



Ellsworth
The FRIENDLY CITY

Short-Term Rental

Report from August 10, 2026, Listening Session

Listening Session Agenda

Welcome

City Manager, Charlie Pearce

Data Share & Where We Are Today

Code Officer, Robert Grant

Citizen Input

City Planner, Brittany Merrill

Next Steps, Wrap-up

City Community Development Team

BY THE NUMBERS



STRs

2016

200 – 300 in Ellsworth

2026

700 - 1,000 in Ellsworth

\$345

Estimated Average Daily Rate

\$30,300

Average Annual Revenue / Unit

Listening Session Attendees

43

Total Signed In

18

Short-Term Rental Hosts

25

Not STR Host

135

Completed Survey on Paper or Online

Attendee Comments

- **Loss of long-term housing stock:**

STRs are converting owner-occupied and long-term rental homes into short-term units. In some cases, this changes the character of entire neighborhoods, and some feel contributes to the housing shortage and spike in home prices.

- **Neighborhood disruption / quality of life:**

Complaints of noise and light pollution, increased traffic, overtourism, and drug use tied to STR guests, undermining residential neighborhoods.

- **Strain on infrastructure & unfair cost burden:**

Concerns about septic system overuse & failures, road conditions, and taxes & fees not matching the services or enforcement needed to manage STR.

- **Economic necessity & affordability:**

Many owners said STR income is what lets them afford rising taxes, mortgages, and upkeep, and keep family properties they'd otherwise have to sell. Several landlords who offer both long and short-term properties stated that the revenue from STRs contributes to their bottom line and allows them to offer long-term rentals at a more affordable price point.

- **Local economic benefit / tourism:**

Guests spend money at Ellsworth restaurants and businesses, generate tourism, and support jobs. Some owners provide local "guidebooks" to steer visitors to town businesses.

- **Self-regulation is already working:**

Hosts argued the industry polices itself: booking platforms have built-in safety checks and reviews, bad hosts/guests get removed, and most STRs are owner-operated, not corporate — so added regulation is unnecessary "not broke, don't fix it".

STR Survey Overview

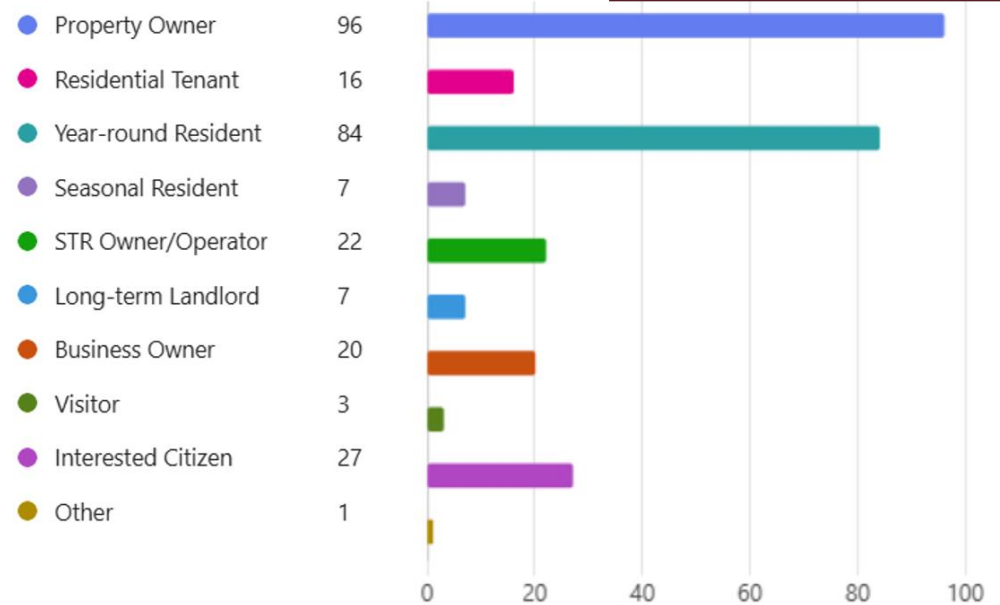
Community Development staff developed and administered a survey to gather citizen input around the potential governance of short-term rentals in Ellsworth. A digital version of the survey was posted online on the Code Enforcement webpage on August 5th and promoted through traditional and social media. Paper copies of the survey were shared at the listening session and available at City Hall from August 5th through the survey close date of September 1st.

