

The Washington Post

Opinions

Hotels are thriving. Why are they worried about my Airbnb listing?

By Rashida Mims

September 28

The writer lives in the Hillcrest neighborhood in the District. This essay was submitted through Airbnb.

The hotel industry in the District is booming, and times have never been better. Numbers released by the [Hotel Association of Washington, D.C.](#) are proof.

In fact, a [report](#) by the association released in March says that the District collected nearly half a billion dollars in tax revenue from hotels last year. This makes it clear that hotels in the District have no problem filling rooms or charging exorbitant rates. With the influx of visitors looking for rooms and with hotels charging higher and higher prices, industry profits are at an all-time high in the District. A [Bisnow report](#) last month said that the District has “3,108 hotel rooms under construction and another 6,621 rooms in planning” and “continued growth in tourism to D.C. should help create the demand to fill all of those new hotels.” So why are hotels and their lobbyists standing in the way of people, including me, who are listing our homes on sites such as Airbnb to make a little extra income, support our families and offer lodging options for visitors who come to the District?

I am a native Washingtonian. I have lived in my Hillcrest home for more than 30 years and raised my children here. I use my Airbnb income to help ensure that I am financially stable in retirement. I appreciate the financial benefits this has provided me and others in my community.

Airbnb hosts in the District make an average of [\\$5,800](#) a year. Many hosts use this extra money to help repair and maintain aging homes, cover increased medical expenses and pay down debt.

And senior citizens such as me benefit greatly from the income. Just because we're empty nesters doesn't mean the nest has to stay empty and unused. For many seniors, this income is priceless in helping to keep a roof over our heads. In fact, almost 1 in 2 Airbnb hosts in the District say they use the money from hosting to afford to stay in their home.

But short-term rentals don't help only those of us who list an extra room; they have a huge impact on our neighborhoods' economies.

When guests come into our homes, the dollars they spend at local businesses — an average of \$136 each day — go right back into making our neighborhoods stronger. These guests help small businesses such as Penny Brew, a locally founded coffee shop in Ward 7, rather than the big-box chains near downtown hotels. And guests stay longer and spend more in our communities when they use short-term rentals.

These truths are especially poignant for D.C. neighborhoods and hosts east of the Anacostia River. Of the [130-plus hotels](#) based in the nation's capital, not a single one is located in Hillcrest, Anacostia, Congress Heights or any east-of-the-river community. While hotels make billions in revenue and ignore these areas, native and longtime Washingtonians are opening their homes to a global community, bringing tourism dollars to local small businesses and spotlighting their unique corners of the District.

The hotel industry wants to thwart any attempt to offer an alternative to staying at a hotel to protect its profits and will work to cut off D.C. residents from earning extra income through our homes to do that.

It's time for the hotel industry to end its obstruction of pragmatic short-term-rental rules that will help support our neighborhoods, boost local small businesses and allow families such as mine to make a little extra income.

Read more:

[Dusty Horwitt and Pamela J. Lee: Learn from Arlington's mistakes on Airbnb regulations](#)

[The Post's View: Does Airbnb 'belong' in D. C.?](#)

[The Post's View: The District's Airbnb bill is too restrictive](#)

[The Post's View: Regulators should resist cracking down on Airbnb](#)

The Washington Post

The story must be told.

- All Comments 12
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SilverSpringK
1 day ago

Ms. Mims this is not about the Hotel Lobby, this is about unregulated businesses in zoned residential neighborhoods. This isn't just about you and your house - its about every other home owner on your block. Would you be happy if every other house on your block became an Air BnB? Would you like it if the value of your house dropped because of unregulated commercial businesses making your stable residential neighborhood nothing but a stay by night SRO? When you bought your home you agreed to a contract with your community - a single family community. By subletting on a nightly basis you are breaking that contract.

And by the way Ms. Mims, the hotel and B&B industries are heavily regulated in DC, to protect the consumers from physical and financial harm. Does your house have a sprinkler system? Has it been inspected for lead paint, asbestos, or mold. Are your carpets and drapes flame retardant? Is your water free of lead or other contaminants? If one of your 'Guests' was injured do you have adequate insurance to cover their medical bills? If you want to compete with the big boys - then be prepared to compete on an equal playing field. Right now you are the one who is not playing fair. Someone could die in your house because you don't want to have to meet the same Life Safety standards that the Hotels and B&Bs have to meet.

This is not just about you Ms. Mims - its about the people you could harm through your willful disregard for the regulations to protect consumers.

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kurt8
1 day ago

Ms. Mims, I have every confidence that you are a very nice lady and a great person to share a house with. However....

