

**The Watt's Accessory Living Space  
Variance of Use  
Letter of Intent**

**March 26, 2025**

Steven Watt & Corinne Reed-Watt  
36 Clover Circle East  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906

**Owner and Applicant:** The owners and applicants are the same, Steven L Watt and Corinne L Reed-Watt, a married couple.

**Tax Schedule No:** 6505109008

**Parcel Size:** 8400 square feet

**Zoning:** RS-6000 (single-family residential)

**Site Location, Size, Zoning:** The property is located at 36 Clover Circle East and is zoned RS-6000 (single-family residential). It is outside the Colorado Springs city limits but within El Paso County, in Stratmoor Hills district. The proposed variance of use is compatible with the planned and existing development and consistent with the El Paso Master Plan.

**Legal Description:** THAT PART OF LOT 4 LY SLY OF A LN DRAWN FROM A PT ON W LN THAT IS 10 FT SLY OF NW COR 2 NE COR LOT 4 BLK 2 STRATMOOR VILLAGE 1

**Request:** The purpose of this application is to request approval of a variance of use to allow a "Accessory Living Space" (within the owner's home) in the RS-6000 zoning district. The use will be for a short-term rental (STR), which is allowed in El Paso County without regulation, but is regulated in this case because we have a kitchen in the STR space.

**Justification:** The strict application of 5.5.4 in this case would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties, expenses, and undue hardship. The kitchen that exists in the space includes certified wiring and proper venting. If we had to remove the kitchen, it would involve demolition and reconstruction, which is expensive. A properly wired kitchen provides a safer living space than having customers bring in their own plug-in appliances and use extension cords. The pages that follow address the Variance of Use criteria included within Section 5.3.4 of the El Paso County Land.

Currently, Short-Term Rentals (STRs) are not regulated in the County and there are about 15-22 (varies by day) listed on Airbnb and VRBO in Stratmoor Hills. The difference between our STR and some of the others is that our space includes a kitchen, which was originally built because we had grandsons who needed a place to stay for some time. They have since moved on. We then decided to change the space to an Airbnb and researched the rules in El Paso County. What we found was that El Paso County does not regulate STRs, so we thought our intended use was clear to go. Now we realize that the kitchen we built makes the unit an accessory unit. There is a separate entrance that can be used, but the space shares our laundry room and there is only a door between our residence and the STR space.

We would like to keep the kitchen, because we see it as being safer than the many "make-shift" kitchens in STRs that consist of extension cords with small appliances (with no venting) and no clean water available (for coffee, cooking, etc.) in any place other than the bathroom. The kitchen provides a safe place to make and eat food.

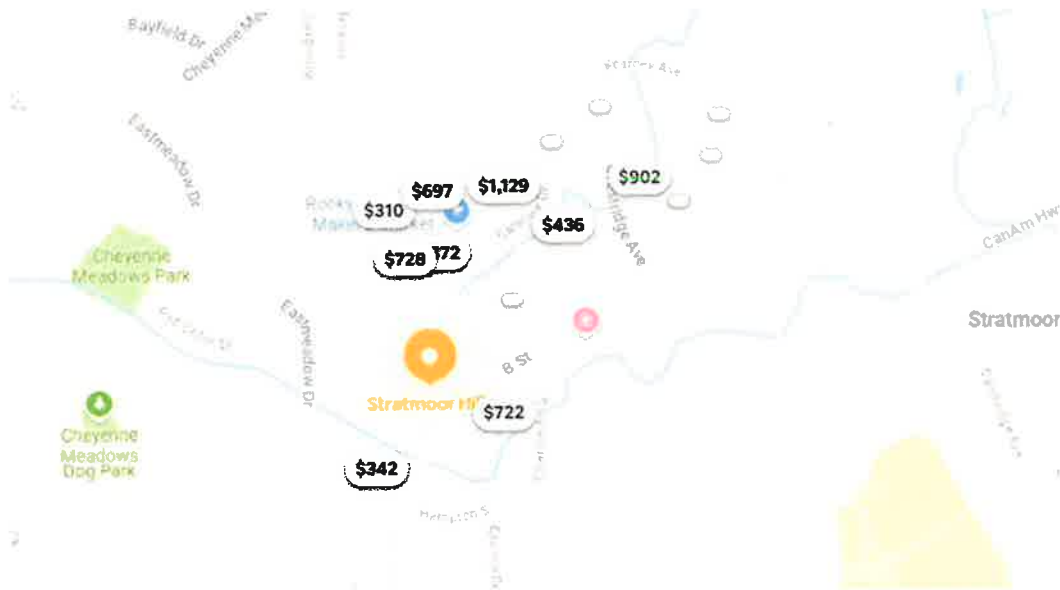
Our renters range from military personnel looking for STRs to support them while they are obtaining permanent housing; grandparents visiting grandchildren; tourists looking for interesting sites in Colorado; and overflow from weddings and events who cannot book at a room at the venue. We have a 5-star rating and are Airbnb Super Hosts. We believe that the

need for STRs will increase due to increased movement of the military from one post to another and increased traveling for pleasure on a budget.

Because the County allows STRs, we believe that we should be allowed to rent our space as an STR with the kitchen, which is safer than small appliances and bathroom water, and meets the needs of our customers. We are also on a fixed income (both over 70 years old) and need this additional income.

