



Striking a Balance: Strategies for Managing Short-Term Rentals in New England

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This whitepaper delves into the short-term rental (STR) sector in New England states, prioritizing health and safety while focusing on achieving balanced outcomes for all stakeholders. Understanding this balance provides valuable insights for STR owners, local businesses, policymakers, and the community to effectively manage the growing industry while ensuring sustainable growth of the economy. Through a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of short-term rentals, the paper identifies challenges and offers effective solutions. Drawing upon the author's experience as a Community and Economic Development Director in local government, practical strategies and tools are presented to promote successful STR management.

Considerations and Lessons Learned

Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging a myriad of stakeholders early on is vital to foster collaboration and gain valuable perspectives. By including representatives such as STR hosts, property managers, residents, local businesses, professional associations, and town authorities, a comprehensive understanding of the issues, special interests, and any potential conflicts at play can be gained. This collaborative approach establishes a solid foundation for developing effective STR management programs.



Establishing Health, Safety, and Welfare Standards

Providing predictable health, safety, and welfare standards for both STR guests and the broader community is paramount to success. Establishing baseline standards for emergency contact information, inspections, and life safety requirements (e.g., fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, occupancy limits, etc.) is crucial to establishing this predictability. Learning from the experiences of other destinations that implemented proactive regulations, these safety protocols including, registration requirements and baseline inspections, will yield a common denominator that all stakeholders can agree on.

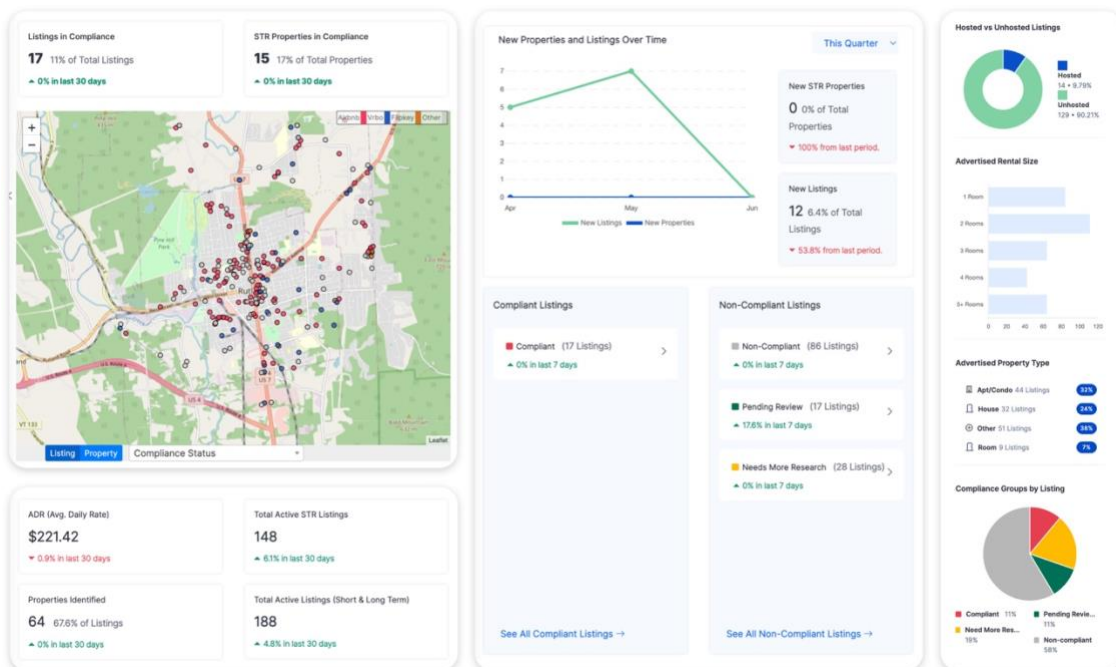
Balancing Community Interests

A balance between the various stakeholder interests is critical to success. Policies must address competing interests including quality of life, guest safety, efficient licensing, registration, and tax compliance from STRs. Striking the right balance requires careful consideration of the unique characteristics and values of the local community, ensuring the protection of property owners' rights while minimizing the perception of government overreach.

Best Practices

Identifying STR Rentals: Leveraging Technology for Accurate Information Gathering

Identifying STR properties requires the integration of advanced technology. Through the strategic utilization of technology, stakeholders gain access to a wide range of information, empowering them to make informed decisions based on data. A comprehensive software solution acts as a centralized platform, offering valuable insights including property addresses, owner contact details, platform listings, occupancy rates, and average daily rates. This consolidated information becomes the cornerstone for effective management of the STR market within a given jurisdiction.



