



SMALL TOWN, BIG BEACH

TO: Mayor & Council

FROM: J. Scott Stephens, Planning Director

DATE: January 20, 2026

RE: **Zoning Text Amendment – Vacation Rental Signage (ZTA25-06)**

ISSUE: The City proposes to amend Article 4: Supplementary Regulations, § 6-18 Dwelling Units Licensed for Vacation Rental, of the Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to amend and clarify signage allowed on sites permitted for Vacation Rental Dwelling Units.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff and the Planning Commission recommend the City Council approve the Zoning Text Amendment.

BACKGROUND: On December 16, 2025, after holding a public hearing, the Commission voted to recommend approval of the Zoning Text Amendment.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: N/A

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS: N/A

RELATED ISSUES: N/A

ATTACHMENTS: Staff Report & Proposed Ordinance

DEPARTMENT: Planning & Zoning

STAFF CONTACT: Scott Stephens

Zoning Text Amendment – Vacation Rental Signs

Staff Report: Scott Stephens

Council COW Meeting Date: January 20, 2026

Application #: ZTA25-06

Applicant: City of Gulf Shores

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The City proposes to amend Article 4: Supplementary Regulations, § 6-18 Dwelling Units Licensed for Vacation Rental, of the Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to amend and clarify signage allowed on sites permitted for Vacation Rental Dwelling Units.

DETAILS OF REQUEST

This request re-defines which signs will be allowed on properties licensed for Vacation Rental Dwelling Units (i.e. Short Term Rentals).

The proposed amendment establishes signage allowed or not allowed on properties that are licensed for Vacation Rental Dwelling Units, specifically:

- Address Numbers (required in this section and as part of the building codes)
- One Identification Sign for each dwelling unit; no larger than six square feet. The sign must be mounted flat to the front façade of the structure, and not directly illuminated. On properties zoned R-1-3 or properties zoned R-1-4 and also abutting the Little Lagoon, the Identification Sign may be mounted on the façade of the principal structure or mounted on a post or pole no more than six feet tall (only one Identification Sign allowed)
- One Name Plate Sign for each dwelling unit; no larger than four square feet, mounted flat to the front façade of the structure, and not directly illuminated; if the Name Plate Sign is “architecturally incorporated” into the façade of the structure, it may be a maximum of eight square feet
- One temporary real estate sign may be posted only on properties that are actively for sale
- For Gulf front lots, one sign on either side of the structure (the east and west sides) may be a Fence Sign or Detached Sign, no larger than 60 square inches, no more than 36 inches above the ground, and at least 15 feet from the Street Line
- No other Fence Signs or Detached Signs allowed
- No Window Signs or Snipe Signs allowed
- No signs may be located on or over a public right-of-way or public easement

This was discussed at the October 21, 2025, meeting, and was postponed to the November 18, 2025, meeting. At the November meeting, it was postponed to the December 16, 2025, meeting, and a work session was suggested.

The Planning Commission held a work session on December 2, 2025, where further changes were discussed and suggested. At the December 16th meeting, the Commission voted to

recommend the attached ordinance.

This text amendment will also update Section 6-18 of the Zoning Ordinance to use the standard term, "Vacation Rental Dwelling Unit."

Additionally, a "grandfathering" clause is being recommended that will allow the individually customized, unique to the property signs that are existing (and not in the right-of-way) to remain as nonconforming. These signs will not be allowed to be moved, enlarged, or altered, but will be allowed to remain as is. In the event one of these signs is moved, destroyed, or falls into a state of disrepair then it must be removed, then any future signs must comply with the new ordinance.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the Zoning Text Amendment as drafted.

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE
TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 1584
(ZONING ORDINANCE) ADOPTED JANUARY 1, 2010,
AT ARTICLE 6: SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS BY CHANGING CERTAIN
LANGUAGE AND REWRITING AS REQUIRED
(ZTA25-06)

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GULF SHORES,
ALABAMA, WHILE IN REGULAR SESSION ON _____, as follows:

Section 1. That Ordinance 1584 (Zoning Ordinance) adopted January 1, 2010, be and it is hereby amended by **adding** or changing certain language (and deleting ~~striking through~~ text) and rewriting as follows:

* * * *

ARTICLE 6: SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS

§6-18. ~~Dwelling Units Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ **Dwelling Units**

A. Purpose. The purpose of this section is to allow **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Units ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ within certain areas of Gulf Shores and establish minimum standards for their use, while minimizing incompatibility with surrounding residential areas.

B. Applicability.

1. **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Units ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ are allowed, **if properly licensed**, in the following areas of the City; the Single Family and Duplex ~~Tourist~~ **Vacation Rental** Overlay District, BN, BG, BT, ICW-N, ICW-S Zoning Districts and multi-family uses that are designated for vacation rentals in Planned Unit Developments (PUD). **A Vacation Rental Dwelling Unit that is not licensed for vacation rental is prohibited in the City.**
2. ~~Dwelling Units Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ **Dwelling Units** are prohibited in the following areas of the City; AG, ATP, ED, IND, OS, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, and R-5 Zoning Districts and single family subdivisions in Planned Unit Developments (PUD). The City may approve **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Units ~~Licensed for Vacation Rentals~~ in individual Multi-family developments located in the R-3 and R-4 Zoning Districts by Conditional Use Permit.
3. Nonconforming Uses. Notwithstanding the provisions of §6-18B2 above, a Single Family or Duplex Dwelling that (a) is located outside of the Single Family and Duplex ~~Tourist~~ **Vacation Rental** Overlay District in an R-1 or R-2 district or in an area designated as such in a PUD, (b) was rented as a **licensed Vacation Rental**

