

Most Popular

1. Houston YouTubers face trespassing charge for prank video
2. Downtown Houston tunnel system: History, hours and more
3. 11 rooftop bars in Houston to enjoy a drink and sunset views
4. Houston home takes you Back to the Future with 80s architecture
5. Abbott's pardon in BLM protest killing isn't justice (Editorial)

LIFESTYLE // HOME DESIGN

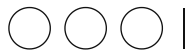
'Chronic party houses' on Airbnb and Vrbo have become hot topics in Houston HOA disputes



Diane Cowen, Staff writer

Updated: July 25, 2022 5:25 p.m.

Gift this article



1 of 2



Paulette Kukuk, left, and Erin Overhouse Locke at the "Welcome to Eastwood" sign on Monday, July 18, 2022 in Houston. The neighbors live in Eastwood near a home that is used for short-term rentals on Airbnb and Vrbo.

Elizabeth Conley/Staff photographer

A dispute over duck feeding and an accompanying fine of \$250,000 may be the most recent neighborhood dispute the Houston area is talking about, but in most places, the hot topic is something entirely different: short-term rental homes that end up as chronic party houses.

Lawyers Gregory S. Cagle, who represents property owner associations and homeowner associations, and Richard Weaver, who represents homeowners, including the Bridgeland couple facing the big fine, said that most complaints between homeowners and their neighborhood associations that make it to their offices involve nonpayment of annual dues or maintenance fees or who have done something to their home — such as painting it a different color — without approval.

Please enter your email address:



What's trending in Houston's design world.

SIGN UP

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms and Conditions](#) and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#)

MORE FROM DIANE COWEN: [Houston HGTV junkie gets her dream house with designer help](#)

Millions of people use short-term rentals such as those found on [Vrbo.com](#) or [Airbnb.com](#) as an alternative to hotels for business trips and family vacations. Some in Houston are even used by people with illnesses who come to the city for ongoing care in the Texas Medical Center.

The ones that become problems, though, are those used as party houses. They are set up for entertaining and have rooms that can be cleared out for dance floors, plus backyards with swimming pools, party spaces and tall privacy fences.

Eastwood residents Erin Overhouse Locke and Paulette Kukuk have both complained repeatedly about a nearby home that's been rented out for noisy parties that line the streets with cars from partygoers. After the parties, the women said they often see beer bottles and plastic drink cups littering the lawn and sidewalk.

Paulette Kukuk, left, and Erin Overhouse Locke at the "Welcome to Eastwood" sign in their neighborhood. They live near a home that is used for short-term rentals — often loud parties — on Airbnb and Vrbo.
Elizabeth Conley/Staff photographer

What's trending in Houston's design world.

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms and Conditions](#) and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#)

The problem in the Eastwood home started before the pandemic shutdown, but halted for a while in the spring of 2020. As COVID restrictions were lifted, the parties resumed, they said.

Those who inquire about the home on Vrbo, where it is listed as "Jungle Estate" receive an automated response asking for more information about a potential reservation, including whether a renter would need accommodations for "... DJ, dance floor, lights" as well as the number of guests who would be there overnight and non-overnight.

Kukuk and Overhouse Locke both say that some renters are families that check in and out without problems, but often the experience is different. There's noise, not to mention streets lined with cars that block fire hydrants and prevent other homeowners from leaving trash bins out for routine pickup.

Both women said the police have been called because of the problems, and complaints to Airbnb and Vrbo have not changed anything.

Citing health reasons related to the coronavirus pandemic, Airbnb invoked a temporary ban on all parties and events in its listings starting in August 2020, by prohibiting single-night reservations by people who didn't have a history of positive reviews. The website recently made the rule part of its permanent policy to discourage "chronic house parties," noting that in 2021, more than 6,600 guests were suspended from Airbnb over party ban violations.

Cagle, author of the book "Texas Homeowners Association Law" and a partner at the [Cagle Pugh](#) law firm, said his firm represents more than 1,000 homeowners associations and he personally represents about 500. Cagle is not involved in the Bridgeland case.

He said the main role of an HOA is to collect dues and maintain a neighborhood's common areas, such as landscaping. They also oversee rules about how owners take care of their property, signing off on the type of roof shingles, exterior paint colors and remodeling that might add new square footage to a home.

What's trending in Houston's design world.

