of time.

Section 3

The Grand Traverse County Sheriff and his deputies are authorized as local enforcement officers of this ordinance.

Section 4

- A violation of this ordinance is a municipal civil infraction, subject to a maximum fine of \$500.00 plus court costs.
- Any person who refuses to abate a noise disturbance upon the demand of an authorized local enforcement officer, interferes with the officer's enforcement of the ordinance, or retaliates against another who has made complaint of a noise disturbance is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by maximum 90 days in jail and a fine of \$500.00 plus court costs.

Section 5

Exempted from this ordinance is any activity defined as a "farm operation" by the Michigan Right to Farm Act, 1980 P.A. 93, MCL 286.471 et seq.

Section 6

Nothing in this ordinance impairs or precludes a separate cause of action provided by statute or common law for conduct prohibited herein.

Section 7

The provisions of this ordinance are severable and if any part is declared void or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining parts shall remain in force.

Section 8

This ordinance shall take effect thirty (30) days after publication.

Effective: December 28, 2008



Additional Information:

https://www.whitewatertownshipmi.gov/uploads/2/1/9/6/21966412/general_ordinance_no._39_-_whitewater_township_noise_ordinance.pdf

Possible Upgrades to Visitors Guide:

Improve Visitors Guide to include educational materials/pamphlets/postings on waterfront specific concerns such as:

- Boating safety and regulations
- Waterfront etiquette and courtesy guidelines
- Invasive species prevention
- Boat ramp and boat wash requirements and locations
- Local environmental regulations

Reduction in Litigation

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Significant Impact on Blight



The ability to offer a personal home or property for rent has allowed for otherwise unaffordable improvements to family homes and significant improvements to several previously blighted properties.



Public Comment - Those Opposed to STRs

Would adopting this proposed STR ordinance better protect your rights, property, and livelihood compared to the current situation?

Public Comment - STR Supporters Without Regulation

If faced with a choice between a complete ban on owning or operating a STR and accepting a STR ordinance with restrictions, could you support the ordinance to balance your rights with the concerns of your neighbors?

Article 21 Ordinance Amendment Process: How this works

Completed

- Public presents proposed changes for PC consideration with application fee. (4/24)
- Planning Commission notices and conducts a Public Hearing (8/6 and again 8/26)

Next Steps

- Planning Commission shall send TB recommendations for or against adoption
- Township Board shall review proposal and approve, deny, or return to PC for adjustments.
- If residents are not satisfied with TB decision they can take any amendment to vote of the people by Referendum.

Best Course of Action

1. PC recommends approval of this ordinance
2. TB Approves this Ordinance - Enabling implementation for 2026
3. Township begins Evaluation Process
 - i. Monitor ordinance effectiveness
 - ii. Track issues and challenges
 - iii. Encourage resident input.
4. Fall 2026, Amend Ordinance as indicated by community feedback.



Potential Issues to Review After First-Year Implementation

- Minimum Stay Requirements
- Change in License Fees
- Permitting duration, does 5 years work?
- Local Contact Person response time
- Maximum # of STRs in Whitewater Township:
 - % of STRs in each district or
 - % overall or
 - Evaluate and record specific neighborhoods that have an HOA that restricts STRs
- Lakefront STRs - Evaluate first and second tier waterfront STR for any additional or unique issues specific to that location.

Laughter is the best medicine!

- ❖ Children keep getting mixed signals. As a kid they're told not to talk to strangers, then as an adult they are paying strangers money to stay in their house.
- ❖ How many ants do you need to rent out an Airbnb? Tenants.