Respondents Weighed In On

DEMOGRAPHICS | GENERAL THOUGHTS | SAFETY STANDARDS FEES & ADMINISTRATION | NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER | NEXT STEPS

Respondent Demographics & General Thoughts

1. What best describes you? (Check all that apply)



63% Live Near a STR

44% Have Never Stayed in a STR

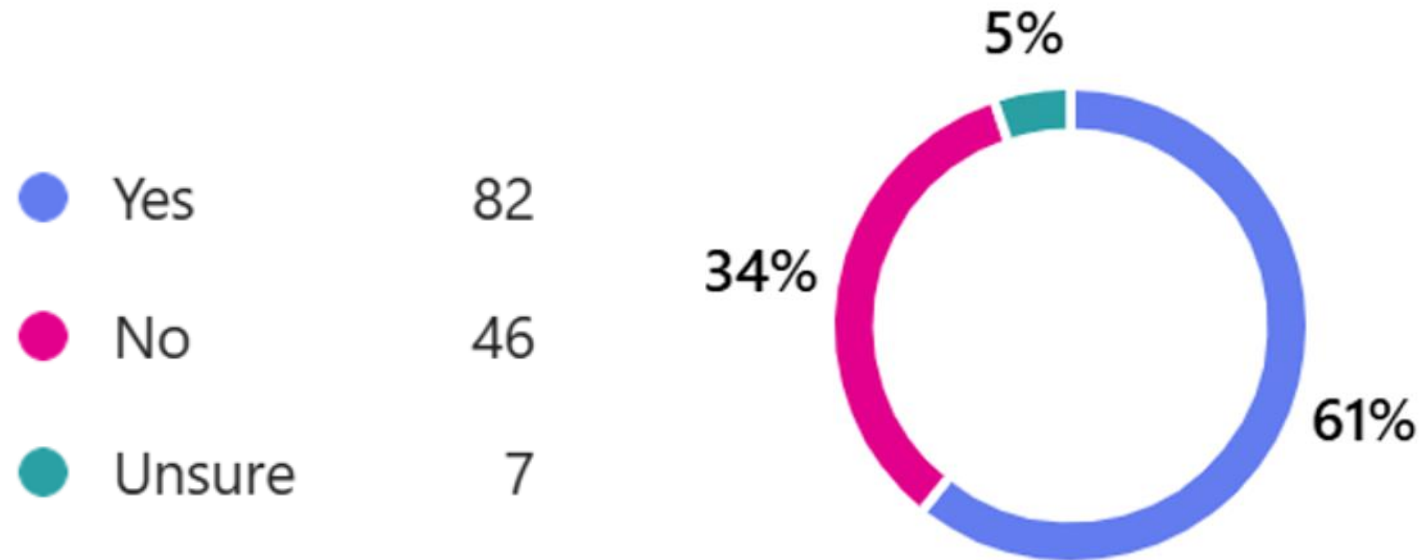
35% Feel Very Positive About STRs in General

30% Encourage More STRs in Ellsworth

28% Feel Ellsworth STR Growth Should be Managed

32% Feel STRs #s in Ellsworth Should be Reduced

61% Feel that Ellsworth Should Require STRs to Register



INSPECTIONS

25 Respondents Support a One-time Initial Inspection of STRs

44 Respondents Support Annual Inspections

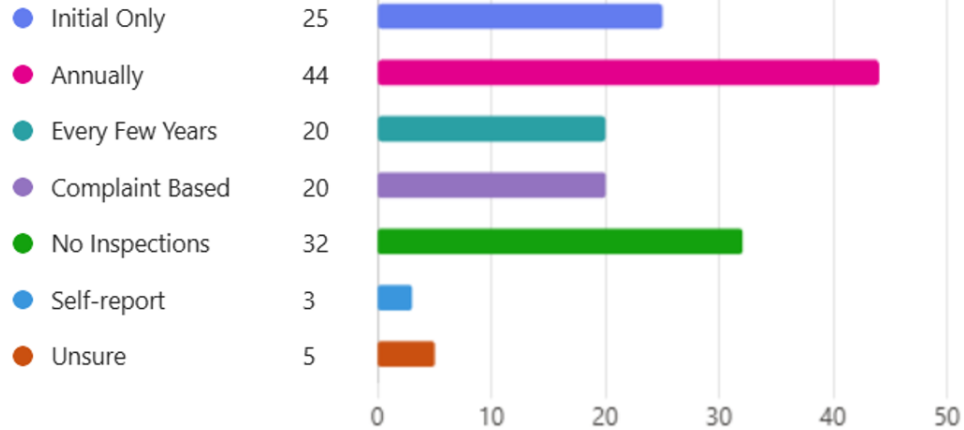
20 Respondents Support Inspections Every Few Years

20 Feel That Inspections Should be Complaint-based

32 Are Opposed to Any inspections

Safety Standards and Administration

Should the City Conduct Inspections?



Feelings About FEES

58% The City Should Charge Fees for Administration

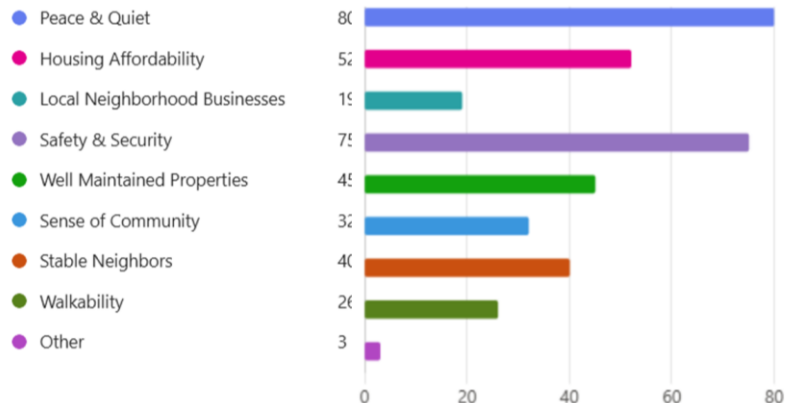
87% Some Form of Annual Fee is Appropriate

