



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**KATJANA BALLANTYNE - MAYOR**

**Short-Term Rental (STR) Registration Application Process Guide**

The STR Ordinance requires STR Operators to apply for and obtain a Certificate of Registration from the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) to operate a STR within the City. This guide is to assist Operators in submitting their application and give Operators an overview of the overall application process.

For requirements, frequently asked questions, and general background on the ordinance please visit <https://www.somervillema.gov/strs>

Please review this guide and the materials on the website. If you have additional questions on applying you can email [isdstr@somervillema.gov](mailto:isdstr@somervillema.gov), or call (617) 625-6600 x4331. For a faster response please use email.

ISD utilizes CitizenServe to process its STR registration, along with other permits and licenses. If you already have utilized CitizenServe and have an account, you can skip the first 2 steps of this guide.

**1) ACCESSING CITIZENSERVE**

You can access the CitizenServe Portal by going to <https://www.somervillema.gov/citizenserve> and clicking the CitizenServe portal hyperlink or logo.

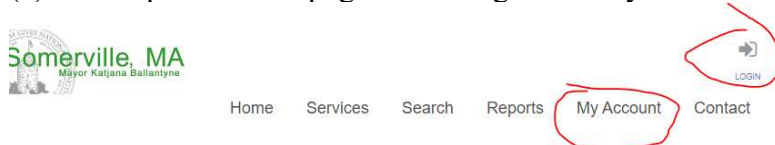
**Apply for a License or Permit**

*Please note: If you would like to apply for a parking permit, visit the [ParkSomerville](#) page.*



**2) CREATING A CITIZENSERVE ACCOUNT**

(a) On the portal home page click 'Login' or 'My Account'



(b) On the login page, click 'Register Now'

LOGIN  
Home / My Account / Login

<b>Already have an account?</b>	<b>New to our Portal?</b>
User Name: <input type="text"/>	If this is your first time using our portal you'll need to register first. Registering is quick, click the link below to get started.
Password: <input type="password"/>	<a href="#">REGISTER NOW →</a>

(c) On the registration page, select ‘Citizen’ as your ‘Registration Type’, fill in all required fields and hit the submit button. *Remember to keep the username and password you create for future reference.*

REGISTER

Home / My Account / Register

indicates a required field

Registration Type:

Citizen

Email:

Confirm Email:

3) ACCESSING THE STR REGISTRATION APPLICATION

a) After logging into your CitizenServe account, on your account page click ‘Apply for a License’  
*Please note: CitizenServe categorizes the STR Registration as a ‘License’*


MY ACCOUNT

Home / My Account

Welcome to your online account Matthew Testing!

You can review your submittals, pay fees or submit new requests through our below. If you have any questions please view the [Contact Page](#) for department information.


Online Services:



PERMITTING

Remodeling or adding on to you home? Learn when a permit is needed, about submittal requirements and apply online.


APPLY FOR A PERMIT



LICENSING

Starting a new business? Learn when you need a license, about submittal requirements and apply online.

APPLY FOR A LICENSE




CODE VIOLATIONS

Want to report blight, weeds, illegal parking or other code enforcement violations in your neighborhood?

SUBMIT A COMPLAINT

b) On the application page, select ‘Short-Term Rental Registration’ under the ‘Application Type’. Your application will automatically fill in the sub-type as Short-Term Rental Registration

 **APPLY FOR A LICENSE**

Home / Services / Licensing / Apply for a License

Select your license application from the list below. If you do not see your specific license type on the list, select "Business Licenses" and then use the subtype list to navigate to your application. A full list of all licenses that may be applied for online is found [here](#).

indicates a required field

Application Type:

▼

Body Art

Business License

Dumpster

Dumpster Hauler

Farmer Winery Event License

Farmers Market

Food Establishment

Leaf Blower Registration

Licensing Commission License

Licensing Commission License Amendment

Marijuana Establishment License

Marijuana Establishment License Amendment

Pool

Public Event/Special Alcohol License

Rental Inspection Program


Short-Term Rental Registration

Tanning

Temporary Food

c) Provide a short description of your STR in ‘STR Description’ (Short-Term rental at [your address])

d) Under ‘Is this application for a new or existing business location?’, select ‘A new business location.’

