

# **Register Your Boarding House Rooming House Shared Single-Family House**

The Winston-Salem City Council and the Forsyth County Commissioners have passed revisions to zoning ordinances pertaining to single-family houses that have been converted into boarding or rooming houses, as well as single-family houses that are shared and occupied by more than four unrelated persons 18 years or older (and their children). The revisions apply only to certain residential zoning districts, and set deadlines for bringing these buildings into compliance, regardless of when they were converted or established.

The revisions require the owners of these buildings, both in Winston-Salem and in the unincorporated areas of Forsyth County, to register with the Winston-Salem Department of Neighborhood Services between Jan. 1, 2008 and Jan 1, 2009.

Look inside for information about the new regulations and how to comply.

## **Boarding and Rooming Houses**

1. The new rules apply to any rooming house or boarding house that is in Winston-Salem or an unincorporated area of Forsyth County *and* is on land zoned for single-family houses\* or on land zoned RSQ\*
2. The owners of these houses must register the house with the Winston-Salem Department of Neighborhood Services between Jan. 1, 2008, and Jan. 1, 2009.
3. These houses must be brought into compliance\* with current zoning regulations by Jan. 1, 2012.

These rules do not apply to owners who have legally established their boarding house as a home occupation, as long as they have no more than three lodgers and have a home occupation permit from the Inspections Division.

## **Shared Single-Family Houses**

1. The new rules apply to any single-family house that is shared and occupied by more than four unrelated persons 18 years or older (and their children) that is in Winston-Salem or an unincorporated area of Forsyth County *and* is on land zoned for single-family houses\* or on land zoned RSQ\*
2. The owners of these houses must register the house with the Winston-Salem Department of Neighborhood Services between Jan. 1, 2008, and Jan. 1, 2009.
3. These houses must be brought into compliance\* with current zoning regulations by Jan. 1, 2012.

## **Registering Your Property**

1. You must turn in a signed and notarized registration form by Jan. 1, 2009. Forms are available online at [www.cityofws.org/hns](http://www.cityofws.org/hns) or at the Winston-Salem Department of Neighborhood Services, 100 E. First St., Suite 423. Neighborhood Services has been designated as the agency responsible for registration of the buildings covered under the new rules, both inside the city limits and in Forsyth County.
2. The registration form requires the following information:

- Address of the property.
- Address, block and lot number and census tract.\*
- Property owner name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.
- Zoning on the property\*.
- The number of rooms used for sleeping.
- The number of adult occupants.
- The number of bedrooms secured by locks to prevent entrance when unoccupied.
- The number of separate living units.
- The number of vacant living units.
- The number of occupied floors in the building.
- The number of mailboxes serving the building.
- The number of electrical meters serving the building.
- The number of kitchens in the building.
- The number of bathrooms in the building.
- The number of exterior doors on the building.
- Areas locked or partitioned to prevent access to some occupants.
- When the property was converted to its current occupancy.

3. Owners will have to turn in a floor plan drawing as a part of the registration application.

Instructions on how to do this are available online with the registration form.

4. Sample registration forms and floor plan drawing are available online.

5. If you have questions about registering your property, call Neighborhood Services at 727-8486.

\* See FAQs

## FAQs

**What is a single-family house?** A house designed to be occupied by one family related by blood, or no more than four unrelated adults. In these houses all residents have access to all rooms and all areas of the house. No areas are partitioned off or locked from other residents of the house. The zoning code notes that certain structural features are evidence that a house is not used by a “family,” as legally defined. These features include multiple mail boxes on the house or property, locked doors or partitions that divide the building into separate living spaces, separate electric meters, separate exterior doors into living areas, or locks on bedroom doors that prevent access when the bedroom is not occupied.

**What is a boarding or rooming house?** A residential building originally built as a single-family house that has been modified, expanded, reconfigured or reconstructed to have one or more separate living units.

**What's the difference between a boarding and a rooming house?**

A boarding house is occupied by the owner, who rents out rooms. Zoning regulations allow up to eight boarders. Rooming houses do not have the owner living in the building.

**How many unrelated people may occupy a single family house?** Within residential districts zoned for single-family houses, no more than four unrelated adults age 18 or older (plus their children) may occupy a single-family house.

**Do the new rules apply to houses that have been subdivided into apartments?** Zoning regulations for RS districts already prohibit houses that have been subdivided into apartments. The new rules do not apply to them because they are already illegal.

**What districts are zoned for single family houses?** Any zoning district that begins with an “RS,” including RS-5, RS-7, RS-9, RS-12, RS-15, RS-20, RS-30 and RS-40. These are districts set up exclusively for single-family homes. Other zoning districts allow a mix of housing.

**What is the RSQ district?** A district set up for residential buildings ranging from single-family houses to quadraplexes (buildings with four dwelling units).

**Where are converted residential houses allowed?** Boarding and rooming houses are allowed in all multi-family residential districts as well as all other districts that allow a mix of residential and commercial uses.

**How do I find out the block and lot number, zoning and census tract of my property?** If you have access to the Internet, go to <http://maps2.co.forsyth.nc.us/geodata/>. Enter the address of the building, and click on "Search." The block and lot number of the property will be listed at the top. Scroll down and the zoning and census tract will be listed at the bottom. You can also call the Inspections Division at 727-2628.

**What happens if I don't register?** Your property will be out of compliance as of Jan. 2, 2009, and will be subject to civil penalties of up to \$100 a day or criminal prosecution in Forsyth County Superior Court.

**What happens if I register my property and don't convert my property by Jan. 1, 2012?** Your property will be out of compliance and will be subject to civil penalties of up to \$100 a day or criminal prosecution in Forsyth County Superior Court.

**How can do I bring my property into compliance with zoning regulations?**

- If you have a boarding or rooming house, you can either convert it back to a single-family house or have the zoning for your property changed to a zoning district that allows boarding and rooming houses. If the zoning change is not allowed, you will have to convert it back to a single-family house. (Note: If a zoning change is approved, the house will be brought up to current fire and building codes.)
- If you own a shared single-family house, the number of occupants must be reduced to no more than four unrelated persons 18 years or older (and their children), or you may seek a zoning change as noted above.

**Will I be reimbursed for the cost of turning my building back into a house for a single family?** No. The deadline for complying with the revised law gives owners time to recoup the cost of compliance.