

**From:** Cathy Douglas <[almostcathy@gmail.com](mailto:almostcathy@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2020 12:49:08 PM

**To:** Stouder, Heather

**Subject:** Support for Short-term rental enforcement

I'm writing in support of the changes to Madison's Short-term rental ordinance being proposed, which will increase the ability of city regulators to enforce our existing rules. Ald. Marsha Rummel suggested I contact you.

Madison already has a very reasonable law for Airbnb hosts: they may rent out rooms in the home they live in at any time, and/or they may rent out their whole, unoccupied home for up to 30 days per year. Unfortunately, a growing number of hosts are choosing to break the law and rent out their whole property (or multiple properties) year-round to transient guests. While this earns them a tidy profit on their investment, it also keeps properties off our already tight housing market, while disrupting and endangering our neighborhoods.

I live two doors down from one of these properties myself, and have kept an eye on this situation ever since noticing it. In that year, things have been changing at a fast pace:

- 1) The number of Airbnbs listing is increasing rapidly.
- 2) More and more hosts are renting out multiple properties.
- 3) Around the country, these unattended rentals are being used as party houses, sometimes with violent and tragic results.
- 4) As municipalities pass regulations trying to control short-term rentals, Airbnb works to make these laws more difficult to maintain and enforce. For example, they recently changed the layout of their site to make it more difficult to detect hosts offering multiple properties.
- 5) In Madison, investors are purchasing properties just outside the Madison city limit and renting them out as Airbnbs. I live half a block from a tiny triangle of the town of Blooming Grove -- about a dozen square blocks -- where the number of STR listings has gone from a couple to seven in less than a year. Three of these properties belong to real estate agents. Of those, two belong to an agent with at least two DBAs and eight Airbnb rentals in the Madison area.

The ordinance changes being proposed will not address all these issues, but it will give city regulators more to work with. The city employee I spoke to about my neighbor's illegal Airbnb seemed very frustrated that he didn't have many tools he could legally use other than the host's guest book. He was prohibited from using information on the Airbnb website, and could not make an unannounced inspection because the owner was never on the property.

The illegal Airbnb on my block is still operating as a result. There was a large party there just last weekend. Afterwards, when the departing guests knocked over the full recycling bin as they drove off, I had to go over and pick up all the cans and other party remains that got dumped in the street. To me, this was sort of a metaphor for how Airbnbs work: hosts get the money, guests get the freedom to do whatever they want, and the neighbors are left to clean up the mess.

Thanks for listening.

Best wishes,

Cathy Douglas