



FAQ: Tourist Rooming Houses

What is a Tourist Rooming House?

City of Sturgeon Bay Municipal Code 20.03 defines a Tourist Rooming House as the following:

A dwelling unit in which sleeping accommodations are offered for pay to tourists or transients for periods of less than one calendar month or 30 days, whichever is less, counting the first day of the rental and not counting the last day of the rental. It does not include a boardinghouse not accommodating tourists or transients, or bed & breakfast establishments. These facilities are sometimes referred to as vacation rentals.

If you are advertising your dwelling on AirB&B, VRBO or any other similar site, chances are you are operating a tourist rooming house.

Why do I need a permit?

The State of Wisconsin and the City of Sturgeon Bay have the best interests in protecting both the renters and the landlord. By having a permit, we are ensuring that public safety for the property and the neighborhood is taken into serious consideration.

What do I need to provide when applying for a permit?

The City requires the following:

- State of Wisconsin Tourist Rooming House Permit number
- State of Wisconsin Sales and Use Tax Permit number
- Door County Tourism Zone Permit number

How long is a permit good for?

New permits are good for one year, with renewal permits being good for two years. This way, the City can address any concerns brought up when permits are being issued.

What if City staff denies my permit?

In the event that staff denies your permit, you may appeal that denial to the City Plan Commission.

Is there a fee to apply for a permit?

Currently there is no fee associated with this permit. However, please be aware that this may change in the next several months.

Do I have to live within the City if I'm renting a tourist rooming house?

No. However, you must reside within Door, Kewaunee, or Brown Counties when the dwelling is being rented. If you are unable to reside within the aforementioned counties, a valid contract with a management company must be presented when applying for the City permit.

Can I put signage on my tourist rooming house?

Yes. Depending on what the zoning is for the tourist rooming house, you can have a sign on it. Please check with the Community Development Department for the proper sign permit and regulations.

What if I live in the dwelling during the period of rental?

If you reside in the dwelling during the period of the rental, you do not need a tourist rooming house permit. However, the State of Wisconsin and the City of Sturgeon Bay recognize these facilities as Bed & Breakfast establishments, even though a meal may not be served during the stay. Proper permits must be taken out through the State of Wisconsin and the City for Bed & Breakfasts. Please contact the City Clerk regarding this at 920-746-2900.

What happens if I don't get a permit?

The City wants to ensure that everyone who operates a tourist rooming house is properly permitted to do so. If you fail to receive a permit and continue to operate, the City may impose daily fines. As always, the City is hoping to be proactive in this licensing procedure, and wishes to avoid any fines.

I have questions about this, who do I contact?

The Community Development Department oversees the permitting process, you can contact Ryan Kernosky, the City Zoning Administrator, at 920-746-2010 M-F, 8-4:30 or by emailing him at rkernosky@sturgeonbaywi.org.