

Discussion: Short Term Rentals

During the Virginia General Assembly's 2017 legislative session, SB 1578 authorized localities to adopt ordinances requiring the registration of persons offering properties for short term rental. The Planning and Community Development Department created draft ordinance amendments related to short term rental of properties, which include properties rented through online services such as Airbnb and VRBO.

1 Topics 6 Answers Closed 2018-04-11

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Topic: Comments on Amendments to Short Term Rentals

6 Responses

6 Responses



Jared Stoltzfus 5 months ago

In reviewing the documents relating to this proposal, I was disappointed that I didn't see any reference to what other locations are doing in regards to VRBO, AirBnB, etc. I also don't see an explanation of why the city feels that something different needs to be done? In Phoenix, the hotel industry lobbied against AirBnB on the basis of lost tax revenue, so AirBnB started collecting and submitting the taxes. What's the argument in Hburg against giving homeowners a way to earn side income from spare rooms? One that I've heard is that it drives up housing and rental costs, decreasing the available housing supply. Seems like that would be great news for builders and developers, who could step in to create affordable housing. There are also ways to limit who is allowed to post on AirBnB to address these concerns. Even if the regulations imposed (getting a business license and providing off-street parking) aren't cumbersome, without knowing the logic behind the regulation I'm opposed.

The 'sharing economy' model of AirBnB, VRBO, etc ultimately keeps a LOT of money circulating locally. The major hotel chains may pay some taxes here, but the vast majority of that money ends up in the bank accounts of incredibly wealthy folks outside the state. (In the case of franchised hotels, I suppose more of it stays local) When a young family uses an extra room to make some side income, it all gets spent here. The same reasons we're better off supporting local artists, farmers, and businesses apply to AirBnB and VRBO folks. If the city is concerned about lost tax revenue, work with AirBnB to collect it. Otherwise, lets talk about the reasoning behind the regulations, and make sure that we're not creating regulations to stop a problem that doesn't exist.

2 Supports



Ritchie Vaughan 5 months ago

Because we're a college town with very specific peak demand vacation weekends (football and graduation), short-term AirBnB/VRBO rentals make really good economic sense in our area. From

an efficiency and resource allocation standpoint, we do not want our city to have enough hotel rooms to accommodate peak demand weekends... because these excess rooms will then stay vacant the remaining 355 days per year that don't have huge vacation demand. It makes far more sense for local residents to be able to open our doors (if we so please) to travelers when demand outstrips local supply for weekend housing. Personally, I'd gladly pay for a license and/or some taxes on my "rental income" in exchange for the opportunity to do this.

In addition to the demand from JMU visitors, short-term rentals may actually help alleviate some of the housing issues in our city. If a family ends up house-poor (ie. too much of their income is allocated to mortgage costs), short-term rentals might allow that family a small extra stream of income to offset higher housing costs. Additionally, our area really lacks short-term housing for folks who want to sell their current home and move into another home.... or build a new home. As a local real estate agent, I see requests weekly from families who need a place to camp out for a few weeks while waiting for their home to be built or a place to stay while waiting for their new house to close.. Again, short term rentals are a viable way to accomodate this needed short-term housing.

2 Supports



Ritchie Vaughan 5 months ago

Requiring a special use permit (as suggested in the public hearing memorandum) to open our homes to short-term rentals is far too burdensome. The city is suggesting that all AirBnB hosts will need to present at the Planning Commission and City Council.... then have to be voted in by Planning Commission and City Council? A process that takes 3 months? Frankly, that's more onerous than acquiring a business license at my residence. I think AirBnB hosts, city council members, and the Planning Commission all have better things to do with our time. We already have laws about noise violations and parking requirements in residential areas that are sufficient to keep disorderly short-term rentals in check. Let's not demand excessively high hurdles for the owners of short-term rentals.

