



Legislative Summary

0-11-26

Allowing Long-Term Room Rentals in Private Homes

The City of Annapolis Office of Law created this summary for the use of Annapolis City Council members during their consideration of the legislation.

Note: This summary outlines the legislation as introduced and does not address any amendments.

Bill Summary

O-11-26 establishes a regulatory framework permitting rooming houses (also referred to as boarding houses) as long-term rental arrangements within owner-occupied private residences in the City of Annapolis.

Background

History

Annapolis historically had rooming houses serving the waterfront economy and the Naval Academy. The City Code section allowing rooming houses and room rentals was repealed in 2008 when the City Council passed O-30-08, a bill clarifying the duties of the then-Department of Neighborhood and Environmental Programs and the Public Works Administration, and rewriting inspection, permit, and public works requirements in Title 17 (Buildings and Construction).

The Department of Neighborhood and Environmental Programs was dissolved in 2016, with its duties reassigned to other departments.



Housing Needs

Housing affordability is a significant issue in Annapolis. Rooming houses, where an owner rents individual sleeping rooms in their primary residence to long-term tenants, are considered to offer an additional option for affordable housing for various groups, including working individuals, students, seniors, and lower-income residents, while maintaining the residential character of neighborhoods.

Prior to this ordinance, rooming houses were not defined or regulated under City Code, creating uncertainty regarding licensing and zoning compliance. This ordinance incorporates rooming houses into the existing rental licensing structure and the Title 21 zoning use tables.

What's the difference between a Rooming House and a Shared Rental?

A **rooming house** is a business arrangement where unrelated individuals rent separate rooms from a landlord/owner, typically with individual lease agreements, separate rent payments, and shared common facilities. Each lodger has a direct landlord-tenant relationship with the owner. The owner is operating a rental enterprise.

It's different than a **shared rental house with roommates**, which is a single residential tenancy where multiple unrelated people jointly rent an entire dwelling unit under one lease (or coordinate separate leases for their own purposes), and share all the space as co-tenants. They have a collective relationship with the landlord as a single household unit for lease purposes.



Details

Section 21.72.010 - Definition of “Rooming House”

A rooming house is defined as an owner-occupied dwelling in which up to four sleeping rooms are rented to individual tenants for periods exceeding 90 consecutive days. Cooking facilities are not permitted in sleeping rooms.

The non-corporate owner-occupant must maintain the premises as their year-round primary residence and manage rental relationships daily. Rooming houses explicitly exclude short-term rentals and bed-and-breakfast homes.

Section 17.44.030 - Licensing Requirement

Rooming houses are added as a new rental category, requiring a Rooming House Operator’s License from the Department of Planning and Zoning. A license is issued on a per-building basis and covers only the principal dwelling unit; accessory dwelling units and detached structures each require their own separate rental operator’s license.

Section 17.44.085(B) - Homestead Tax Credit Requirement (§)

Owner-occupancy is verified by requiring an active Maryland Homestead Property Tax Credit (Tax-Property Article § 9-105) at the time of initial licensure and at each annual renewal, as verified by the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT). If the credit lapses or is revoked, the rooming house use must cease within 60 days, unless the credit is restored; failure to restore the credit renders the use nonconforming.

Section § 17.44.085(C) - Operating Standards ()

- *Local Responsible Party (LRP)*: The owner is the primary LRP and must be reachable by phone 24/7 and able to respond in person within two hours. When the owner cannot meet that requirement, the owner must designate an Alternate LRP in writing and file it with the Department of Planning and Zoning. The owner and any active Alternate LRP are jointly and severally liable for all violations.



- *Cooking Facilities:* No more than one kitchen is permitted; cooking appliances are prohibited in sleeping rooms or ancillary spaces. A common kitchen accessible to all residents is allowed and must comply with Chapter 17.40.
- *Sleeping Rooms:* Each sleeping room door must have a lock operable from the inside. Owners retain a key for emergency entry only. If a code violation renders a room uninhabitable, the owner is responsible for the tenants' reasonable costs of substitute housing.

Sections 21.48.010 & 21.48.030 - Zoning

Rooming houses are added as a Permitted Use (P) in all residential zoning districts (R1A through R4-R) and in Office and Mixed Use districts (P, MX, PM, C2P).

Sections 17.44.110 - Definitions Update

New definitions include: Rooming House, Homestead Tax Credit, Local Responsible Party (LRP), Alternate Local Responsible Party, Owner-Occupied, Apartment Hotel, and others. Existing definitions (Applicant, Host, Hosting Platform, Tenant, etc.) are clarified and refined.

Chapter 17.40, Article VI - Property Maintenance Code

The former rooming house permit and operational titles of Sections 17.40.670–17.40.700 are changed to reserved/repealed. There is currently no information in those sections. The purpose of the change is to remove confusion when readers search for “Rooming Houses” and reserve those section numbers for future use.