
Meeting Summary

Public Meeting #1

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., Council Chambers, 1000 Central Avenue, Los Alamos

Attendees

Per meeting sign-in sheets, there were 16 attendees, including members of the Project Team (County staff and project consultants). Members of the Project Team in attendance were as follows:

- Desirae Lujan (LAC)
- Sobia Sayeda (LAC)
- Anita Barela (LAC)
- Adrienne Lovato (LAC)
- Eric Abeyta (LAC)
- Noah Berke (Wilson & Company)
- Ben Bachwartz (Wilson & Company)

Planning & Zoning Commissioner David Hampton, member of the project Steering Committee, was also in attendance.

Meeting Summary

Meeting Start & Presentation

The Project Team (County staff and planning consultants from Wilson & Company) began a slideshow presentation at 6:15. The slideshow presented at the meeting can be found on the project website, livehostvisitlac.org.

Attendee Questions

At slide 17, attendees asked several questions about the information presented.

Several attendees asked questions about the STR regulations in Taos. One attendee asked if permits were issued on a first-come-first-served basis, to which the Project Team responded yes. The attendee voiced that this did not seem fair, if an applicant for an STR permit could be beat out by another applicant simply because that applicant is faster to submit and not based on any merits of each STR application.

An attendee asked why Taos had chosen a 120-permit limit, when the community knew there were at least 180 STRs in operation. The Project Team said that this was what this community had determined to be appropriate.

An attendee asked how a community could prevent an entire street from become STRs. The Project Team explained that many communities, including Santa Fe, had implemented distance requirements for STRs, requiring that an STR could not be located within 50 feet of another.

Several attendees expressed concerns that the County had already elected to make regulations and that public input was pointless. The Project Team responded that this was not exactly the case since, although the County believes some STR regulations are needed, it would prefer minimal regulation. The goal of this process is to assess which regulations the community wants to see adopted related to STRs.

There were questions about the communities that the Project Team had used for the comparison of STR ordinances, primarily Taos and Santa Fe in New Mexico and Durango, Colorado. The Project Team had presented the results of analysis of such ordinances in each of these communities during its slideshow. Attendees asked why the communities in question had been selected. The Project Team answered that these were nearby communities who had recently adopted STR regulations.

Some attendees felt that the specific comparisons were not appropriate, given that the communities have tourism-based economies while Los Alamos was more like company town, serving one key employer in LANL.

There were two suggestions from attendees to analyze the STR regulations of Midland, TX, as that community's economy is centered on one main industry (oil & gas). The Project Team said Midland could be added to the comparison, and encouraged the public to share other communities they felt were comparable in some way to Los Alamos.

At the same time, the Project Team cautioned that there would not be a perfect comparison community, especially given Los Alamos' unique conditions. They also explained that standards for short-term rentals were hard to come by. Many communities had studied the issue and attempted to develop these standards, but these need to be taken with a grain of salt, as they deal with complex topics like housing, economics, and the unique characteristics of a community that cannot be addressed precisely through policy.

To illustrate this point, the Project Team continued with the presentation and shared the example of Albuquerque's short-term rental ordinance. That City had enacted STR regulations in 2021. These rules were relatively relaxed compared to some of the comparison communities the Project Team had analyzed. Since adoption of the regulations, housing has become more expensive and less available in the Albuquerque. The perception among some in Albuquerque is that short-term rentals have contributed significantly to this problem. The Mayor's office has asked the City Council to approve additional rules for STRs, aimed at limiting the number of STRs in the City. The Albuquerque case is a good example of what most communities experience when they attempt to regulate STRs: There are no hard and fast rules for regulating STRs, and each community must "feel out" what STR regulations are appropriate for it through its political processes.

End of Presentation

The Project Team resumed and finished the presentation. They gave instructions for the open house exercises and the presentation concluded. Results of the exercises are shared at the end of this summary.