33% Support Reduced Fees for Owner-occupied STRs

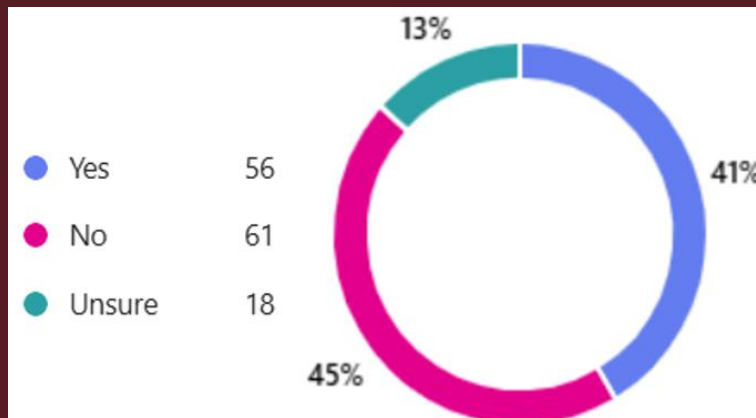
82% Maine Should Share a Portion of Collected Lodging Tax

Neighborhood Characteristics & Integrity

Top 3 Neighborhood Characteristics



Have STRs Impacted Your Neighborhood?



Top 3 Priorities for Managing STRs



Survey Comments

The STR owners should have a limit or a limit in a neighborhood radius. Our historic homes make the town charming. How will we reconcile as a city when no actual residents can live there? Also, when you have small children, you have no idea who is coming and going and how safe you are in your own home?

People who don't reside in their STRs for a certain amount of time in the year should be heavily taxed. Vacant homes all winter while hard working locals can't buy a house is super lame.

Make sure that rules are fair across the board. Hotels, long term rentals and STR's. Keep an eye out for places that claim to be long term but are not they are the places that give bad names to the people doing it right. Also remember most of these places would sit empty if not utilized for STR. They either have owners who live in them in the winter or would cost so much to rent long term no one who needs housing could afford them. Final thought, the city should look into a vacancy tax for people who buy properties and then let them sit empty. We have multiple of these on our road.

We have been a STR property owner for 3 years and we have met the most wonderful families and people. They are dining, shopping, attending local events boosting the local economy. We limit the guest to six people. We installed a new septic system. We have all the safety features such as fire extinguisher, smoke alarm, carbon monoxide detectors, lit walkways, liability policy, and appliance instrumentation manual. We are retirees and the extra income pays high lake front taxes, make improvements to a cabin built in 1944, pay utilities bills, etc. We live next door and we love introducing the guest to the beautiful Branch Lake and hosting this amazing area.

While I feel it would be acceptable for the City to have some oversight in making sure the STR's are compliant to applicable codes, that is where I feel the oversight should stop. The market can regulate the rest. If the availability of STR's does not meet demand, the people that rent them will go elsewhere. With them goes their money, so any regulation needs to be very well thought out as there are very real consequences surrounding this topic. Real world consequences that go far beyond the City's borders.

Survey Comments

Please keep in mind that neighborhoods are more than places to count 'heads in beds'—they are communities where people live year-round. I support property owners' rights and recognize that short-term rentals are important to our local economy. I do feel there is also a responsibility to preserve safe, stable residential neighborhoods. As the number of STRs increases, there is a gradual loss of community, more traffic and parking issues, and a feeling that neighborhoods are becoming commercial rather than residential - this has occurred on Chapel St. over the past 6+ years. All policies should strive to balance tourism with the quality of life of full-time residents.

Renting a room in one's own property or renting out a property you've owned for a long time doesn't take a way from the available housing stock. Buying previously long-term rented or owned properties to turn into STRs does take away from available housing stock and should be heavily regulated, if allowed at all.

Make STR permits mandatory, cap total STR permits issued in the city, and fine anyone with a STR that doesn't have a permit.

Not your concern. Stay out of private owner rights

Stop overregulating everything

This city relies on tourism. Don't try to fix something that isn't broken. We are a destination for investment currently. If you try to regulate STR we will no longer be

Please keep this unregulated! We don't need to spend 40K on software. STR owners have safety features, lighting, etc., because their HOMEOWNER POLICIES already require this! And homeowners' policies are crazy expensive. Stay out of our pockets, please! We are busting our butts to live and stay here in our homes.

Consider stop wasting tax dollars, consider an incentive for builders and contractors to build affordable housing, messing with STRs is not going to fix the affordable housing problem.

You don't really care what people say with this survey. You can say that you had public comment and that will make YOU happy



Questions?

City of Ellsworth Economic and Community Development Team

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