

To: City of La Crosse Council Members  
From: Lenore Knudson, Town of Onalaska

Hello, I have been attending a few City of La Crosse meetings regarding the efforts to create an ordinance for short term rentals. I was requested by a concerned citizen of the City of La Crosse to share my experiences with STR.

In many areas the final approved Ordinances are for **owner-occupied residences only**.

At the Committee meeting on December 5, with all due respect, most of the pro-STR owner-presenters do not live in the City of La Crosse. If any of them do not live next door to a STR, they have **no idea** how disruptive they are to a residential neighborhood.

Short term rental continues to be a "hot topic".

- There continues to be many misconceptions by those who are renters or owners.
- The reality of living next door to a short term rental is polar opposite of what many perceive:
- There are no background checks of renters. Renters do not investigate the owners. It is sometimes suspicious when owners and renters provide each other with complimentary reviews. There are no onsite managers, as there are in hotels.

These non-owner-occupied residences are hotels and are "in business" 24/7.

- **They should be zoned for commercial and should meet the requirements of any commercial hotel or business.**
- As one example, short term rentals typically are not meeting commercial side-yard setbacks so they are too close to residential-zoned properties.

**ENFORCEMENT:** Neighbors must police and report rental violations. There are not enough government or police resources to inspect or to enforce the laws, regulations, and ordinances. Following up on complaints would be constant. Neighbors who complain are in jeopardy with repercussions from both owners and renters. Our neighborhood experience has resulted in shouting and near-physical altercations.

In an area 1,000 feet from that rental property, residents routinely contacted local officials with complaints.

**As I have stated in the past: When a nearby resident called Air BnB to tell them they felt seriously in danger, Air BnB told the resident-neighbor to go to a hotel.**

In our experience, Air BnB does no enforcement of any kind. No background checks on renters or owners, no contacting local municipalities to verify proper Permit or License status.

Again, with all due respect, someone managing these rental websites is sitting at a computer and most likely has access only to the information provided by owners and renters. If these website managers would have a rental next door to them, the experience would be remarkably different.

The contentious cost of doing business as an issue:

- Rates for the 2-bedroom property next to me had been: \$400 per night.

- The property 8 doors away that had been remodeled to house 24 people. The rates had been: \$1,000 per night, \$7,000 per week.

Any fines are just "the cost of doing business".

After nearly two years of hassle and grief, these two properties are no longer operating.

It is not true that complaints made to these websites are usually handled effectively with enforcement. That has not been the experience in our area. The opposite is factual.

**Suggestions for Ordinance codes:**

- Comply with all Health Department codes and regulations
- Comply with Residential Zoning regulations, city and county
- Handicap access and bathrooms
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Sprinkler system
- Side yard setback requirement
- Trip electrical outlets
- Ground wire
- Fire pit codes
- Fencing codes
- Testing for Lead, Asbestos

Also, please keep in mind that the residents have no idea who are the maintenance persons working on the next door property. Quite a while ago I talked to one worker - he was on leave from travelling around setting up carnival rides.