Dwelling Unit ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ during the calendar year 2009 prior to August 31, 2009, and (c) was duly licensed for such rental on August 31, 2009 with all rental income having been duly reported for the computation and timely payment of business license fees and lodging taxes in calendar year 2009 shall be ~~permitted and regulated as s-~~ **shall be allowed to continue as a Vacation Rental** Dwelling Unit ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of ~~§6-18B3~~ **§6-18B2** above, a Dwelling Unit in a Multi-family Dwelling that is **(a) was made a nonconforming use by the February 25, 2019, adoption of the** above provisions, **and (b)** that was licensed as a **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Unit ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ for such rental on August 31, 2018, with all rental income having been duly reported for the computation and timely payment of business license fees and lodging taxes in calendar year 2018, shall be ~~permitted and regulated~~ **allowed to continue** as a **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Unit ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ **if it complies with applicable licensing and operating regulations.**
5. The continuing use of said **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Unit ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ shall be regulated as legal nonconforming uses pursuant to Article 13 Nonconformities.

C. Permitting and Taxation.

1. As a condition of the issuance of a business license for a **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Unit ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~, the owner of a Dwelling shall apply for and receive a business license from the City Revenue Division prior to using the dwelling unit for said purposes.
2. A business license shall be valid for a time period as determined by the Revenue Division but not to exceed one year. A license may be revoked by the Revenue Division for noncompliance with the requirements herein. Decisions of the Revenue Division may be appealed to the Council.
3. A copy of the business license shall be supplied to the rental agency. The property owner and rental agency shall be required to present this license upon request of the City. The property owner shall be responsible for complying with all requirements of this Section.
4. **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Units ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ shall be subject to any applicable lodging and resort taxes normally levied in the City.

D. Occupancy. Occupancy shall comply with the following requirements:

1. Occupancy of a **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Unit ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ by more than one (1) family, as defined in Article 4 Definitions, for longer than thirty (30) consecutive days shall be considered a violation of this Ordinance and prohibited.
2. **Vacation Rental** Dwelling Units ~~Licensed for Vacation Rental~~ shall be limited to a maximum rental of 180 days or it shall be deemed a long term rental and exempt from the regulations of this Overlay District.

E. Parking, Access, and Circulation.

1. Parking spaces may be provided on driveways or within a parking lot specifically designed for such use.
2. Required parking, maneuvering areas, and driveways shall be covered with a surface suitable for parking as approved by the City Public Works Director or his designee. The use of gravel, rock or any other similar material that is not similar in color to beach sand is prohibited.
3. Parking within public street rights-of-way is prohibited and subject to the enforcement actions and penalties as specified in Chapter 21 of the Code of Ordinances.

F. Signage.

- ~~1. No signage, other than that permitted in the underlying district, shall be permitted.~~
- ~~2. All Dwelling Units Licensed for Vacation Rental shall display their address prominently so that it is clearly visible and readable from the right of way, and, in the case of a Dwelling Unit Licensed for Vacation Rental located on a gulf front lot, the address shall also be displayed consistent with the requirements of Chapter 20 of the Code of Ordinances and Section 20-4 therein.~~

- 1. Signs on the premises of a Vacation Rental Dwelling Unit that are visible from the right-of-way are allowed only as described in this section. For the purposes of this section, the signage regulations apply to each dwelling unit unless otherwise stated. Structures or parcels may have multiple dwelling units. Signs as described in this section must be permitted, except for a Real Estate Sign described in (6).**
- 2. A Vacation Rental Dwelling Unit shall display its address number in compliance with the applicable building code and using characters not exceeding eight inches in height, in a line not more than 36 inches long, so that it is clearly visible and readable from the right-of-way, and, in the case of a Vacation Rental Dwelling Unit located on a gulf front lot, the address number shall also be displayed consistent with the Code of Ordinances Sections 20-4 and 7-126.**
- 3. One Identification Sign may be posted on a Vacation Rental Dwelling Unit. Such sign shall not exceed six square feet in area exposed to view and must be mounted flat to the front Façade of the Principal Building. Rider signs or auxiliary signs mounted adjacent to the primary sign are allowed but the combined sign area of the primary and rider sign(s) may not exceed six square feet. No such sign shall be Directly Illuminated. On properties with an underlying zoning of R-1-3 or on properties with an underlying zoning of R-1-4 and abutting the Little Lagoon, the one Identification Sign may be freestanding (instead of attached to the structure or building) under the following provisions:**
 - a. The overall height of the sign and post may not exceed six feet from grade;**
 - b. No portion of the post or sign may be on or over the public right-of-way;**

Section 4. Signs improperly placed within the public right-of-way shall be removed immediately. Attached signs that were existing as of **December 16, 2025**, shall be considered nonconforming. Detached signs that are individually customized, unique to the property, and are complimentary to the principal structure’s architectural design and context, and were existing as of **December 16, 2025**, shall be considered nonconforming. Nonconforming signs may remain, but shall not, after the effective date of this Ordinance, be enlarged, structurally altered, moved, or extended unless such sign shall be made to comply with all the provisions of this Ordinance.

Section 5. That this Ordinance shall become effective immediately after its adoption and publication as required by law.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2026

Robert Craft, Mayor

ATTEST:

Tobi Waters
City Clerk