



Short Term Rental License Administrative Procedures

These Administrative Procedures address the requirements for obtaining a Short Term Rental (STR) License, which will be issued by the Community Development Agency Planning Division. Marin County generally has three requirements for operating STRs:

1. **STR License**, issued by CDA (unless specifically exempt);
2. **Business License**, issued by the Department of Finance (DOF); and
3. **Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT) Certificate**, issued by DOF.

For those seeking approval to operate a STR, obtaining a STR License through the Planning Division is the first requirement. A Business License and TOT Certificate are the second and third requirements and can be obtained from the Marin County Department of Finance (DOF).

Pursuant to Marin County Code, section 5.41.050, these administrative procedures set forth the process to apply for, obtain, maintain, monitor, and renew a STR License from the Planning Division. Refer to Table 1 for more information about the unincorporated areas with caps on the number of STR Licenses and STR operating requirements. These Administrative Procedures supplement, and should be interpreted to be consistent with, the provisions of Marin County Code Chapter 5.41. In the event of any inconsistency, the provisions of Chapter 5.41 govern.

Marin County Code Chapter 5.41 sets forth requirements for STRs in the unincorporated areas of Marin County, and generally requires property owners that advertise or rent a unit or a portion of a unit of property for less than 30 days to obtain a STR license, although there are exceptions as outlined below.

STR Questions?

If you have questions about your STR License, please feel free to contact CDA at str@marincounty.gov.

For any questions related to your Business License or Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), please reach out to the Department of Finance at businesslicense@marincounty.gov or tot@marincounty.gov, as they handle all matters related to business licensing and tax collection.

STR License Exceptions

A hotel, motel, agricultural homestay, bed and breakfast inn (B&B), or campground does not require a STR License. A STR unit located on an agriculturally zoned property that is at least ten acres in size and where the property's primary use is commercial agriculture also does not need a STR License. If you fall into one of these exceptions, the DOF will require that you sign a [Zoning Compliance Acknowledgement](#) and submit it to the Planning Division before they will issue you a Business License.

STR License Restrictions

A STR License will not be issued for any of the following:

- A property where there is no existing legal residential unit.
- A structure subject to a recorded governmental restriction, including covenants or agreements for an affordable housing unit, agricultural employee unit, or farmworker housing.
- Recreation vehicles, structures without foundations, and non-residential areas of buildings.
- Pursuant to State law, certain accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are restricted from obtaining STR licenses, including units that were created after January 1, 2020, that meet the criteria for a statewide ADU exemption. The term “created” refers to the date that an application was first submitted to the Community Development Agency. If you are applying to use an ADU as an STR, Community Development Agency staff are available to help you understand the ADU regulations and determine whether the ADU is restricted for use as a STR.

Initial STR License

All STR owners or their agents must obtain a STR License from the Community Development Agency, Planning Division. To obtain STR License approval, STR owners or their agents must demonstrate compliance with the requirements outlined in Chapter 5.41 of the Marin County Code. The CDA recognizes that some of the standards outlined in Chapter 5.41 may require a property owner to obtain other permits to bring their property into compliance (for example, septic system improvements). Therefore, STR Licenses can be issued with conditions of approval to provide time to comply with applicable STR requirements. All STR Licenses are valid for two-year terms, meaning they must be renewed every two years or they will expire.

STR License Wait List Process

The CDA will maintain STR License wait lists for townships where the number of STR License applicants exceed the number of available licenses for that area, or when the total number of license applicants exceed the number of available licenses countywide. STR Licenses for applicants on the wait list shall be issued in the order applications were received.

Once there is an opening for a license, the next property owner on the wait list will be contacted and informed that they can submit a license application. The property owner will then have up to 60 days to submit a STR license application. If they do not submit the license application by that deadline, then the next property owner on the wait list will be contacted and given the opportunity to submit a short term rental license application.

The total number of STR Licenses allowed in unincorporated Marin County is limited to 1,200, excluding Dillon Beach. In addition to the overall countywide cap, there are caps placed on certain townships, mostly located in West Marin. The caps are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Community Caps

Township	Allowable Number of STR Licenses
Bolinas	54
Dillon Beach	204
Fallon	3
Forest Knolls	8
Inverness	86
Lagunitas	4
Marshall	27
Muir Beach	19
Muir Woods Park	19
Nicasio	8
Olema	3
Petaluma	2
Point Reyes Station	26
San Geronimo	7
Stinson Beach	192
Tomales	11
Valley Ford	1
Woodacre	8

STR License Application Process

STR Owners or their agents must apply for an STR License through the CDA's Planning Portal by completing the online application and submitting the required fees and associated license materials.

Under certain circumstances when technical review is necessary, the Planning Division may refer an application to a variety of public agencies including the Marin County Department of Public Works, the Community Development Agency's Environmental Health Services Division, the local fire department, and water and sanitary districts.

