

Board of County Commissioners Workshop Read Ahead



Community Development • 125 NW Chehalis Avenue, Chehalis, WA 98532 • Phone: (360) 740-1146

Date: September 5 2025
Staff: Mindy Brooks, Community Development Director
Re: **Lewis County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update**
Attachments: [Volume 1 – Comprehensive Plan](#)
[Volume 2 – Zoning Designations](#)
[Volume 3 – Development Regulations](#)

BACKGROUND

Every 10 years all counties in cities in Washington State are required to update their comprehensive plans, and implementing ordinances, to address new population allocations and changes in state law since the previous update (RCW 36.70A.130). This is called Periodic Update. Periodic Update is also an opportunity to consider local priorities for managing growth and development.

Lewis County began Periodic Update on January 1, 2024, and is required to complete all updates by December 31, 2025. The Lewis County Planning Commission has made recommendations and is forwarding to the BOCC for consideration the following documents:

- Volume 1 – Comprehensive Plan: goals, policies and land use designations
- Volume 2 – Zoning Designations: zoning that implements the land use designations
- Volume 3 – Development Regulations: regulations that implement the goals and policies
- Volume 5 – Supporting Documents: materials adopted as further findings of fact

The Volume 4 – Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), which is also required to be updated during Periodic Update, is under development. The delay is to ensure adequate coordination with partner agencies and other stakeholders. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission will make a recommendation on the CAO in October and the BOCC will hold a hearing in December.

This staff report provides a very high-level description of the Short Term Rental proposed with the Periodic Update. Staff encourage everyone to review the documents in detail.

SHORT TERM REGULATIONS

The Planning Commission received a significant amount of testimony regarding the draft regulations for short term rentals (STRs). After deliberating, the commissioners voted to recommend the regulations found in Volume 3, Chapter 17.105. Below is a summary of the recommendation.

STRs are defined as “a lodging use, that is not a hostel, hotel, motel, cabin or yurt village, or bed and breakfast, in which a dwelling unit, or portion thereof, is offered or provided to a guest for a fee for fewer than thirty (30) consecutive nights.” STRs do not include:

- A dwelling that is owner-occupied for 6 months of the year and within which no more than 3 rooms are rented.
- A dwelling that is rented on a month-by-month basis.
- Dwellings run by charitable organizations or the government under RCW 64.37.

There is no proposed cap on the number of STRs countywide or for any given community. The Planning Commission had considered a cap that no more than 25% of dwelling units could be used as STR but decided that local data is necessary to inform the discussion of potential caps. They removed the cap from the recommended regulations.

All STRs would be required to obtain a permit through the Department of Community Development. To obtain a permit the dwelling unit would need to be a single family residences including cabins, ADU, duplex, tiny home, detached bedroom, RV/trailer, yurt or similar structure. Multifamily residences may not be used as STR, unless the UGA – Small Town incentive is utilized. Please note, three or more dwelling units on one parcel can be permitted as a motel use.

To obtain a permit the dwelling unit needs to have a certificate of occupancy, a building permit or a recent inspection to demonstrate the structure is safe for habitation. There needs to be an approved water source and wastewater system. The owner/operator will need to provide the state UBI, proof of insurance and proof of paid taxes.

Maximum occupancy of the STR will be 2 people per bedroom, plus 3 additional people, or the design capacity of the septic system. There must be at least 1 parking space on-site per bedroom. There needs to be garbage service or the garbage needs to be stored in a secure receptacle. And the owner/operator needs to provide local burn restriction information to guests.

The owner/operator will need to annually certify that the dwelling is still used as a STR and still meets the standards (e.g., properly functioning septic system). Any owner/operator that does not obtain a STR permit or does not recertify and is operating a STR may be subject to code enforcement.

Staff recommend implementing the new STR regulations, if adopted, on January 1, 2026 and allowing 6 months, through July 1, 2026 for all existing STR owner/operators to apply for their STR permit.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Testimony included a requests from the STR owner community to engage in more in the process. The Planning Commission recommends forming a STR Advisory Committee that would do the following:

1. Track the data provided through the county permits.
2. Track neighbor complaints, referring as necessary to Code Enforcement.
3. Present the results, with recommendations, to Community Development and the Planning Commission.

If the BOCC would like to consider forming a STR Advisory Committee, staff recommend you direct Community Development to propose the structure, make up and bylaws for such as committee. This would be separate from the ordinance adopting the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

NEXT STEPS

All materials are available online <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/comprehensive-plan-periodic-update/>.

The BOCC will hold a public hearing in September 23 to receive testimony on Volumes 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the Periodic Update. A Notice of Hearing was published on September 2. Written testimony can be sent now through September 22 at 4:00pm to mindy.brooks@lewiscountywa.gov or 351 NW North Street, Chehalis, WA 98532

Questions regarding Periodic Update and the documents should be directed to Mindy Brooks at mindy.brooks@lewiscountywa.gov or 360-740-2610.