2 Supports



David Kreider 5 months ago

As Airbnb users for many years, including in several foreign countries, I've come to appreciate not only the experience of warm hospitality from compassionate people, but the social entrepreneurial genius of this model that amazingly builds connections, social capital, and often friendship and trust between total strangers. As persons who grew up in a part of the world torn apart by conflict (in Israel-Palestine) it could not be more meaningful to my wife and I that we now live in such a beautifully diverse community of blended cultures and stories and faiths that calls itself the Friendly City. As such, we appreciate the support we see in this effort to make this very powerful social entrepreneurial vision a reality here. To that end, I would echo the sentiments of others above who have noted the benefits to our community of being a welcoming space to visitors from all walks of life and other parts of the world who may find reason to stop and enjoy what we have to offer and hopefully nurture reason to come back and to commend our community to others for having been here.

With regard to the logistics of generating permits and regulations, I would only add to the comment of Ritchie Vaughan regarding what I tend to agree is an unnecessarily cumbersome process for obtaining "Special Use Permits" for short term. I agree with her argument that existing noise and

parking laws should suffice to regulate potential concerns in those regards with neighbors. I would add that given Airbnb's business model which is built around nurturing reputations of mutual trust and respect—both as hosts and guests—via exchanges of personal reviews of their experiences—that there is an internal incentive in this model to respect the concerns and interests of each other. That includes such basics as care for property, congeniality, cleanliness, respect for neighbors, and compliance with House Rules (which generally include clauses about acceptable noise, parking, etc). Any negative reviews are detrimental to their reputation as future guests or hosts and as such become largely self-regulating and create incentives for both guests and hosts to work things out in their mutual self interests which for the hosts include positive relationships with their neighbors. As for additional regulatory prerogative by the City, I would argue that to simply make it clear to hosts that any complaints raised by neighbors with the City will be taken up with them (as hosts) in the manner currently outlined by the City, and if not corrected, may result in forfeiture of the establishment's License to do business and further legal proceedings, if necessary, is a substantial and adequate incentive for them to make every effort to avoid potential complaints from their neighbors.

1 Support



Erin Bishop 5 months ago

I'm supportive of the concept of formalizing a legal process to allow short term rentals (that have not already been identified as bed and breakfasts) within the city, especially as this process stands to set clear and enforceable guidelines. While AirBNB has revolutionized the way people can connect with opportunities, it is a marketing and communications tool at it's core; the business of renting a property is still very much a business on the ground, and one that has a lot of impact and connectivity on and within the location it takes place. Viewing these activities as a business, I am supportive of the need to license, inspect, tax, etc. I operate a business within the City, and though a majority of my operations are online, I am still responsible to the City and State, etc. I think this is fair, especially given the changing web-based nature of many businesses. I am very glad to see the phrase "non-transient occupancy restrictions of the zoning district in which the use is located" included, because that reinforces and formalizes the need for rentals to be bound by zoning district regulations, which would include the opportunity to apply for special use or exemptions. All of this supports the concept that rentals need to be formalized and addressed in a way that gives our community the ability to openly have these discussions, collaboratively and comprehensively plan, and have clear and dependable expectations for what type of activities can take place in our business districts and neighborhoods.

0 Supports



David Kreider 5 months ago

One more comment and suggested revision to the proposed amendment with respect to parking.. On reading the Proposed Short Term Rental (STR) Regulations and Related Zoning Ordinance Amendments (Last updated: 3/8/18) Added Subsection (27) under Section 10-3-25 entitled Off-Street Parking Regulations, I am unclear whether the Amendment (27) is calling specifically for one off-street parking space per guest room or if that statement simply means what it says that "Short term rentals shall provide one parking space for each guest room or accommodation space..." It seems to me it should be sufficient to require that the rental provide adequate space for their guests to park either on-street (immediately in front of their property) or off-street. If the owner opts to find

alternative parking for their own vehicles that does not infringe on the parking spaces of their neighbors—or require the guests to do so—that should be the owners' prerogative. It seems to me that requiring rentals to add parking lots on premises is both counterproductive to the City's interests to limit storm water run-off and unnecessary to address the concerns regarding parking so as not to infringe on the parking spaces of neighbors.