 **APPLY FOR A LICENSE**

Home / Services / Licensing / Apply for a License

Select your license application from the list below. If you do not see your specific license type on the list, select "Business Licenses" and then use the subtype list to navigate to your application. A full list of all licenses that may be applied for online is found [here](#).

indicates a required field

Application Type:

Short-Term Rental Registration▼

Sub Type:

Short-Term Rental Registration▼

STR Description:

Short Term Rental at 1 Franey Rd, 3 rooms.

Is this application for a new or existing business location?:

A new business location▼

?

Address or Parcel #:

?

Somerville

MA

FIND ADDRESS

e) *Entering the STR address:* Enter your house number and street name in the ‘Address or Parcel #’ or your parcel number if you know it and select ‘find address’. The ordinance requires the STR to be run out of the operator’s primary residence, this address should match the home address in your CitizenServe account.

*Please note: The system will require the address to match a **valid assessing address** in the system. Typically houses with an address range have only one number associated with them in the assessing database (for example 5-7 Sample St., will be 5 Sample St. or 7 Sample St. ) If you are having difficulty determining your assessing address, please utilize the City's Assessing database property lookup at: <https://gis.vgsi.com/somervillema/Search.aspx>*

f) After the address is correctly filled in, the STR Application will populate, which looks like this:

**REQUIRED INFORMATION**

STR Type:

STR Number of Guest Bedrooms:

A residential unit offered as a short-term rental shall be limited to ten guests, or two guests per guest bedroom, whichever is fewer.

STR Maximum Number of Guests:

STR Emergency Contact:

STR Emergency Contact Number:

STR hyperlink(s) (required prior to Certificate Issuance):

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**

STR Operator Proof of Primary Residence at the Residential Unit to be Offered as STR. Address on documentation must match the address being offered for STR.

Copy of deed or lease:  [?](#)

Copy of driver's license or state issued identification:

One other document showing residency:  [?](#)

Signed [STR Statement of Responsibility](#)

Signed Statement:

Signed [STR Property Owner Approval Affidavit](#) (if Operator is a tenant) OR signed [STR Operator Property Ownership Affidavit](#) (if Operator is the property owner)

Signed Affidavit:

Floor plan showing guest bedrooms and egress path for each guest bedroom (if a Shared Unit, must also show location of the Operator bedroom)

Floor plan:

STR Certificate of Registration with Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR). (Visit [DOR website](#) for registering with the State and retrieving certificate)

STR DOR Certificate of Registration:

Proof of STR Liability Insurance (Visit the [State website](#) for information on the insurance requirement)

Proof of STR Liability Insurance:

*The Massachusetts Division of Insurance has not reviewed or determined whether insurance offered through a host platform (such as Airbnb or VRBO) is sufficient to meet the State's liability coverage requirement*

SUBMIT

SAVE FOR LATER

#### 4) UNDERSTANDING THE APPLICATION

The following is some additional background on more potentially complex aspects of the application.

a) *STR Type*: The ordinance allows for a STR to be one of two allowable types. An Operator must choose one type. Both types require the unit to be a residential unit and the Operator's primary residence:

- **Autonomous Unit**: the unit is being rented in its entirety while the Operator is away. This type is limited to ninety (90) STR rental days per year.
- **Shared Unit**: a portion of the unit is being rented while the Operator is staying in the unit during the rental. This type has no limit on the number of STR rental days per year.

b) *STR Emergency Contact and Phone Number*: The Ordinance requires an Operator to provide a designated individual for an emergency contact. The emergency contact must be someone who is able to respond to any issue or emergency in person at the STR within 2 hours. If the STR is a Shared Unit, ISD will allow the Operator to put themselves as the Emergency Contact, since they are staying in the unit during the STR. The contact telephone number must be available and active to public safety agents, the STR occupants, and other tenants.

c) *STR hyperlink(s)*: Enter the hyperlink(s) to your STR listing if you already have a listing set up. If you don't yet, don't worry it is only required prior to the Certificate issuance, not at time of application. After you submit your application, however you will not be able to enter anything into this field. You can message staff through CitizenServe or email to have them enter the link(s) for you. *Please note: The ordinance allows for one listing per listing website, per residential unit. If you are using multiple listing websites for your short-term rental, those listings must be consistent so as to not offer separate bedrooms, beds, or spaces to separate groups.*

d) *Proof of Primary Residence*: The Ordinance requires the STR unit to be the Operator's primary residence. The Ordinance requires the following *three items to prove primary residence*. All items must list your home address as the STR address.

