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OPINION

Protect the property rights of Texans from an influx in short-term rentals

Cities need the power to limit nuisance properties.



Plano resident Catherine Burns stands with those opposed to short-term rentals stand after prompting from Bill France, who leads the Plano TX Neighborhood Coalition, during public comment at a Plano City Council meeting at the city's council chambers in Plano on Monday, March 13, 2023. (Liesbeth Powers / Staff Photographer)



By Saul Anuzis

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In 2021, Texas became the [third-most popular](#) state in which to host an Airbnb — a trend that is continuing to increase as short-term rental property owners' profits skyrocket. This isn't just true for city centers; there has also been explosive growth in short-term rentals in [rural communities](#) across the state.

As the popularity of short-term rentals continues to rise, unintended negative consequences are burdening many Texas communities who are confronting this shifting housing landscape. As concerns over safety and infringement on peoples' property have become a particularly acute issue, Texas has been at the forefront of the debate on how to address a number of adverse effects on both communities and property owners.

Home to "America's team," the Dallas Cowboys, historic sites, famous music venues and festivals, national parks and more, Texas attracts millions of domestic and international visitors each year. Short-term rentals, such as those offered through platforms like Airbnb and Vrbo, have become a popular option for travelers. However, the unprecedented growth of the short-term rental industry has some communities questioning the lack of oversight and regulations governing these quickly multiplying properties.

The proliferation of short-term rentals is unfortunately causing disturbances across the state for many residents, such as increased noise, pollution, traffic and even crime. One Dallas resident, Diana Neacsu, told KXAS-TV (NBC5), "I don't feel safe anymore in my own house" due to [rowdy, late-night parties](#) held next door at an Airbnb. And in one formerly quiet East Austin neighborhood, huge, "theme-park-like" mansions are constantly popping up alongside permanent residents. Mary Thompson, [a senior citizen in that community](#), even said, "One person came to my door and told me that I could sell my house to them and go into assisted living. ... You moved into my neighborhood. You don't get to tell me to leave!"

It's clear that more and more problems are surfacing related to the rapid spread of short-term rentals. This is especially true for families who've settled down and expect to raise a family in a secure environment, or for senior citizens who've planted roots in hopes of a quiet retirement.

One of the biggest concerns surrounding short-term rentals is the impact they have on the social fabric of Texas communities and the inevitable negative effect on the property rights of other neighbors. When multiple properties within local neighborhoods are rented out short-term, it creates a revolving door of strangers and a lack of community cohesion. People who are buying homes in these neighborhoods often have no idea that their next-door neighbors are not actually neighbors at all, but a different set of strangers every weekend.

Understandably, parents may be wondering about the safety of their children and the security of their community. Senior citizens who expected peace and stability are now met with volatile neighbors and increased noise and traffic. With many families or seniors often investing their life savings and relocating to Texas to settle down, one can imagine how disheartening it is when your neighborhood is slowly overtaken by these unregulated short-term vacation rentals.

More must be done to protect the property rights of Texas residents who have personally invested in their homes and communities. For one, legislators need to ensure that local government leaders are able to maintain oversight of these rental properties. Any legislation that preempts this local control — like House Bill 2665 sponsored by Gary Gates, R-Richmond — would further harm Texas communities that are feeling the negative effects of short-term rentals.

Local leaders are well-versed in the needs and challenges of their individual neighborhoods. They are the ones who are best suited to make decisions on matters related to Texans' property rights.

Saul Anuzis is president of the 60 Plus Association and the American Association of Senior Citizens. He wrote this column for The Dallas Morning News.

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