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betternighborsla.org

February 24, 2026

Whittier City Council
7630 Washington Ave
Whittier, CA 90602
ccd@cityofwhittier.org
VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

RE: Better Neighbors Comment Letter – Second Reading of Ordinance No. 3175 - Short Term Rentals - Zoning Code Amendment No. ZCA24-0003

Dear Honorable Mayor Vinatieri, Mayor Pro Tem Martinez, and Councilmembers,

Better Neighbors LA (“BNLA”) is a coalition of tenants, housing advocates, and community members committed to protecting long-term housing by curbing illegal short-term rental (“STR”) activity. Through research and data analysis, we assess the STR industry’s impact on affordable housing and neighborhood stability.

We appreciate the time and attention the staff and Council have given this ordinance. To best protect housing and residents in Whittier, we continue to urge the Council to strengthen the ordinance by: 1) instituting a true primary residence requirement that limits STRs to one per person; 2) improving the fine structure; and 3) adopting a Private Right of Action. These changes will promote long-term housing, mitigate the impact of corporate STRs, and keep residents safe.

1. Adopt a True Primary Residence Requirement.

As currently drafted, the ordinance allows STR operators to qualify either by living on the STR property for over half the year or, if the owner does not live on the STR property, by residing elsewhere within the City. BNLA recommends adopting a true primary residence requirement, limiting STR operation to individuals who live on the STR property for at least 50% of the year. In doing so, the Council will also limit STRs to one per person, rather than the current two. This will preserve housing by ensuring that an STR is used primarily as housing with short-term renting as a secondary use and not as a standalone commercial venture. Similar provisions exist within the City and County of Los Angeles,¹ along with many other local jurisdictions. Methods such as a review of the homeowner’s exemption filing or notarized lease can serve as proof of primary residence.

¹ Los Angeles City: <https://planning.lacity.gov/ordinances/docs/HomeSharing/adopted/Final%20Ordinance.pdf>; Los Angeles County: <https://tcc.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Short-Term-Rental-Ordinance.pdf>

2. Improve the Fine Structure.

- A. **Strengthen penalties for Illegal STR Operators:** BNLA recommends updating WMC § 5.68.070(A) to ensure that violators of the ordinance are liable for fines *per violation, per day*, set at:
- \$1,000 for a first offense
 - \$2,000 for a second offense
 - \$3,000 or more for third and subsequent offences

Fining *per violation, per day*, makes the ordinance more enforceable. For example, the city would be able to fine the operator of an unregistered STR for each day it is illegally advertised, increasing liability for operators who choose to flout the ordinance.

- B. **Add Penalties for Repeat and Chronic Offenders:** Currently, third and subsequent offenses only result in permit revocation. Additional escalating fines, as recommended above, added to WMC § 5.68.070(A) for chronic offenders are necessary to dissuade continued illegal activity.

- C. **Strengthen Enforcement Against Hosting Platforms:** BNLA recommends the following updates to WMC § 5.68.090:
- Clarify that each day that a hosting platform allows a host to advertise a listing without displaying a valid permit number constitutes a separate offense, subject to distinct penalties and fines regardless of whether the City has issued a notice.
 - Increase fines for hosting platforms, currently \$200 and \$500, to an amount that meaningfully deters violations.

Jurisdictions such the City and County of Los Angeles impose high fines on platforms that list or facilitate bookings for unpermitted STRs. In the City of Los Angeles, hosting platforms are fined \$1,211 per day for completing a booking for a listing that does not have a valid Home-Sharing registration number.² Whittier should adopt a similar deterrent structure.

3. Adopt a Private Right of Action.

BNLA encourages the Council to include a Private Right of Action in the Ordinance that would allow any interested party to pursue legal action when unlawful STR activities occur. Cities like West Hollywood, Santa Monica, San Francisco, and Beverly Hills already have this measure in place as a deterrent and enforcement backstop.

² Los Angeles City: <https://planning.lacity.gov/ordinances/docs/HomeSharing/adopted/Final%20Ordinance.pdf>

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Council Meeting: _____

Agenda Item No: _____

Better Neighbors Comment Letter

Agenda Item 8D: Short-term Rental Ordinance

Page 3 of 3

Amid California's ongoing housing crisis, Whittier has taken important steps to protect residents from displacement and the safety challenges posed by STRs. We urge the Commission to strengthen the STR Ordinance by including a true primary residence requirement, improving the fine structure, and adopting a Private Right of Action. Should you have any questions, please contact Maura O'Neill at maura@betterneighborsla.org.

Sincerely,

/s/

Randy Renick

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