

Dear Members of Council,

Please add this to the written agenda regarding STRs.

London would be hurt if STR were limited to primary residences — which would effectively ban most current Airbnb hosts from earning a living. London shouldn't rely upon other city's data or solutions. Our city's population is uniquely transient. People come to London to immigrate, attend a semester of school at Western University and Fanshawe College, or to receive or support someone here for medical care. These guests like to stay in a home-like setting for cheap rates that many Airbnbs offer, as compared with hotels.

Airbnb offers an excellent platform where guests and hosts and their homes are rated. I've been a Superhost for years. I prefer the Airbnb platform to long-term rentals because Airbnb handles credit card transactions. They offer supports to both guests and hosts if needed. They facilitate good housing. Hosts can get bad guests out immediately for breaking their house rules (like too loud or smoking indoors.) It's a better system than the one for long-term tenants, where bad tenants terrorize other tenants through Ontario's six month to one year eviction process. Plus, if Council targets to crack down on Airbnb, London's demand for transient housing might shift hosts to use Craigslist or Kijiji, where neither hosts nor guests are protected, making both parties vulnerable to fraud and scams, with no record for taxes.

My Airbnb is a legally licensed duplex rental in Old East Village. We bought it because my husband was born and raised nearby, we loved the house and saw its potential, and we wanted to be responsible self-employed people who could use the investment in this home to pay for our daughters' university and later, our retirement (since neither of us can rely on a pension). When we purchased it in 2013, it was run down and my husband and I painstakingly renovated and restored it at a great cost.



**Before**



**After**

The city has made progress in revitalizing Old East Village by developing Kellogg Lane, Western Fair and its market, allowing several microbreweries and fostering entrepreneurial businesses, gentrifying the area in a good way. Having well maintained houses adds to this goal. So many beautiful heritage homes are falling apart in Old East Village, like our neighbour's vacant house, which literally had the front porch collapse into rubble last fall. There's another beautiful historic home, which is approximately 35 houses away from mine on Lorne Ave, has been vacant for as long as I can remember, and is also rotting in place.

It feels punitive when you allow these beautiful heritage homes to rot in place — vacant — for a decade or more, but want to close down STR's to solve the "housing crisis" when our STR is providing much needed short-term housing and had a 88.7% occupancy rate in 2021.

During covid, my mural business was severely impacted by shutdowns. Around 80% of my earnings are from murals in care homes and hospitals. It has been very frustrating to have earned contracts in 2019 that I still as of 2022 have not been allowed to complete. Not many families can survive when 80% of their income has been cut from them, through no fault of their own. Having our Airbnb allowed me to stay off of CERB or other government handouts. Having self-sufficient residents should be London's goal, so perhaps limiting Airbnbs to local owners will be an excellent solution to your perceived STR problem.

Restricting STRs to principal residences will hurt London based families and prevent us — and many others — from responsibly earning our livings and keeping our earnings in our community. Our city has better methods to solve housing problems by forcing tenancy on houses that currently remain vacant, unlike my habited Airbnb. I think the resounding turnout in support of STRs at your meeting in 2019 and the recent meeting in March 2022 shows that the vast majority of good London based hosts should not be penalized because of the actions of a few bad apples.

Sincerely,

Jen Romnes

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