

SUBMISSION – AUDREY BESSETTE

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DATED OCTOBER 17, 2023 – ITEM 1 - REGULATING SHORT-TERM RENTAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 11:58:17 AM

Personal information

Full name: Audrey Bessette

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Job title:

Organization:

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City: Winnipeg

Province or territory: Manitoba

Postal code:

Delegation information

Committee: Council

Committee - council: Support the recommendations

Committee - other: N/A

Agenda item (number and title): Report of the executive policy committee on short term rentals

Service inquiry: Submit Comments in writing

Participation preference: N/A

Comments in writing: Many things in our community have changed over the last ten years including the widespread increase in short-term rentals (STRs). Corporations that profit from short-term rentals like Airbnb and VRBO are negatively affecting cities across the world and Winnipeg is no exception.

Homes in our community are being purchased by investors who rent them out as STRs, thus removing housing stock from the general population. The majority of these investors rent these homes to STRs without any oversight at all. This has had broad negative implications for the permanent residents in the neighbourhood.

As more homes get converted to STRs, it creates a scarcity of long-term rental units and homes available which limits the ability of families and individuals to find suitable homes for purchase. Additionally, STRs drive up rental costs across the city as they present an inflated overall rent rate and other landlords see this as comparative rationale for increasing long-term rental rates. This will continue to have a negative impact on low income families, individuals and newcomers, as well a impact our ability to attract people to live in Winnipeg from other cities and countries.

While increasing property values are favourable to property owners, the impact that STRs are having on property values presents a double-edged sword wherein some property values are inflated by artificial comparison, while other property values plummet due to the undesirable qualities that an overabundance of STRs create within a neighbourhood or building. Additionally, where values are artificially inflated, it prices out many first time homebuyers and young families who will make our community and neighbourhoods more vibrant.

When investors purchase homes for STR use that are not their primary residence, these homes routinely become unregulated ghost hotels which have proven to be havens for criminal activities including, but not limited to, prostitution, drug, guns and gang operations and human trafficking. This necessitates an increased presence of police and emergency services, causing further drain on the already stressed resources of these departments. In legal hotels, there are regulations and protocols that are not present in STRs such as having a requirement for certain levels of staffing, building and guest safety measures, and other requirements that any business by which any business would have to abide. STRs are, in essence, running businesses without contributing to the community and without having to provide any basic safety measures.

I urge The City of Winnipeg to consider removing the option to operate an STR outside of one's primary residence. Limiting STRs to the owner's primary residence will ensure that housing supplies are not co-opted for business purposes. Where an investor may wish to operate an accommodations business, there are other avenues for them to pursue in the hotel industry. Giving housing stock back to the available pool will be a boon to the people of Winnipeg and those who wish to come to live in Winnipeg. This is a fair and reasonable measure to adjust in the proposed by-law and one that will only help to support the healthy growth of Winnipeg.

File:

Public engagement preference: Yes