



CHESTNUT HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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Discussion Guidelines regarding support of Visitor Accommodation variances in Chestnut Hill

Within Chestnut Hill, the Philadelphia Zoning Code requires a variance for Short Term Rental uses (defined as renting a unit for fewer than 30 consecutive days) in properties that do not have a primary resident.* Such a use is classified as Visitor Accommodation per the City's Zoning Code. This regulation applies to all properties that fall within the following zoning districts: RSD/RSA/RM, CMX-1, CMX-2, or CMX-2.5. These zoning districts encompass all of Chestnut Hill except for the Druim Moir area (zoned RMX-1), and Chestnut Hill College (zoned SP-INS). The prohibition of the Visitor Accommodation use in the RSD/RSA/RM zoning districts has existed since 2013. The prohibition in the CMX 1, 2, 2.5 zoning districts came more recently. The City also has licensing requirements for all Short-Term Rentals and the online platforms (Airbnb, VRBO, Expedia, etc) that are often used to promote and process such rental transactions.

In 2015, the City communicated its licensing and permitting requirements to online platforms (Airbnb, VRBO, Expedia, etc). City regulations state that such platforms require "hosts" to provide their License numbers for their listing(s). Non-compliant listings could be removed from the platform. Further legislation regarding such uses was imposed in 2021, and the online platforms were given until January 1st, 2023 to collect valid license numbers. Due to this newer process, among other factors, our community is seeing an increase in variance applications for Visitor Accommodation uses.

** The accommodation of visitors for fewer than 30 consecutive days, conducted by the primary resident of the dwelling unit, the main use of which is for household living, is known as Limited Lodging, and is not affected by these guidelines because such a use does not require a variance. This use does, however, require a Limited Lodging Operator License from the City. Primary residents can be a natural person (a human being, not a corporation) who is the property owner or a natural person who lives in the dwelling unit as the renter's primary domicile for more than half of the year and who is authorized in writing by the owner to provide limited lodging. (See section 14-604-13, Philadelphia Zoning Code)*

In anticipation of such variance applications, we have compiled 12 potential concerns for those considering such applications. These do NOT cover all of the City requirements regarding licensing and permits. They are intended to identify factors guiding a community decision to support or oppose a variance for a Visitor Accommodation use. Please come to our meetings prepared to address these 12 concerns.

- 1. The community impact of using the property for Visitor Accommodation rather than as a long-term apartment or single-family residence.**
- 2. The compatibility of use of adjoining properties. Visitor Accommodation in residential districts is generally discouraged.**
- 3. The demonstration of support (or opposition) by adjacent and near neighbors, especially those within the 250-foot radius established by the City as an affected neighbor.**
- 4. Willingness to consider a time limitation on the variance or limit it to current ownership.**
- 5. Proximity of owner or manager, ideally in Chestnut Hill.**
- 6. Impact on parking in the neighborhood.**
- 7. The minimum rental duration for the Visitor Accommodation use at this property.**
- 8. History and track record of applicant to operate other Visitor Accommodations in the community and elsewhere.**
- 9. The presence and quantity of nearby properties that are operating with a variance for use as Visitor Accommodation.**
- 10. Potential of outdoor gathering areas on the property and impacts of such to surrounding properties. Quiet hours and prohibition of parties are important conditions.**
- 11. Refuse storage and collection procedures.**
- 12. Maintenance (repairs, leaf, snow, etc), management and issue response procedures and staffing. For a property already used for Visitor Accommodation, is the property well-maintained? Does it have a history of complaints to 311, 911 or to the property owner?**