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms and Conditions](#) and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#)

MORE FROM DIANE COWEN: [Houston's original ecosystem is nearly extinct – but conservationists won't let it die](#)

“HOAs are the family law of real estate, and there’s a lot of drama and emotion,” Cagle said. “I am continually amazed at the things people can do that irritate their neighbors. There is no limit to that.”

He noted that many HOAs or civic associations operate with deed restrictions or neighborhood rules from boilerplate documents, and many are decades old. So new issues such as one neighbor feeling his privacy is invaded by another neighbor’s security cameras or whole blocks of homes disturbed by a short-term rental house, wouldn't be included in a document like that.

Even as some boards change their documents to cover short-term rentals, he said it’s unclear on whether new rules could be applied retroactively to rental properties that already exist.

The Eastwood Civic Association doesn’t have the ability to enforce any rules; instead it turns complaints over to the city of Houston. Kukuk recalled that some years ago, a homeowner was operating a day care center from her home. When neighbors complained about traffic for dropoff and pickups and ongoing delivery trucks, the issue was sent to the city, and the day care closed.

Overhouse Locke and Kukuk said the neighborhood civic association hosts an annual tour and social gatherings, but has also worked to [resolve problems with frequent stopped trains on railroad crossings](#) and to represent the neighborhood over the proposal to send a rapid bus line through there.

Weaver said that any HOA changing its rules about rental property has to be very specific about the time frame, since many properties rent for six months to a year.

What's trending in Houston's design world.

By signing up, you agree to our Terms and Conditions and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#)

about a deed restriction violation.

Regardless of the nature of a neighborhood complaint, both Cagle and Weaver said they often escalate because of personality conflicts between HOA board members and homeowners or when a homeowner thinks he's being singled out for something others in the neighborhood do, too.

When issues get to the level of lawyers being involved, both Cagle and Weaver counsel their clients to look at the issue and the potential cost of resolving it.

In the case of the Bridgeland couple being fined \$250,000 for feeding ducks, Weaver said that sometimes an HOA board will try a heavy-handed approach to get a homeowner to stop doing something.

“Yes, some send scare letters, but they’re a bluff. The HOA will send a letter that has no legal support and they just hope it scares someone into stopping an activity,” Weaver said. “About half of the time they can work things out. A lot has to do with which community HOA it is - it has to do with whether they are nice people or not nice people.”

diane.cowen@chron.com

Lifestyle Stories

- [Review: ‘Cocaine Bear’ is the coked-up feature we all need right now](#)
- [What is boudin? Everything to know about the Cajun sausage](#)
- [RodeoHouston season kicks off with its giddy Rodeo Uncorked! party](#)
- [Quavo honors Takeoff with new song ‘Greatness,’ says Migos is ‘gone’](#)
- [Broadway at the Hobby Center’s new season includes Michael Jackson, Tina Turner and ‘Funny Girl’](#)



Written By
Diane Cowen

Reach Diane on

Diane Cowen has worked at the Houston Chronicle since 2000 and currently its architecture and home design writer. Prior to working for the Chronicle, she worked at the South Bend (Ind.) Tribune and at the Shelbyville (Ind.) News. She is a graduate of Purdue University and is the author of a cookbook, "Sunday Dinners: Food, Family and Faith from our Favorite Pastors."

What's trending in Houston's design world.

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms and Conditions](#) and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#)

RETAIL

Rice Village boasts neighboring needlepoint stores, and both are booming in popularity

On Tangley Street near Rice Village there are two needlepoint shops, Stitches in Time and Needle House, catering to both old and young generations of stitchers.

BY MEGAN MUNCE

MOST POPULAR

Houston YouTubers face trespassing charge for prank video

Downtown Houston tunnel system: History, hours and more

11 rooftop bars in Houston to enjoy a drink and sunset views

Houston home takes you Back to the Future with 80s architecture

What's trending in Houston's design world.

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms and Conditions](#) and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#)

-
- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Our Company | Interest Based Ads |
| Newspaper Delivery Safety Procedures | Terms of Use |
| Privacy Notice | Advertising |
| Your California Privacy Rights | Careers |

CONTACT

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Subscribe | Frequently Asked Questions |
| e-Edition | Newsroom Contacts |
| Archives | Corporate Subscriptions |
- [Customer Service](#)

HEARST *newspapers*

©2023 Hearst Newspapers, LLC

