



**Wolf Laurel Road Maintenance &
Security Homeowners Association Inc.**
63 Village Lane, Mars Hill, NC 28754

Report of the Short Term Rental Task Force

In response to expressions of concern, Wolf Laurel Road Maintenance and Security and the Wolf Laurel Property Owners Association convened a joint task force to examine the role and practice of short term rentals in the community. The task force included people who approached short term rentals from various perspectives and attitudes. The purpose was neither to prohibit nor regulate short term rentals, but to consider ways to enhance the short term rental experience by maximizing the benefits and minimizing the problems from the practice consistent with the character and experiences of our community. The task force chose to do so by (1) asking what role rentals play in our community, and (2) identifying “Best Practices” through which property owners who host short term rentals could design their rental opportunity and attract quality renters, and through which the community could best benefit from short term rental neighbors.

Short term rentals have been a constant presence during Wolf Laurel’s 55 years. The longtime developer, Bald Mountain Development Corporation, rented properties through its real estate division and even operated an Inn for many years. When the corporation left the mountain, its rental business was sold to others who remain. The practice continues into the era of internet rentals. One property manager has estimated that rentals in the community have increased 62% in 2020 compared to 2019. Not only are short term rentals a long term feature of Wolf Laurel, they are expected to play a continued role in its future and its growth.

There are good reasons for property owners at Wolf Laurel to welcome these rentals. By widening the exposure of those interested in spending time in the mountains, rentals are a critical source of marketing for the community. Many, perhaps nearly all, of the current property owners fell in love with the mountain during a visit as a guest or a renter. One property manager estimates that about 60 percent of their renters inquire about property purchase in the community, and nearly 50 percent of their renters actively look at listed property during or shortly after their visit. Thus, short term rentals are one of the driving forces in supporting demand for property at Wolf Laurel, and thus provide upward influence on property values.

The task force acknowledges that problems do occur with renters who may not be familiar with our customs nor rules. But those involved in rentals insist that such unfavorable experiences are rare rather than common, and seldom do problem renters return. In general, renters are people seeking the same recreational opportunities and serene natural experience that all property owners enjoy at Wolf Laurel. They are our temporary and potentially future

neighbors who have invested in the opportunity to enjoy our community. Covenants explicitly assign property owners the responsibility for their renters observance of the community's rules and repeated problems are addressed through normal covenant enforcement procedures.

“Best Practices” were developed from the experiences of successful custodians of rental properties, filtered through recognition of the specifics of problem rentals. Members who manage the physical and recreational infrastructure of the community probed the rental market experience and added their advice. Experiences were shared and queried to refine the list. The goal of the product was to develop a body of renters who find their experience in our community positive and memorable and wish to return again and perhaps to join us on a permanent basis. The happy, satisfied renter is less likely to be a problem renter and more likely to enliven and enhance our community. Best Practices seek principles to achieve the happy renter, the happy rental property owner, and the happy Wolf Laurel neighbor. The Best Practices list is attached.

The task force also queried “Best Practices” to enhance the community's benefit from rentals, asking: How can the community best convert short term renters into visitors who enjoy in our community as we do, perhaps joining us permanently? The answer was that those practices were actually inherent in the character of our community everyday. We are known for welcoming new neighbors and embracing their addition to our activities; for warm greetings to others enjoying the many things we have to offer; for eagerness to assist those with questions; for helping when a neighbor seeks directions or appears confused or lost; for readily acknowledging the variety of joys that we experience in Wolf Laurel including quiet and solitude. Everyday we share our good fortune with our neighbors, celebrating our experiences about the wonderful life we have made here. These “best practices” imprint our visitors with impressions that for over fifty years have continued to attract new residents to our community. The task force hastens to add that when visitors wittingly or unwittingly violate one of the rules or informal practices that make our days on the mountain enjoyable, it is proper to gently introduce them to our ways. And, when necessary, do not hesitate to report dramatic or persistent problems to Wolf Laurel security.

Finally, the task force concluded that the community should anticipate increased rentals as the current interest in our community grows. Institutions within the community should continue to be sensitive to legitimate concerns of homeowners, to problems that may be emerging, and creatively seek solutions. Acknowledging problems and working with all involved to resolve issues will be to the benefit of all in the community.

The task force invites your response to our work. Whether you are a owner who rents your home or a homeowner with concerns about the impact of rentals, let us know your concerns and inform our understanding of the phenomenon that we are all experiencing.