Presentation to the City of Winnipeg Executive Policy Committee

Oct 17th, 2023

Regarding Agenda Item @2: Regulating Short-Term Rentals (includes but not limited to Air B'nB's, Vrbo's etc)

I am submitting this as a resident of the Daniel McIntyre ward with concern about Agenda Item #2 on regulating STR accommodations. While the proposed by-law will increase accountability in some ways, I remain against the proposed framework as I don't think it goes far enough.

The reason is that the proposed bylaw is missing a key element.

It is missing a primary residence requirement. If this was included that would mean that STR operators could only rent out their primary residences and only for a certain number of nights a year that you can rent out your primary residence: New Your City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Amsterdam, the entire country of Japan, New Orleans, Copenhagen, Paris, Vienna, Vancouver, Toronto etc.

We always hear that Winnipeg wants to become a 'world class city' (we have an NHL franchise, a Canadian Human Rights Museum' RWBallet, etc)

You could make the argument that Winnipeg is not on the same level as some of these places, but many other smaller cities like Mississauga, Quebec City, Ottawa, and Vaughan all restrict STR's to primary residences. And why shouldn't us as tax paying citizens deserve to have the same protection in terms of safety and the negative economic impacts on the rising housing costs and lack of access to long term rentals that the current STR policies are impacting.

There is no excuse or good reason not to include the primary residence clause. And the positives outweigh any perceived negatives

Companies like Airbnb started off as a place where you could rent out a room in your 'home', but now you see investors buying entire homes (therefore taking them off the market converting them to STR's) and blocks of units in condos like mine (the Glasshouse Lofts on Hargrave St) which have contributed to significant criminal activity, lack of safety and lack of long-term rental options which, lack of availability for potential residential owners wanting to buy to live there as well.

I would like nothing more that to see our City Council understand that proposing an amendment to the proposed by-law to only allow STR's in one's primary residence. One of the issues that many people have with STR's is that it affects the quality of life for the residents who live around them, especially in multi-unit residential buildings like the one I live in, which has been overrun with STR's.

When there is a primary residence requirement, you would see a lot less issues, because people would never let the kinds of things, we've seen happen in STR's to happen in their own homes. (human trafficking, drugs selling, prostitution).

I believe this would also help the City of Winnipeg save money on law enforcement when they aren't constantly called to deal with issues because of these STR's. The police are a fixture in our building as a result of STR's owner who fail to take responsibility for their units and use the police and our building's security for that purpose. Restricting STR's to primary residences would also force STR owners to return

all of their non-owned units (approx. 60 units in our building alone) back to the regular rental market or real estate market.

Winnipeg's current rental vacancy rate is around 2.9%. Renters need those units more than the STR operators do. You will hear many stories today from STR owners where they will use emotional appeals about how much they contribute to society and the economy because they rent their units to refugees or people travelling from remote communities to access medical care. AS someone who actually worked in health care for the last 38 years, I know there are many other services that are in a better position to provide supports to these groups seeking medical care. If these STR owners should not be troubled by this amendment as they can find another way to derive income from these units by converting them to long term rentals or selling them outright.

It seems like until now, city council has given equal with to the arguments by STR operators and the people impacted by them. But as I just alluded to, STR operators can do something else with their other units if a primary residence requirement is added today.

On the other hand, if I have decided I've had enough of living in a building that's become overrun (it's like a ghost hotel, there is no 'community' because strangers are always coming and going, and the common areas are many times unavailable for actual residents that live in the building!) my only option is to sell the home that I love.

I love living downtown, the by-law you're voting on, if it is sent to council without the primary residence requirement, is exactly the kind of by-law that will prioritize STR's over residents in many neighborhoods, not just downtown. On thing that is also important to note is that the developer of our building, Urban Capital received$4.5 million through the city/provincial Live Downtown Rental Development Program which was launched in late 2014.

I can honestly say that the money that was contributed by the city through that program may have been wasted, as it helped build what has become a poster child for the issues with the STR industry. It shouldn't come down to me selling the home that I love to get away from a nuisance business that is literally operating right beside me.

You may hear STR operators claim it will ruin their livelihood. To that I say, find a way, which we have shown is possible and viable, to make a living without destroying the resident's quality of life and safety!

When people use their property as an investment rather than home, there is some inherent risk in that. When you buy other forms of investments, an investment advisor goes over the risks involved. However, STR owners seem to think there should be no risk to their real estate investments. These people claim to be entrepreneurs that have worked hard to develop their business, but it's on the back of the policies that aren't in place to protect other residents.

City Council needs to see understand that we need to prioritize actual residents' quality of life and safety, and the housing and long-term rental segment of society over the profits of the STR owners when they have pushed the envelope of reason in owning and operating multiple units on a short-term basis. It does not create 'community' like permanent residents living side by side would, among the other points I have already made.

Before you proceed with voting on this today, and sending it to full council, I sincerely urge you to prioritize the people who actually live beside and, in the neighborhoods, impacted by STR's over the profits of the STR owners/operators and amend the proposed by-law to include a primary residence only rule,

My main point is that please amend to include primary residence only, please read my submission for my rationale which is supported by many others. thank you

Sincerely,

Heather P-Howdle

Condo corp 989