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Dallas takes step forward in prohibiting Airbnbs, VRBO short-term rentals

Dallas moves ahead in another hurdle that would prohibit short-term rentals in single-family residential areas.



The City Plan Commission meets to discuss amending the Dallas Development Code to limit short term housing at Dallas City Hall on Thursday, Dec. 8, 2022. (Liesbeth Powers / Staff Photographer)



By [Josephine Peterson](#)

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The City Plan Commission broadly recommended on Thursday that Dallas prevent short-term rentals in single-family residential neighborhoods.

The advisory committee voted 9-4 in the controversial issue, affecting more than 2,000 residences, according to a city analysis. There is no city legislation that outright allows these short-term rentals, it just doesn't outlaw them.

"If my granddaughter is living next to a [short term rental] or between them, is that really what my son-in-law bought a house to have as his next-door neighbor," Commissioner Claire Stanard said.

The recommendation will be sent to City Council for a full vote to define short-term rentals such as Airbnbs and VRBO listings as "lodging" in the city code, which prohibits lodging in single-family residential areas. Short-term rentals are defined as rentals for 30 days or less.

The council is likely to choose between three options: update zoning laws to require short-term rental owners to reside in the listed home in single family residential areas, establish registration rules and penalties for bad hosts, or ban short-term rentals in single family residential areas.

Dallas is on track to follow suit of Texas cities like Fort Worth and Arlington where short-term rentals are banned in residential areas.

Chair Tony Shidid, Vice Chair Brent Rubin and Commissioners Tipton Housewright and Brandy Treadway voted against the measure.

"Rather than blatantly say we aren't going to do these things, we owe it to our citizens to have a little bit more nuance and have a multifaceted approach to this," Housewright said.

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This does not impact short-term rentals in areas of the city zoned mixed-use.

The argument

The debate largely centered on neighborhood safety and quality of life.

A city study completed this month comparing 911 and 311 calls of registered and potential short-term rentals to other residences. The study looked at calls about parking, litter, and noise complaints. The

study counted more than 2,600 short-term rentals in the city of Dallas, 88% of which are not tied to a complaint. A reported 123 rentals had a history of two or more calls.

There were a few rentals that were tied to 30 or more calls, city staff told commissioners.

Some commissioners like P. Michael Jung, shared worries about enforcement response times to short-term rentals, saying response that takes hours or days is often too late to catch a violation.

Stanard said there is also a disparity in the rate of people who file complaints.

“People don’t tend to call in. Obviously I’m not going to call the police, because I don’t like how many cars are in my neighborhood,” she said.

She thinks that if these rentals are allowed to operate in single family residential areas, other commercial businesses could argue to operate in neighborhoods.

Some commissioners said that many short-term rentals were owned by large investment companies or property owners who don’t live in the area. Jung said while he understands this will impact the income of some, these property owners can still make money renting out their home as a long-term rental.

City hall has been divided on this issue for years but unified in its interest for accountability of irresponsible property hosts or guests. There have been three task forces, studies and several public meetings since 2020 looking to find regulations over these properties.



P. Michael Jung (right), member of the City Plan Commission, listens to questions during a briefing on amending the Dallas Development Code to limit short term housing at Dallas City Hall on Thursday, Dec. 8, 2022. (Liesbeth Powers / Staff Photographer)

“I don’t have any faith that regulation is the sole solution to this problem,” Commissioner Melissa Kingston said.

Also, commissioners shared that passing this recommendation by piece-mealing the broader residential issue was difficult. The commission also discussed home-sharing and accessory dwelling units like mother-in-law suites and live-in garages. There are separate committees for land use, compliance and zoning.

Commissioner Lorie Blair said she feels that this is only part of the puzzle and voting on the land use part of this without knowing potential compliance changes seems short-sighted.

“I’m confused, I’m frustrated and I’m angry,” Blair said. “I’m angry that our process sucks.”

There were disagreements on whether these properties are healthy for a city.

The city housing director, David Noguera, advocated for solutions, saying if short-term rentals were outright banned, they won’t disappear, but just go “underground.” He doesn’t feel that the city should look at this as a binary issue, but rather how to equip the city to track and tax these rentals.

“You see so many people using it because there is a need for it,” Noguera told commissioners. “The question is what is the correct mixture? What is the correct ratio we should have of mixed housing options in our market?”

Kingston cited studies from Carnegie Mellon and the University of Massachusetts that conclude Airbnb rentals in markets increase rent and housing markets.

“It’s not a secret that we have an affordable housing crisis in our city,” she said. “They are squeezing out the people who would live there and pushing them out farther and farther.”

Public outcry

Scores of people came out to share their comments, most of which were against short-term rentals.

The anti-rental voice was vocal, citing examples of “party houses” with loud music, drugs, heavy litter and limited parking. Some called these rentals the “commercialization of neighborhoods.”

Olive Talley said the commission had to decide between investor profits and the sanctity of the community.



Casey Burgess (center), executive assistant city attorney, briefs the City Plan Commission about the possibility of amending the Dallas Development Code to limit short term housing at Dallas City Hall on Thursday, Dec. 8, 2022. (Liesbeth Powers / Staff Photographer)

“Please use your power and leadership to put the welfare of Dallas homeowners who invest our lives here over the special interests of mostly absentee opportunists who care little about the quality of life of the city,” she told commissioners.

