

To the Madison City Planning Commission
Regarding Legislation on Tourist Rooming Houses

January 31, 2020

Madison City Plan Commission Members;

We are writing in support of the city's proposed changes to ordinances that apply to tourist rooming houses in the city of Madison. Ordinance 58895 is desperately needed. The proposed changes to create an annual permit, amend zoning regulations, amend the definition of TRH and bedrooms, and amend definition for primary residence will be a great step to better protect neighbors in our city.

Registration fees, documentation of guests names and vehicles, and ability of the city to inspect a home used as a rental property are very reasonable requirements to ask of a person who is using their home to run a rooming house. When I stay at a hotel, motel or even a state park I am required to pay fees, fill out forms, and provide detailed personal information including my car model and license plate, so I see no reason that operators and guests of tourist rooming homes cannot be asked to do the same.

We have experienced being the direct neighbor of a thoughtless homeowner running a busy AirBNB property from December 2018-July 2019 in our neighborhood on the near west side of Madison which is zoned for single family homes. In our case, the homeowner did not live on property though she claimed to. The property had at least 4 separate listings on AirBNB and our street became a revolving door of strangers appearing to check-in at 10pm, parking congestion from up to 5 renters' cars in the street per evening, strangers hosting parties in the backyard, etc. Even when this owner was established to be unlicensed, continued to operate outside of the current "light-touch" regulations, and ignored requests from neighbors to reduce the volume of rentals, the city was unable to do anything to help us. The current rules as written were not able to be enforced.

We recognize and do not want to punish those AirBNB hosts who are operating in a way that honors the original intent of tourist rooming homes and is considerate to their neighbors. Unfortunately, under current regulations, plenty of hosts can easily take the opportunity to rent multiple rooms, not live in the home they are renting, and excessively profit off of our "nice quiet neighborhoods" (as our neighbor did), by essentially running an unregulated mini-hotel in a residential neighborhood.

Madison needs updated regulations on tourist rooming houses as this problem is growing due to the growth of online platforms such as AirBNB. This is a world-wide problem that many cities are struggling to address. Thank you for working to improve our city ordinances.

Sincerely,

Fred M. Van Riet and Sarah Van Riet
Homeowners, full time residents, and taxpayers at
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