



**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
REGULAR MEETING**

#26-0706

TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Christopher Cooper, Acting City Manager

DATE: August 18, 2026

TITLE: First Reading – Ordinance Amending Chapter 15, Article X, Vacation Rentals, to Clarify Enforcement Authority; Revise Certificate of Compliance, Suspension, and Penalty Provisions; Establish Inspection Access Requirements; Preserve Enforcement Following Ownership or Entity Changes; and Enhance Compliance Requirements – **(Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission approve on first reading an ordinance amending Chapter 15, Article X, Vacation Rentals, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Fort Lauderdale (City) to strengthen the City's vacation rental enforcement framework by clarifying enforcement authority; revising Certificate of Compliance, suspension, and penalty provisions; establishing inspection access requirements; preserving enforcement following ownership or entity changes; and improving compliance, consistency, and program administration.

Background

On August 18, 2015, the City Commission adopted Ordinance C-15-29 establishing the City of Fort Lauderdale's Vacation Rental Program following changes to Florida law that limited local governments' authority to prohibit or regulate the duration and frequency of vacation rentals. While state law preempted certain regulatory authority, it preserved the City's ability to regulate vacation rental operations to protect public health, safety, and neighborhood quality of life. The City's ordinance established a comprehensive regulatory framework requiring annual registration, Certificates of Compliance, life-safety inspections, responsible party designations, and operational standards governing occupancy, parking, noise, solid waste, and other neighborhood compatibility requirements. The City also adopted a registration fee structure designed to recover costs associated with administering, inspecting, and enforcing the program.

As the program matured, City staff evaluated operational efficiencies and administrative processes to improve service delivery while maintaining regulatory oversight. In 2017, following an analysis of program costs and registration procedures, the City Commission adopted amendments that streamlined the registration process, reduced registration fees,

waived annual onsite renewal inspections for owner-occupied vacation rentals in favor of a notarized affidavit of compliance, and modified responsible party requirements. These changes reduced administrative burdens while preserving the City's ability to ensure compliance with vacation rental regulations.

Since its inception, the Vacation Rental Program experienced substantial growth and increased operational complexity. Registered vacation rentals increased from approximately 320 properties in 2017 to more than 1,300 properties by 2025, requiring additional staff, expanded inspection resources, enhanced monitoring technology, and a dedicated customer support center to effectively administer the program. In response to these operational demands, staff continually evaluates enforcement practices and program administration to ensure the City's regulatory framework remains effective and responsive to changing industry conditions.

Since adoption of the ordinance, staff has continuously evaluated the effectiveness of the City's regulatory framework through program administration, enforcement activities, legislative changes, and evolving operational practices. As the program matured and the number of registered vacation rentals significantly increased, staff identified opportunities to clarify ordinance language, improve administrative processes, address enforcement challenges, and ensure the Code of Ordinances continues to support consistent and effective program administration.

In February 2023, the City Commission directed staff to conduct a comprehensive review of the Vacation Rental Program, including municipal comparisons, enforcement practices, registration fees, and opportunities to strengthen the City's regulatory framework. Following that review, the City Commission adopted amendments requiring the installation of noise monitoring devices at vacation rentals, increasing civil penalties, strengthening penalties for operating during a suspension, authorizing enhanced penalties for irreparable or irreversible violations, and removing the previous limitation on suspension periods. These amendments further strengthened the City's ability to address quality-of-life concerns while promoting compliance among vacation rental operators.

Following implementation of these enhancements, staff continued to monitor program performance, evaluate enforcement trends, and review comparable municipal practices. In 2025, the City completed a comprehensive fee study that determined the existing registration fees no longer reflected the actual cost of administering the program. Based on those findings, the City Commission approved a revised fee structure designed to restore full cost recovery and ensure the long-term sustainability of the Vacation Rental Program.

