



Board of County Commissioners
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On April 8, 2024, Jefferson County enacted a moratorium for one year to pause land use applications for short-term rentals. The moratorium applies only to permit applications for Department of Community Development (DCD) approval of hospitality establishments per section [18.20.210](#) of the Jefferson County Code (JCC), and specifically for subsection (3), transient residences or transient guest houses (accessory dwelling units) proposed for short-term accommodations, defined as fewer than 30 days.

The purpose of the moratorium is to evaluate whether to change existing regulations. The pause is to enable completion of a public planning process to consider amendments to the development regulations that govern short-term rentals. Kate Dean, Chair of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), commented that, "We continue to be concerned about the availability of affordable housing in Jefferson County. That is why the Commissioners declared a housing emergency in 2017 when for-rent vacancy was one percent or less. Additionally, the University of Washington College of Built Environment currently ranks Jefferson County as the second-least affordable County in Washington based on median home prices compared to wages."

Information suggests that there may be over 400 short-term rentals in unincorporated Jefferson County operating without the required land use permits. This moratorium will allow adoption of new regulations, if any, before processing a substantial set of short-term rental applications under current rules. One concern is that without adequate land use regulation of short-term rentals, there may be life and safety concerns or impacts to neighbors.

The moratorium ordinance requires County staff to complete a workplan in which DCD will lead a public process to assess and prepare a draft ordinance with possible recommended revisions to the development code. There will be opportunity for public participation during the review process before the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. "The ordinance gives staff a year to complete this process, but we're aiming to get a proposal on the table for consideration and action sooner than that," said Community Development Director Josh Peters.

Chief Strategy Officer Brent Butler will present to the Jefferson County Planning Commission on May 1, 2024 to review comments received about short-term rentals during a series of three public meetings in March in each of the county's commissioner districts. The Planning Commission agenda will include a set of preliminary options for potential code amendments. Planning Commission meeting information may be found at this webpage: www.co.jefferson.wa.us/580/Planning-Commission.

While the planning process continues, unpermitted vacation rentals will continue to be considered low priority for code compliance, unless there are life-safety concerns or other code violations on the property that warrant code compliance action. Additionally, public nuisance complaints to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office will be managed in the same way during the moratorium as before.

According to DCD Director Peters, following adopting of any new rules, there will be a grace period for operators of vacation rental businesses to apply for hospitality establishment permits before initiation of an enforcement program.

The moratorium ordinance can be found on the county's homepage: www.co.jefferson.wa.us.

A public hearing will be held within 60 days of passage of the moratorium ordinance to allow for public testimony, as required by state law.