Meeting Summary – Public Meeting #1 – February 22nd, 2023

Other Discussions

Throughout the remainder of the meeting, members of the Project Team spoke one on one or with small groups of attendees. Topics discussed included the following:









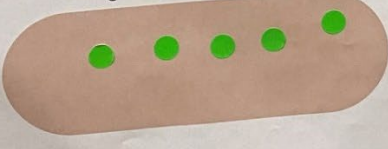
- An attendee asked Ben Bachwartz if the regulations would simply consist of requiring a permit. She felt that would be pointless. Mr. Bachwartz explained that there would likely be additional basic regulations at the very least – for instance, requiring a 24-hour contact for the property. These other regulations would be identified by the public during this process.
- Other attendees shared with Mr. Bachwartz that adding any regulations could exacerbate a severe shortage of short-term that served LANL contractors, interns, and new employees. They noted that LANL intends to add 2,000 employees this year.
- An attendee identified herself as a realtor, LANL employee, and property owner currently managing a Short-Term Rental, and communicated with Desirae Lujan that she disagreed with the definition of an STR being 30-days or less; there are mid-term and long-term rentals, also. Ms. Lujan informed that the STR program would be applied to rentals that were 30-days or less. The attendee stated that establishing regulations on STRs would negatively impact rental availabilities for LANL students and contractors because property owners would rather rent for more than 30-days and not have regulations. She added that imposing parking requirements for STRs would not be fair to property owners who own properties in areas that already suffer from parking issues – like the Western Area. Ms. Lujan asked her thoughts on a business license requirement to track STRs and have contact information for emergencies, or if nuisance issues arise. She stated that she would not be opposed to registering an STR with the county to provide contact information in case of an emergency but would not want to have to go through a Business License process with the county. She shared that she has heard horror stories about the county holding a business license over applicants by requiring building code updates; requiring a business license for an STR would give the county an ability to do the same with STR managers. Ms. Lujan communicated that those instances were specific to commercial buildings where the building use classification had changed; and they were relevant to the International Building Code, not the Development Code. Ms. Sayeda added that STRs would be processed similar to Home Occupations.
- An attendee shared that he currently rents STRs in Los Alamos County, and his renters are not leasing for parties or are in relation to tourism. He stated that they are employees at LANL, contractors and families visiting residents. The clientele is different from STRs in Taos or Santa Fe, so they are not good comparisons. He also expressed that having density restrictions would not be fair – property owners not in support of STRs could obtain an STR permit, with no interest in using it, just to prevent their neighbors from receiving one.
- Another attendee, a realtor, expressed to Ms. Lujan the same concern for LANL students and contractors. Housing is already limited, and applying regulations to STRs would discourage property owners from supplying a service that is greatly needed, pushing these employees to instead camp in tents and sleep in their vehicles.


Exercise Board Results

Below are photos showing the results of the two board exercises that solicited feedback from attendees:

What should the goals of the Short-Term Rental Program be?

Choose which is most important to you with a sticky dot

1. Prevent the loss of rental housing	2. Slow or prevent the overgrowth of STRs
	
3. Combat displacement	4. Preserve the residential quality of neighborhoods
	
5. Balance the needs and rights of property owners and neighbors	6. Ensure health and safety of guests and residents
	
7. Capture tax revenue	8. Support tourism in a balanced way
	
9. Allow for economic gain for residents	
	

 LIVE HOST VISIT
LOS ALAMOS COUNTY
SHORT-TERM RENTAL PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

LOS ALAMOS
where discoveries are made

WILSON & COMPANY
PUBLIC RELATIONS



Meeting Summary – Public Meeting #1 – February 22nd, 2023

Use 1-3 words to describe your thoughts about short-term rentals

Necessary,
Helps the
community

Necessary

Are they to
support
LAVL only?

I favor them
less regulation will work best

OK setting shortage
of housing
in Los Alamos

Necessary
Neutral

Are they beneficial to the community or an issue?

Beneficial

Both

beneficial

Beneficial

Current number of
STRs is beneficial

How should they be regulated?

Yes, # of
permits per
owner/entity

"Less is more"

with some STRs only
minimal regulation is
needed

Minimally, but
increasingly, try that
out on a regular basis.

Shocked that the
County is trying to
regulate at this time
because the current
amount is working

Minimal, no
restrictions, they
help the community