The review process for a new STR License will normally involve the following eight steps:

1. A STR License application along with the required fees and materials will be submitted for review.
2. Planning Division staff will conduct a preliminary review of the application materials and request any additional information that is necessary. The goal is that staff completes this preliminary review in 30 working days.
3. Once the preliminary review is complete and any additional application materials have been submitted, the application may be referred to other departments for their review.
4. The Planning Division or another department may identify additional information that needs to be submitted for an application to be complete. Once applicants have been notified of the information necessary, they will have 90 days to submit those application materials unless the Planning Division grants them a 90-day extension. Once the resubmittal period and any extension period have lapsed, the application will automatically expire.
5. Once all the information has been submitted and reviewed by Planning staff and other departments, the application will be evaluated for eligibility to receive a license.
6. An application that is complete, has been reviewed by relevant departments, and deemed eligible for a STR License will be formally accepted and issued a STR License.
7. Once an STR License has been issued, the applicant must comply with any conditions of approval.
8. The Planning Division will notify surrounding properties that the license has been issued.

STR License Submittal Requirements

Included in Chapter 5.41 (and detailed in the STR License Application Submittal Requirements form that will be provided to property owners when they are able to apply for a STR License) is an explanation of items that must be submitted to the Planning Division at the time an STR owner or their agent applies for a license.

Septic Systems and Wells

In the event that the STR is served by a private septic system, then that system must be documented with the Community Development Agency Environmental Health Services Division or other appropriate public agency, shall be inspected for proper operation by an approved licensed professional, and shall be sized appropriately for the short term rental and any other combined use.

The Marin County Environmental Health Services has developed a septic inspection form that must be filled out and submitted as part of a STR license application.

In the event that the STR is served by a private water supply (well or spring), the property owner will need to possess a domestic water supply permit from the Marin Community Development Agency Environmental Health Services Division or other appropriate public agency and prove potability with a current bacteriological test.

STR Property Owner Responsibility After STR License Issuance

It is the property owner's responsibility to ensure that their rental is following the standards outlined in Chapter 5.41 of the Marin County Code. Failure to do so could result in fines or the revocation or non-renewal of the STR License. Additionally, the property owner should be aware that the following needs to be done after the STR License is issued:

- **Exterior Signage.** The property owner is responsible for ensuring the exterior STR sign is posted at the STR property. At a minimum, the sign shall be posted while the unit is being used as a STR. The sign shall be legible from the public right-of-way, made of durable materials and securely placed in the front of the property or unit (where there are multiple units on the property), at a height of three to five feet as measured from the top of the sign to grade, in such a way that it is readily visible to the public upon inspection. Please note, the County will provide you with a sign template when your license is issued. Exceptions will be granted to STR properties that are located in HOAs where signage was prohibited as of January 1, 2025.
- **Requirements for Advertisements.** All STR owners or their agents shall include the following information in any online or printed advertisement:
 - The valid Marin County STR License number.
 - The number of parking spaces available for the STR.
 - The valid Marin County Business License number.
 - The valid Marin County TOT Certificate number.
 - Further information where applicable as specified in the license requirements, such as water use restrictions.
- **Good Neighbor Information Sheet.** The host or local contact person of the STR shall post the county-prepared "good neighbor" information sheet inside the unit.
- **Site Plan.** The schematic site plan showing the location of parking spaces shall be provided to the guests.
- **Evacuation Routes.** If available, evacuations routes must be posted near the front door of the STR, with a QR code or link to the County's online evacuation map. Further, this evacuation map must be provided as a handout so guests can take the map with them in the case of an emergency. Please note, there are communities where evacuation route maps have not been created. In this case, it will not be a requirement that the property owner provides an evacuation route map. Instead, the County will provide emergency preparedness information which should be shared with guests that encourage visitors to sign up for emergency alerts in order to receive real-time evacuation notifications.

- **Conditions of Approval.** It is the property owner's responsibility to comply with any conditions of approval as outlined in the STR License decision. In some cases, a property owner may need to comply with the conditions before renting the STR.
- **Obtain Business License and TOT Certificate.** Each operator of any transient occupancy accommodation must register for a Business License and TOT Certificate with the Department of Finance. To register for a Business License, visit www.marincounty.gov/bl, and for TOT registration www.marincounty.gov/tot. Please direct any questions about these registrations to the Department of Finance's Business License Division at Businesslicense@marincounty.gov.

STR License Renewal

STR Licenses must be renewed every two years with the following limitations:

- An initial STR License for a multi-family dwelling or condominium unit cannot be renewed for an additional two-year term and shall instead cease operation after two years from the date of the license issuance, unless revoked earlier.
- Any property owner legally operating more than one STR will only be eligible to renew a single STR License.

A complete STR License renewal application for an existing STR License must be submitted at least sixty days prior to the expiration date of the license. Upon timely submittal of a renewal application, the existing license will remain effective until a decision on the license renewal application has been issued. Failure to submit a timely application for a renewal of an existing STR license shall result in termination of the license.

A STR License renewal application shall be denied if there have been more than three verified substantial violations of the license requirements related to the STR during the previous STR License term. Substantial violations are violations for which a complaint has been received from a member of the public and a code enforcement case opened with an investigation verifying the existence of the violation.

A STR License renewal may also be denied if conditions of approval were not satisfied during the two-year term of the initial STR License.