On June 2, 2026, staff presented the City Commission with a comprehensive review of the City's vacation rental enforcement program, including current enforcement practices, commonly enforced violations, municipal comparisons, operational resources, and opportunities to strengthen the City's existing regulatory framework. Following discussion, the City Commission directed staff and the City Attorney's Office to prepare ordinance amendments addressing identified enforcement and administrative gaps, improving

regulatory clarity, and strengthening the City's existing enforcement framework while remaining consistent with Florida law.

The proposed ordinance amendments represent the next phase in the continued evolution of the City's Vacation Rental Program. The amendments do not establish a new regulatory framework; rather, they clarify existing provisions, strengthen enforcement authority, improve administrative consistency, address operational challenges identified through program administration, and incorporate policy direction provided by the City Commission.

The proposed ordinance amendments focus on eight (8) targeted enhancements intended to improve the administration and enforcement of the Vacation Rental Program. Collectively, the amendments (1) strengthen enforcement authority, (2) improve administrative consistency, (3) enhance compliance and accountability, and (4) address operational challenges identified through nearly ten years of program administration and Commission policy direction.

Proposed Ordinance Amendments

The proposed ordinance amendments are intended to strengthen and clarify the City's existing vacation rental regulatory framework by addressing operational and administrative issues identified through program implementation while preserving the City's established approach to vacation rental regulation and enforcement. These amendments are based on operational experience administering the City's Vacation Rental Program, regional comparisons, and policy direction provided by the City Commission.

Specifically, the proposed amendments will:

Strengthen Enforcement Authority

- Codify a civil penalty of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per day for operating a vacation rental without a valid Certificate of Compliance.
- Apply the same daily penalty to properties operating with an expired Certificate of Compliance, while providing an exception for administrative delays attributable to the City's renewal process.
- Establish that violations, suspensions, and revocations remain enforceable despite changes in ownership, entity structure, or responsible party where continuity of ownership or control exists.

Improve Administrative Consistency

- Correct a scrivener's error related to the suspension periods contained within the ordinance.
- Establish a rolling twelve (12)-month period for calculating repeat violations to ensure consistent application of progressive enforcement provisions.
- Limit the effective date of a Special Magistrate-ordered suspension to no more than fourteen (14) calendar days after issuance, reducing unnecessary delays while providing reasonable time for transient occupants to make alternate

accommodations.

Enhance Compliance and Accountability

- Prohibit the issuance or renewal of a Certificate of Compliance when outstanding fines, liens, costs, or penalties remain unpaid.
- Require property owners or their designated representatives to provide access for inspection when staff is investigating a safety-related complaint, with failure to provide access constituting a violation.

Collectively, these amendments represent targeted refinements to an established regulatory program rather than the creation of new regulatory authority. The proposed changes are based on nearly ten (10) years of program administration, operational experience, regional comparisons, and policy direction provided by the City Commission. The amendments are intended to improve administrative consistency, strengthen enforcement tools, promote voluntary compliance, close identified regulatory gaps, and further protect the health, safety, and quality of life of the City's residential neighborhoods while remaining consistent with Florida law.

Effective Date and Implementation

Staff recommends that the ordinance become effective thirty (30) days following adoption to provide an orderly implementation period. During this implementation period staff will notify all registered vacation rental operators of the ordinance amendments through the City's advertisement monitoring provider (NEUMO). In addition, staff will update administrative procedures, public-facing program materials, internal enforcement protocols, and educate operators on the revised requirements. This implementation period promotes voluntary compliance, provides reasonable notice of the amended provisions, and supports the consistent administration and enforcement of the Vacation Rental Program.

Resource Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

Strategic Connections

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035* Vision Plan: We Are Community

This item supports the Advance Fort Lauderdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan specifically advancing:

- The Neighborhood Enhancement Focus Area
- The Housing Element
- Goal 2: Be a community of strong, beautiful, and healthy neighborhoods.

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – June 2, 2026, Commission Conference Vacation Rental Presentation

Exhibit 2 – Business Impact Estimate

Exhibit 3 – Ordinance

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Department

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