1. Your situation is not restricted by the proposed law, in fact it makes it easy for you to be an Airbnb host.

2. I support this law. I am not a hotel. I am a homeowner who bought my home in a neighborhood not zoned for hotels. I should not have an illegal hotel next to me contrary to the terms I bought my house on.

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NOLA Bill
1 day ago

When Airbnb and its ilk take over half the homes on your block and replace friendly, long-term residents with a revolving door of bachelorette and bro parties that like to sing karaoke in the back yard at 2am on a Tuesday....you might change your tune. In my city, corporate and non-local players have taken over the majority of short-term rentals simply because they are very profitable. Airbnb likes to trot out similar "mom-and-pop" stories as this one here, yet the statistics do not support their claims. And as

others have written here, the platforms are by their very nature data-mining companies, yet they continue to refuse to give jurisdictions the data they need to enforce any of the regulations (such as night limits) or remove illegal listings from their website. And guess what happens to property values in your quaint, formerly affordable residential neighborhoods when you allow mini-hotels to take over? You think you have an affordable housing crisis now? Just wait

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kenton55

1 day ago

Odd this, in that the proposed limitations would not affect rental units within a primary residence ...

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steven unger

2 days ago

(*Edited*)

It is critical to recognize that there are 2 sides to airbnb: 1) host-resident "private room" rentals where the host lives in the same living unit with the guest during the

guest's stay and 2) host-absent "entire place" rentals where the guests rents an entire home or apartment and there is no host present to monitor or supervise the property or guest.

I call airbnb host-resident "private room" rentals the "good" airbnb because they do all the good things airbnb talks about like keeping people in their homes. These are the hosts who understandably contribute to articles like this one and testify at city hearings. I believe these hosts should be supported and encouraged by their cities.

I call airbnb host-absent "entire place" rentals, when offered on an on-going basis, the "bad" airbnb because these generate the airbnb horror stories, irritated neighbors and can siphon off long-term rentals for local people to short-term rentals for tourists primarily so that the property owner can make more money by renting short-term than long-term.

When offered on an on-going basis "entire place" rentals are really "urban vacation rentals" which never existed 7 years ago. Vacation Rentals have been heavily regulated in resort areas for decades, they just never existed in cities. Cities around the world are now trying to figure out what to do.

Another problem is that airbnb "talks the talk" about working with cities but does not "walk the walk". For example in my city -- Portland, Oregon -- "entire place" rentals are limited to 90-night a year. airbnb could easily enforce this limitation without turning over any host data to The City; however, airbnb simply refuses to do so. Then when airbnb refuses to give The City the information they need to do an audit, airbnb complains that The City used third-party data scraping services to conduct an audit. What choice does the city have if airbnb won't supply the needed data?

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db4
2 days ago

I don't think the problem is a senior citizen occasionally renting out a room. The neighborhood problems are twofold: renters who are noisy, destructive or just plain inconsiderate with few legal remedies for their removal, and homes that are purchased expressly to be operated like an unregistered hotel. Both have negative impacts on local economies and home values, and need more regulation.

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nychotpilot
2 days ago

The fact that this essay was submitted via Airbnb says it all. For sheer propaganda Airbnb cannot be beaten: Goebbels would have been stupefied were he alive today.

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kurt8
1 day ago

And a situation that is not regulated by the proposed law.

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harvey brownstein

2 days ago

Because housing shortages is becoming a major problem in most of our cities. Landlords hold apartments empty so they could rent to Abnb, instead of the people in those cities who live there and need a roof for themselves and their families. The lease to my apartment was 48 pages, it made me feel secure with the background checks and demands of documentation, all that security goes out the window when tenants rent to who knows who so they can make an extra buck. Not what I want where my fami!y and I live, if I wanted to live in a hotel I would I don't choose to live in a hotel and I would hope fellow tenants in my building don't treat it like a hotel.

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ExPatSpain

3 days ago

AirB&Bs are destroying neighbourhoods all over Spain. Barcelona has 17K AB&BS of which almost 12K are illegal. Noise and constant movement of party goers ruins residential premises. I live in Valencia and the city government is putting strict regulations in place so we don't become a second Barcelona. Those who love AB&Bs don't have one of them next door.

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Makes sense
3 days ago

The airbandb next door to me was noisy every weekend and many weekdays all year round. The owner was more concerned about the comfort of his guests and not the least concerned about noise to Neighbors. We used to live in a great neighborhood but had to move because of the disgusting noisy Airbnb. The security was problem too as we never knew who was next door. One time it was rented to out of state police officers who were even noisier and worse. Airbnb's ruin great neighborhoods.

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up is down
3 days ago

If you're not breaking the law, what's the problem?

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