Below are maps showing the existing STRs in Stratmoor Hills (Airbnb and VRBO). Keep in mind that these were taken on 3/26/25 and STRs vary by day.

Airbnb:



VRBO:



In addition to the regulatory hardship, we have experienced hardship due to our inexperience in navigating the planning and permitting process. We used a builder who agreed to adhere to the Pikes Peak Regional Building and El Paso County Planning regulations. Several inspections were completed (overall electrical; vent installation in the kitchen; and the heat pump) by the County. Other than the kitchen and the heat pump, all other construction was already in place when we bought the house. Downstairs, there were two bedrooms and a bathroom in place. For the new space, one of the bedrooms was made into a pantry and kitchen and the other into a living room/bedroom/office combination.

The nuance of a kitchen making this space an accessory living space came to light when the County called the builder (nearly a year after the builder told us that everything was complete) and told him that the electrician failed the electrical inspection. That seemed odd to us, because the builder had told us that all inspections were passed, which caused us to open up our STR. The electrician had spent an extra day at the house taking pictures and sending them to the builder as his final "proofs" that the work was in compliance. The new inspection was done on April 15, 2025 (a year after we were told the construction was complete).

**NOTE:** Please review the "Background" section below for additional information regarding the sequence of events that lead them to believe renting the unit was legal without any additional process.

**Development Code:** The strict application of any of the provisions of this Code would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties or undue hardship for the owners. Because of the kitchen in this portion of the owners' home, the space is considered a separate dwelling. The current Land Development Code does not permit a second dwelling to be rented in any zoning district other than the multi-family zoning districts. Applicants who wish to have two dwelling units in their house have no choice but to either rezone to a multi-family zoning district or request a variance of use.

Rezoning the property to a multi-family zoning district, such as the RM-12 zoning district, is inadvisable in this situation, because it does not even come close to being a residential development of up to 12 dwelling units per acre.

- The variance of use is generally consistent with the applicable Master Plan.
- The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding area, harmonious with the character of the neighborhood, not detrimental to the surrounding area, not detrimental to the future development of the area, and not detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the inhabitants of the area and County. The property is surrounded by the RS-6000 zoning district. There are 15-22 parcels with known STRs. Having multiple dwelling units on a single parcel is in keeping with the existing character of the neighborhood. The STR in question has a private entrance, as well as an entrance from the main part of the house. The exterior door is screened with vegetation. The second dwelling is not visually obtrusive, matches the character of the surrounding residential homes, and is not a detriment to the neighborhood. All utilities for the second dwelling derive from the original house and are paid for by the owners. Many of our neighbors have multiple people and/or families renting and/or living in their homes. This area is noted for having several homes where multiple soldiers share living expenses.

**View from the entrance to the property.**



**Entrance to STR:**



**View of the Kitchen currently in the space:**



- The proposed use will be able to meet air, water, odor, or noise standards established by County. The proposed use is a dwelling being served by Stratmoor Hills Water and Sanitation District and will be serviced by Colorado Springs Utilities.
- The proposed use will comply with all applicable requirements of this Code and all applicable County, State and federal regulations except those portions varied by this action; The proposed dwelling is within the RS-6000 zoning district. Table 5-4 of the Land Development Code identifies the density and dimensional standards of the RR-2.5 zoning district:
- Minimum lot size, front setback, rear setback, and maximum height requirements are within standard RS-6000 and will not be affected with this change.
- El Paso County allows for STRs within a residence in the RS-6000 zoning district; however, this STR will have a kitchen, which makes it an “Accessory Living Quarters”, which is not allowed without a variance. This variance is to allow the space to be rented as an STR with the kitchen intact. As discussed, there are 15-22 STRs in Stratmoor Hills at any one time and many other houses with multiple tenants.
- The proposed use will not adversely affect wildlife or wetlands.
- The dwelling has been constructed. No additional impacts to wildlife are anticipated as a result of the approval of the second dwelling. There are no wetlands onsite.
- The applicant has addressed all off-site impacts; There are no anticipated additional off-site impacts except for a minor increase in traffic. No traffic impact study is required because all of the criteria are satisfied. Vehicular traffic:
  - 1) Average Daily vehicle trips to the accessory structure are below 4 typically, and that’s only when the structure would be rented.
  - 2) Our driveway does not come into contact with any major or minor roadway intersections or highways.
  - 3) The occasional increase in vehicular trips is typically less than 4.
  - 4) The type of traffic is limited to passenger vehicles; therefore, no commercial vehicles or trucks are negatively impacting the traffic to the property.
  - 5) The LOS will be maintained as it currently is.
  - 6) There is no state highway near our property.
- Pedestrian traffic: There will be no pedestrian traffic as a result of this requested land use.
- Bicycle traffic: Bicycles are scarce in our area; however, adding this STR will not significantly affect bike traffic.

***Master Plan Elements***

No Master Plan elements are being changed with respect to the variance of use request, as identified in this Request for Variance.

**Background:**

Our home was constructed in 1964 and is about 2060 square feet (1035 upstairs and 1035 downstairs) with an attached garage. The finished area in the basement is 848 square feet and the space in question for this request is about 450 square feet.

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Google Map View of our house (our house marked with the red teardrop):







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