

Attachment "D"

Dear Councilmembers,

The Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council applauds the completion of the report on home sharing enforcement. Our area has over three hundred currently active home sharing permits, a 67% increase since December 2020, and many listings without any permit at all. We have had numerous shootings at short-term rentals, both reported and unreported, several murders, as well as substantial nuisance activity. Much housing has been taken off the long-term market as well.

We wholeheartedly support the short, medium and long-term solutions recommended in the report. In order to have a healthy, well-regulated system, we suggest the following based on our years of experience with rentals in our neighborhoods:

Short-term

Fines must be levied at a level that has a deterrent effect. This level is not the same for all property owners, therefore in order to ensure compliance with regulations, fines should be commensurate with listing rate or property value.

A mechanism must be created to handle neighbor complaints, and for those complaints to have an impact on the eligibility of a property for participation in the home-sharing program. The home sharing complaint line must collect complaints before callers are transferred to any other department. Properties with frequent nuisance complaints must be suspended, and if the decision is appealed the suspension must remain in effect until a decision is reached.

Particularly, neighbors' claims that the person holding a short-term rental permit for a residential property does not reside at that location must lead to action on the part of either the Director of Planning or the City Attorney. Neighbors do know who lives next door. Further, consequences for providing false information and documentation should be sufficient to deter others from doing the same.

Medium-term

A new department should be created to handle all aspects of the home sharing program. This program should have a citizen-oversight body with members that represent the residents of the City, not the elected officials. We suggest nominations to this commission or committee be made by Neighborhood Councils.

Long-term

The ordinance is overdue for a revision, and the City now can take advantage of years of global experience with short-term rentals to create the best possible regulations. We urge funding to be provided so that this may be accomplished. Here are items we request be included:

“Platforms” are entities that merely provide a mechanism by which hosts and renters can find one another. All platforms must be required to enter into agreements with the City.

Not all websites listing short-term rentals are platforms. Many broker sites contain curated listings published by the company itself. A licensing system with a set of regulations specific to brokers would help ensure compliance by this population.

Whole-house unhosted rentals create the vast majority of the housing, nuisance and public safety problems and should be regulated more strictly than “hosted” rentals.

All “hosts” should be required to prove that they carry homeowners or renters insurance that covers short-term rentals. In Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs), guests violating rules have the capacity to do substantial damage to nearby properties and even entire neighborhoods. Therefore, the program should require proof of liability coverage that would address such a situation.

Additionally, safety problems at short-term rentals worldwide are well documented. Therefore, permits should only be issued after a property is inspected for safety and compliance. Further, the City should reserve the right to enter any unit to ensure continued safety and compliance.

Finally, the short-term rental program must, as the report says, benefit the City as a whole. The program should be revenue neutral or revenue positive, and revenue loss to hotels must be taken into account in this calculation. Enforcement mechanisms must be robust and self-funding.

Thank you for your attention.