Example of an STR dashboard provided by GovOS

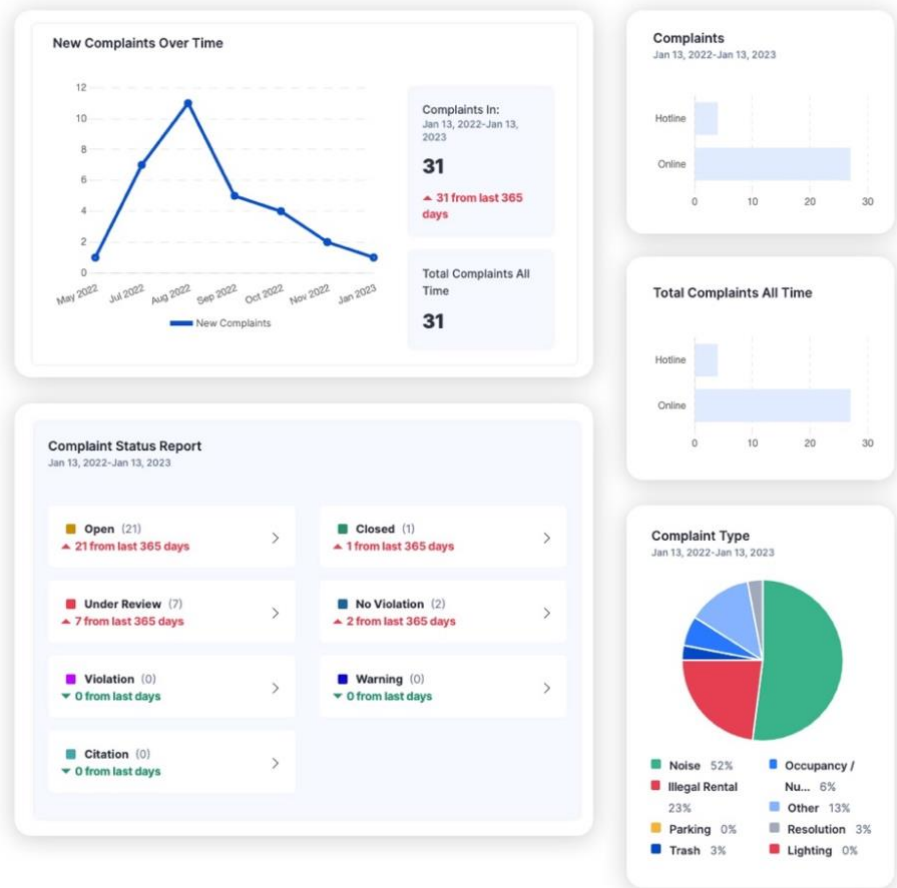
When selecting a software provider, a thorough evaluation of their capabilities is imperative. Defining information requirements and available resources is crucial. Local governments must consider the financial and human resources trade-off between establishing an in-house STR division or collaborating with a technology partner. Successful collaboration requires a partner who understands the unique challenges and offers customized solutions, avoiding a rigid template-based approach. This optimized approach lays the groundwork for an effective STR management program.

Implementing a Registration and/or Licensing Process

A registration and/or licensing process will not only address health, safety, and welfare concerns but also open communication channels between local government and STR owners. Providing basic owner information and contacting the owner before problems escalate is a best practice. Implementing a technology solution that provides an end-to-end solution means offering one centralized system that brings all forms and payments online in one workflow for the owner to complete and local staff to approve.

Establishing a Complaint Hotline

Establishing a complaint hotline is an effective strategy to alleviate the workload on human resources and ensure compliance with basic safety standards. Partnering with a technology company enables a bilingual, 24/7 hotline that efficiently categorizes complaints by type and location. This provides valuable insights into issues and progress. Regular data-driven reporting safeguards the interests of residents, hosts, and guests, promoting informed decision-making and eliminating subjective perceptions.



Example of a complaint hotline dashboard provided by GovOS

According to a [2022 report by Rent Responsibly and College of Charleston](#), approximately 80% of STR hosts experienced no complaints from their neighbors or community over the past year. Furthermore, 80% of those who implemented good neighbor practices reported positive relationships with the majority of their STR neighbors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, successfully managing and growing local economies through programs to manage STRs necessitates a balanced approach and the adoption of best management practices. Implementing registration and inspection processes ensures compliance with fundamental health, safety, and welfare standards. Utilizing available technologies, such as property identification and complaint hotlines, minimizes costs and administrative burdens on local jurisdictions and emergency services.

Each municipality's STR management program will vary based on specific needs. Addressing core issues, employing suitable tools, engaging stakeholders, and making data-driven decisions forge a successful path. Continual evaluation, responsiveness, flexibility, and adaptability ensure long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

New England can balance STR economic benefits with housing availability, community well-being, and local culture through informed policies and collaboration among homeowners, communities, businesses, and regulators. This whitepaper aids policymakers and stakeholders in creating sustainable and inclusive STR practices.