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Agenda Item No: 9.A

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Sent: Thursday, February 5, 2026 11:41 AM

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Cc: Bill Dobrenen <billdobrenen@aol.com>

Subject: STR Ordinance First Reading

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Dear Whittier City Council and Staff,

Bill Dobrenen and I are writing to you on behalf of several STR hosts regarding the final updates to the most recent STR ordinance being proposed. Thank you for the opportunity to be heard, as STR hosts and concerned residents alike. We recognize that there has been a lot of hard work put into the ordinance and are just as anxious and committed as you all are, to see it through and finalized.

We are two of several long time, reliable and responsible STR hosts in the Non-Fire Zone area of the City of Whittier, specifically the area in and around Uptown Whittier. While not every host agrees with everything that is being proposed 100% of the time, we can confidently say that we represent the majority of hosts as it relates to our opinions about STR's.

During the last City Council meeting held Tuesday, January 27, 2026, Council voted to have staff come back with another first reading of the ordinance, in order to revisit just the following raised by Councilmembers. These items are listed below as we understood them, along with comments for each: 500 foot buffer rule

It is our opinion that the 500 foot buffer is unnecessary. Density will no longer be an issue in the High Fire Severity Zone neighborhoods, because STR's are eliminated in those areas. As you can see on the superimposed map provided to you by Fabio Soto on January 27, 2026 and also attached to this letter, existing STR's are spaced relatively evenly and peppered throughout the city outside of the fire zone. Upon implementation of the ordinance and its restrictions, it is highly likely that there will be even less STR's in operation, and even less incentive for new STR's to surface over time. Additionally, enforcing a buffer of 500 feet (or 300 feet, or 200 feet or 100 feet) will have a significant adverse effect for hosts that operate more than one STR on one property such as Bill Dobrenen, Phillip Sywulka, Ron Olson and Fabio Soto. These hosts would not be able to take advantage of the 3 STR maximum rule already agreed upon in the proposed ordinance. Therefore, any type of buffer rule will prohibit us from operating STR's fully, and will negatively affect our current income potential. Lastly, removing this rule will essentially eliminate issues at the application counter and between otherwise friendly neighboring hosts. Eliminating this rule will ensure neighboring hosts will not have to race to the counter due to the first come first serve nature of the application process, causing possible friction between some hosts in close proximity.

Exception for Hosts Living on the Property in High Fire Severity Zone

We fully recognize the need to eliminate traditional STR's in the High Fire Severity Zones. The concerns raised by residents in those area are very serious and valid. There is no dispute among STR hosts as far as fire safety in those areas are concerned. There is a recommendation however to make an exception for hosts that live on the property 100% of the time year-round. The fire safety and nuisance risks are reduced significantly if not eliminated altogether if the host lives on the property. It is highly unlikely that guests will have large parties and violate house rules if they know the host is living on the property. We understand this is a highly sensitive topic and strongly support the idea of revisiting this exception within 6 months to one year to assess its effectiveness and identify any abuse or non-compliance.

CC: CM; ACM; CA; Council; Original to CC; Public Binder; Department

Current Parking Conditions vs. Zone Requirements

Parking congestion in the High Fire Severity Zones has been one of the top concerns for residents in those areas. Eliminating STR's in those neighborhoods solves the parking issue, where streets are extremely narrow. Improperly parked or too many parked cars can pose a major safety risk during an evacuation. These issues are not prevalent in the Non-High Fire Severity Zone areas. The streets are significantly wider and there is not the same level of risk or concern. Therefore, requiring STR's to comply with existing parking zone code requirements seems punitive for hosts trying to operate an STR in much older homes in some cases built in the 1910's and 1920's. It will be virtually impossible for some of these homes to comply with current zone requirements. For this reason, the group feels that allowing STR's to observe current parking conditions at the rental, just like any long term rental property would, will be not only logical but also fair.

“Good Neighbor” Policy – Notification of Owner or Property Manager during Emergency or Complaint

Our group of hosts does not feel particularly strong about any updates required for this part of the ordinance and agree it just needs clarity. The only exception would be to possibly change the language in the ordinance to allow for any “Representative or Designee of the Property Owner” rather than just a “Property Manager”. In many cases Hosts cannot afford to hire a formal property management company.

In conclusion, it is not our intent to overhaul the ordinance or start over. As a matter of fact we feel strongly that the rest of the ordinance should remain untouched and as is. We are too close to final resolution to allow the derailment of this ordinance. We would simply like to provide our collective perspective on each item above, with the hope that it will help move the process along faster and more efficiently to final resolution, and that City Councilmembers are aware of what the majority of STR hosts who are also Whittier residents are thinking and feeling.

Lastly, we want to let you know that we are committed and motivated to launch a Task Force of STR Hosts that can help City Staff and Council navigate the months following the implementation of the ordinance. We can provide feedback, ideas and if necessary help with enforcement. It is clear both parties want this ordinance to be successful and make sense for all parties involved.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Fabio Soto

Fabio Soto
STR Host

Bill Dobrenen

Bill Dobrenen
STR Host