- Copy of Deed (if the property owner is the STR Operator) OR Copy of Lease (if a tenant is the STR Operator).
  - If the Deed does not list your home address, ISD will accept a Declaration of Homestead recorded with the Registry of Deeds.
- Copy of driver's license or state issued identification.
- One other document showing residency (such as cable bill, utility bill, vehicle registration)

e) *City Forms*: The Operator is required to review, complete, sign, and have the property owner also review and sign certain forms that must be uploaded with your application. Links to the forms are available for download within the application, but if you would like to download them prior to starting your application they can also be found on the CitizenServe Portal navigating to 'Services' 'Licensing' 'Submittal Requirements'. The forms are:

- **STR Statement of Responsibility**: This form is required for all applications and must be reviewed and signed by both the property owner and the STR Operator. If the Operator is also the property owner, they will sign the form under both owner and Operator sections.

- STR Property Owner Approval Affidavit: This form is required for applications where the STR Operator is a tenant. The form must be signed by the property owner.
- STR Operator Property Ownership Affidavit. This form is required for applications where the STR Operator is the property owner.


f) *Floor Plan with Egress Paths:* ISD requires a floor plan which labels the guest bedroom(s) and egress path for each guest bedroom for your application. Ensure your floor plan is clear, legible, and includes the entire residential unit. A Shared Unit STR type must also label the Operator's bedroom. *Please note: At the time of pre-certificate inspection an ISD Safety Inspector will verify a floor plan showing the location of the guest bedroom and egress paths for the guest bedroom is posted on the interior of each guest bedroom.*

g) *Certificate with Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR):* STRs are required to register with the DOR for room occupancy excise tax purposes. Visit the State's website for information, registration, and how to retrieve your certificate: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/room-occupancy-excise-tax#operator-registration>

h) *STR Liability Insurance:* The State requires operator's of STRs to maintain liability insurance of not less than \$1,000,000 to cover each short-term rental. ISD will accept a certificate of insurance which demonstrates that coverage. For additional information please go to the State's website: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/short-term-rental-insurance> . *Please note: If you use a Host Platform (such as Airbnb or VRBO) and the Host Platform offers free STR insurance coverage, the Massachusetts Division of Insurance has not reviewed or determined whether Host Platform coverage is sufficient to meet the minimum insurance requirements.*

## **5) FILLING OUT THE STR APPLICATION**

a) Fill in all required fields, upload all required documentation, and fill out and upload all required City forms.

b) The STR application has additional background information built into it, so please review any notes and click on any  symbols if you are unsure.

c) After completing your application submission, please pay the \$50 initial filing fee.

*Please Note: This is only an initial filing fee, if your application is approved after ISD review is complete you will have to pay the remaining \$200 of the \$250 total registration fee before your Certificate can be issued.*

## **6) THE STR REVIEW**

a) Your application and submittal documents will be reviewed by ISD for accuracy and compliance with the STR ordinance.

b) If there is missing, incomplete, or inaccurate information or your application does not comply with the STR ordinance, ISD staff will notify you.

c) If your application has all the required documentation and is deemed to comply with the ordinance, an ISD Safety Inspector will then contact you to schedule a pre-certificate in-person inspection.

## **7) PRE-CERTIFICATE INSPECTION**

- a) An ISD Safety Inspector will conduct a general safety inspection in the unit to be offered as a STR. A copy of the current inspection checklist can be found on the CitizenServe Portal navigating to 'Services' 'Licensing' 'Submittal Requirements'
- b) Any corrections noted by the inspector will be required to be corrected and a follow-up inspection can be scheduled.
- c) If you pass the inspection, ISD will approve your application pending payment of the remaining registration fee.

## **8) CERTIFICATE ISSUANCE**

- a) After you pay the remaining fee balance and provide any hyperlinks to your listing(s), ISD will issue your Certificate of Registration. You can print a copy from your application once it is issued.
- b) Please post the Certificate in your STR, as required by the ordinance.