ORIGINAL

ORDINANCE NO.: 2026-013

Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 17 (Unified Development Ordinance), Article 4: Use Regulations Sec. 17-4.2 Principal Uses and Article 9: Definitions and Rules of Measurement Sec. 17-9.4 Definitions

BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council this 3rd day of March, 2026, that the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 17 (Unified Development Ordinance), Article 4: Use Regulations, Sec. 17-4.2 Principal Uses and Article 9: Definitions and Rules of Measurement, Sec. 17-9.4 Definitions is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 17-4.2 Principal Uses

(c) Standards for Specific Principal Uses

(3) Commercial Uses

g. Visitor Accommodation Uses

1. Short-Term Rental (STR)

   A short-term rental located within a residential base zoning district shall only be located upon a parcel having frontage on a street containing four through lanes and classified as a Major Arterial, Minor Arterial, or Collector in the most recent update of the City of Columbia Comprehensive Plan transportation maps. An owner-occupied short-term rental (STR) is not subject to this standard.

Sec. 17-9.4 Definitions

Owner-occupied
A dwelling unit that is lawfully classified as owner-occupied (legal residence) by the County Assessor and is receiving the four percent special assessment ratio.

Requested by:

Assistant City Manager Palen

Approved by:

City Manager

Mayor

Approved as to form:

City Attorney

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Introduced: 02/17/2026
Final Reading: 03/03/2026

CITY COUNCIL

February 17, 2026 at 4:00 P.M.
City Hall, 3rd Floor, Council Chambers, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, S.C., 29201

AMENDMENT TO THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE
Owner-Occupied Short Term Rentals

Proposal:	Request to amend the Unified Development Ordinance, Chapter 17 - Article 4: Use Regulations Sec. 17-4.2. Principal Uses (b) Principal Use Table and (c) Standards for Specific Principal Uses; and Article 9: Definitions and Rules of Measurement Sec. Sec. 17-9.4 Definitions, to modify standards for short-term rentals (STR) in Residential Base Zoning Districts to exempt owner-occupied dwelling units.
Applicant:	Andrew Livengood, Zoning Administrator
Staff Recommendation:	Staff Sponsored
PC Recommendation:	Approved (7-0)

DETAILS

On January 6, 2026, City Council passed Ord. 2025-107, establishing Short-Term Rentals (STR) as a use within the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that is allowed within commercial and mixed use districts, and in residential districts if certain standards are met. Namely, the standards require that an STR in a Residential Base Zoning District must be located on a lot having frontage on a street that has 4 through lanes and that is also classified as a major arterial, minor arterial, or collector in the City of Columbia's comprehensive plan.

Upon the review and approval of Ord. 2025-107, Council expressed their desire to exempt owner-occupied STRs from the above standards. **Thus, the purpose of the amendment before the Planning Commission today is to provide an exemption to the residential district STR standards for owner-occupied dwelling units.** Upon passage of this new amendment, an STR in an *owner-occupied* dwelling unit may be located in a residential district, regardless of the classification of the street or number of lanes.

To determine whether a dwelling unit is owner-occupied, this amendment utilizes the same standard that exists within Chapter 5 of the City Codes (the Short Term Rental Permit program): the lawful classification as owner-occupied by the County Assessor, receiving the 4% special assessment ratio.

It should be noted that:

- The only aspect of the UDO's regulation of STRs being reviewed by the Planning Commission today is this exception for owner-occupied STRs.

- As before, the UDO regulates the location of STRs only. Performance standards for STRs would remain within Chapter 5, Article IX, of City Codes - currently administered by the Code Enforcement Division. This amendment to the UDO does not exempt owner-occupied STRs from compliance with the standards contained within Chapter 5.

g. **Visitor Accomodations Uses**

1. **Short-Term Rental (STR)**
A short-term rental located within a residential base zoning district shall only be located upon a parcel having frontage on a street containing four through lanes and classified as a Major Arterial, Minor Arterial, or Collector in the most recent update of the City of Columbia Comprehensive Plan transportation maps. An owner-occupied short-term rental (STR) is not subject to this standard.

(4) **Agricultural Uses**

a. **Agriculture and Forestry Uses**

1. **Community Garden**

Community gardens shall comply with the following standards:

(i) Accessory buildings shall be limited to sheds for the storage of tools, greenhouses, and seasonal farm stands. The combined area of all buildings and other structures, excluding greenhouses, shall not exceed 15 percent of the area of the parcel. Greenhouses may not exceed 75 percent of the area of the parcel.

(ii) Areas used for communal composting shall be limited to 20 percent of the area of the parcel.

(iii) Perimeter fences, including trellises, are allowed in community gardens, subject to the standards in Sec. 17-5.8, Fences and Walls.

(iv) Before issuance of a permit for a community garden, it shall have an established set of operating rules addressing the governance structure of the garden, hours of operation, assignment of garden plots, and maintenance and security requirements and responsibilities.

(5) **Industrial Uses**

a. **Waste-Related Uses**

1. **Recycling Center**

A recycling center shall comply with the following standards:

(i) Stocks and supplies shall be either stored inside enclosed buildings or screened by solid walls, opaque fences, dense evergreen shrubbery or the like, so that they are not visible from any public street or from the ground level of adjacent property used for residential or office purposes.

(ii) Any required front yard shall not be used for storage.

(iii) The side yard setback for storage areas and buildings adjacent to residential or office uses shall be at least 25 feet.

(iv) Adequate ingress and egress shall be provided.

OUTBUILDING
A shed, garage, or other building that is accessory to a principal use on the same lot.

OUTDOOR DISPLAY OF MERCHANDISE (AS ACCESSORY TO A RETAIL SALES USE OR WHOLESALE SALES)
Outdoor display of merchandise is the placement of products or materials for sale outside the entrance of a retail or wholesale sales establishment.

OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT
See "Entertainment, Outdoor."

OUTPARCEL
A remaining parcel platted in a commercial subdivision but set aside for future development or some other purpose specified on the plat.

OWNER-OCCUPIED
A dwelling unit that is lawfully classified as owner-occupied (legal residence) by the County Assessor and is receiving the four percent special assessment ratio.

PARAPET
That portion of a wall that extends above the roof line.

PARCEL
See "Lot."

PARKING AREA
An outdoor area containing off-street parking, including any appurtenant driving areas, such as aisles and driveways.

PARKING LOT
See "Surface Parking or Parking Lot."

PARKING SPACE
An area provided for parking a licensed motorized vehicle in operating condition in accordance with Sec. 17-5.2, Off-Street Parking, Bicycle Parking, and Loading.

PD
See "Planned Development."

PERSON
For the purposes of enforcing this Ordinance in accordance with Enforcement, "person" includes an individual, corporation, government agency, government official, business trust, partnership, two or more persons having a joint interest, or any other legal entity. Persons subject to the remedies and penalties established in Enforcement, for violating this Ordinance shall include the owner, tenant, or occupant of the land or structure that is in violation of this Ordinance and any other person who participates in, assists, directs, creates, or maintains a situation that constitutes an Ordinance violation, including but not limited to an architect, engineer, builder, contractor, or agent.