A handful of short-term rental owners and Dallas STR Alliance spoke in favor of these rentals. They want more city standards and regulations for these short-term rentals, like requiring owners to live in the residence, inspections and density limitations.

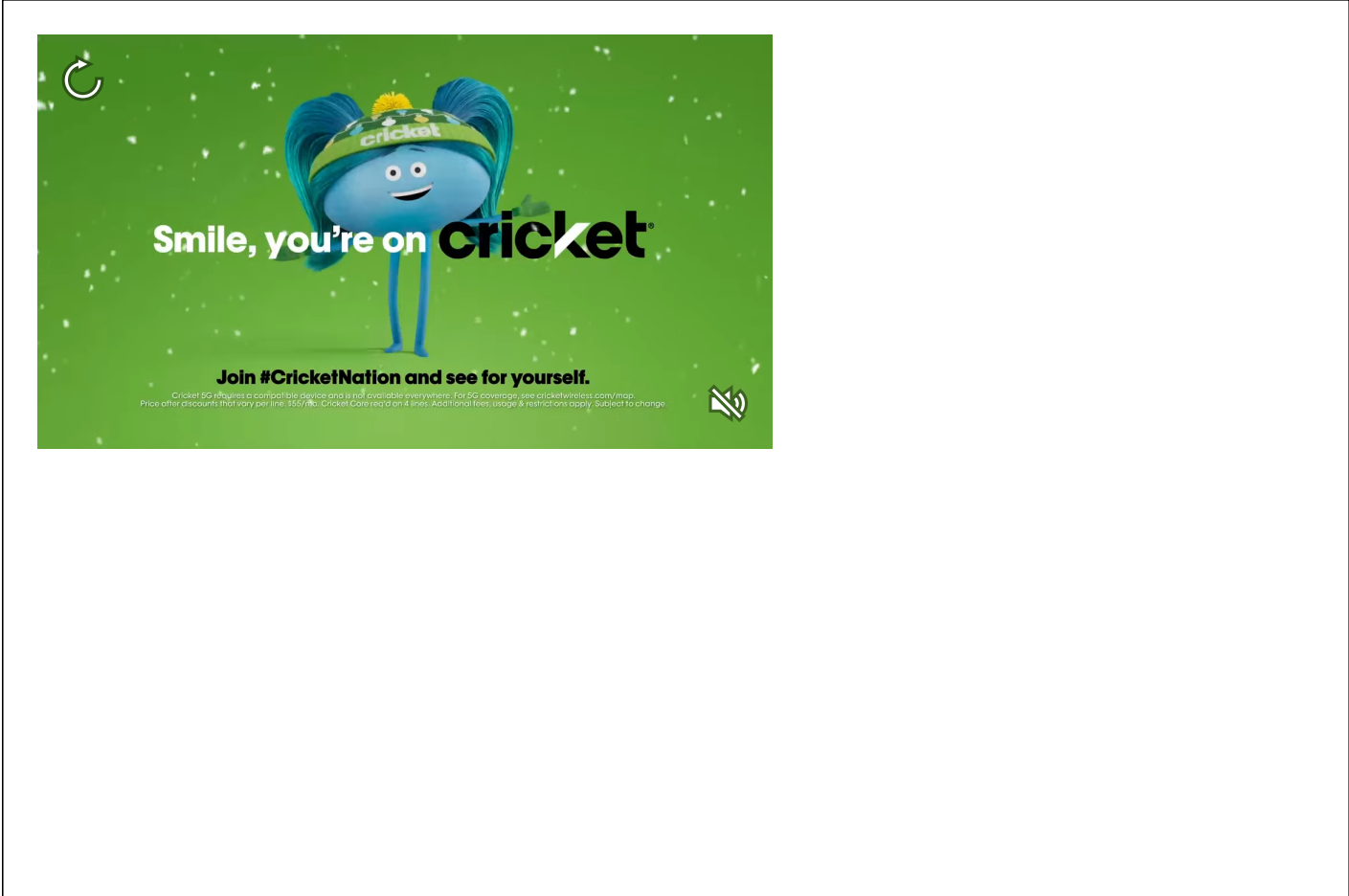
“Why do you want to zone [short-term rentals] out of existence when 88% are good operators,” Dallas STR Alliance and short-term rental owner Lisa Sievers asked?

Airbnb announced measures to limit parties from neighborhoods this holiday season. The short-term rental company shared on Thursday that it will ban some one-night bookings during New Year’s Eve for home listings as it did last year.

“Specifically in Dallas, over 2,450 people were deterred by our various anti-party defenses from booking entire home listings over NYE 2021,” the press release said.



[Josephine Peterson](#), Dallas County reporter. Josephine covers Dallas County. She returned to her hometown to join The Dallas Morning News in 2022 after previously working at The Tacoma News Tribune in Washington and The News Journal in Delaware. Josephine is a graduate of University of Missouri and American University. In her free time, Josephine enjoys kayaking with her dog, Dougal.



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