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**OPINION**

# Dallas must end Airbnb nightmare

Council should act to restrict rentals through zoning.





Dallas' housing market and our residential neighborhoods are being destroyed right in front of us. International booking platforms like Airbnb and VRBO have created [a gold rush that is driving wealthy investors to snap up houses and turn them into mini-hotels](#) — a crisis for both existing residents and those trying to find housing.

This week, the Dallas City Council will have the opportunity to bring sanity back to our housing market and protect the residential character and quality of life in our neighborhoods. They can do that by supporting the Keep It Simple Solution ordinance, updating the development code to clarify that short-term rentals are a commercial use that doesn't belong — and should no longer be allowed — in residential areas.

In 2021, [nearly half](#) of all home purchases in Dallas County went to investors. In 2022, investors purchased [nearly a third](#) of all homes sold in Dallas-Fort Worth. That investor demand is driving up home prices as well as rental costs as more homes are converted to short-term, rather than long-term rentals.

Those short-term rentals — properties rented through platforms like Airbnb for less than 30 days — also destroy what Dallas homeowners have worked for decades to build, nurture and defend, creating a land-use conflict that requires a simple zoning fix.



## Opinion

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We're in this mess because the city has failed to enforce long standing zoning. The ordinance would clarify that short-term rentals are a lodging use, allowing them to operate in mixed-use and commercial areas and some Planned Development Districts. This conforms with state tax law that defines a short-term rental as a "hotel" requiring payment of a hotel occupancy tax.

It's a no-brainer. Define them as the hotels that they are and stop this flagrant land grab. According to new data being released by [insideairbnb.com](https://www.insideairbnb.com), if KISS is adopted, up to 5,000 "whole home" short-term Airbnb listings could increase available-for-rent housing stock by 16% citywide, and much more in some places — up to 62% in Council District 1, for example. Why would we let this industry turn our housing market on its head and destroy our neighborhoods? Dallas needs real housing, not more hotels.

Residents living near short-term rentals need relief from [the unrelenting stress and dread of whatever the next "guests" will bring](#): a drunk partygoer banging on the door at 2 a.m., mistaking our home for the short-term rental next door? Or "guests" toting AR-15s looking for the neighbor who complained about noise? Or

prostitutes, drug dealers or [drive-by shooters whose random bullets pierce the window of a child's playroom?](#) These are all real events experienced right here in North Texas.

If you haven't lived this nightmare, it's easy to dismiss the problem as a few bad apples. It's not. Dallas' systemic failure to enforce existing zoning laws, abetted by the industry's legal threats and lobbying, led to this inevitable clash of incompatible land uses that pit short-term rental owners and their "hosts" against full-time residents who bought homes with zoning that promised they would live next door to another neighbor, not a hotel.

After four years of study by two council committees, three task forces, briefings to the full council, eight robust discussions and public hearings over six months by zoning and planning officials, there are still some council members who, incredibly, want to postpone the vote until after the city's May 8 elections, presumably to avoid taking a stand.

We want a vote in April before state lawmakers, at the behest of lobbyists hired by Airbnb and other international booking platforms, can pass laws that strip all local powers to regulate them.

Proper land use is a critical responsibility of local government, and it's threatened by an unbridled corporate push to convert more and more housing to mini-hotels. It's a national trend toward commoditization of housing, where institutional investors and large hotel chains want in on the short-term rental action.

Our residential neighborhoods are not for sale. Neither is our city.

To be clear, the ordinance would not take away an individual's property rights. Homeowners will still have the right to rent their properties for 30 days or more. And long-term renters are desperate for more options.

Dallas also has a right and a duty to use its zoning powers to protect the general health, safety and welfare of its citizens. But giant platforms are trying to remove these very powers from Dallas and other cities. They're trying

to steamroll neighborhood opponents in cities across America, and Dallas is just the latest showdown.

We call upon the mayor and City Council to do the right thing and act in the best interests of hundreds of thousands of homeowners who have invested our lives here — not the special interests of giant rental platforms who turn homes into businesses that erode our housing market and destroy neighborhoods.

*Olive Talley, a 37-year resident of Dallas, is a longtime neighborhood leader in Old East Dallas and a leader of the Dallas Neighborhood Coalition, a grassroots organization of residents across the city. She is an award-winning print and network television journalist turned documentary filmmaker. She wrote this for The Dallas Morning News.*

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Olive Talley