

And Another Thing!

A judge recently upheld the City of Daytona Beach's misplaced argument that short-term rentals are only allowed in tourist zoning districts or community redevelopment areas where hotels and motels are also permitted.

Now, the intrepid group of rental property owners who sued the city in the summer of 2017 is planning to appeal the decision to the 5th District Court of Appeal.

In my view, the city's position on this important issue is shortsighted and clearly geared toward appeasing the Halifax areas strong hotel/motel lobby, who view short-term vacations rentals as a threat to their continued viability, in an era where tourists are growing tired of paying exorbitant prices for a cubical in a beachfront fleabag that smells like mold and looks like merde. . .

As I've said before, this expensive and time-consuming fight is unfortunate – and it's time that the City of Daytona Beach and other municipalities throughout Volusia County awaken to the benefits of this growing segment of the state's tourism economy.

You don't have to venture very far into many neighborhoods – especially on the languishing beachside – to see the devastation that has resulted from a stagnating service-based economy, decades of neglect, a lack of strategic vision and almost non-existent code enforcement.

In certain areas, malignant blight is so prevalent that it creates a gut-wrenching visual.

The deplorable condition of once vibrant residential and commercial districts is defining our community in the eyes of residents and visitors alike – and that's not a good thing for the future of tourism on Florida's Fun Coast.

When investors purchase dilapidated properties and renovate them into a marketable short-term rental – it has a radiating effect in the surrounding area, slows the spread of blight and proves that pride in appearance can be equally contagious.

According to rental property owners, these renovations are performed at private expense, without tax abatement or government incentives, and the construction and ongoing maintenance provides jobs, such as landscaping, property management and other trades while increasing sales at local businesses.

I know a few of the plaintiffs in this case – others I have met at community events – and they are solid citizens, many heavily invested in the City of Daytona Beach and personally committed to the Halifax areas social, civic and economic revitalization.

One property owner recently explained to me that resort hotels are artfully designed to keep visitors on the property – spending money at on-site restaurants and lounges – while short-term vacation rentals, by their very nature, encourage tourists to get out into the community – to shop, eat, drink and play at local businesses and venues.

Obviously, local governments must retain the right to enact common-sense rules to alleviate nuisance issues and ensure the health, safety and quality of life for all residents – but property owners should be permitted to market short-term rentals in an open and responsible way without oppressive government regulation.

In my view, many local hotel/motel operators are part of the problem.

For years they have refused to reinvest in their product, squeezed profits while paying shit wages for scullery work and allowed their facilities and amenities to deteriorate. While some hoteliers have kept up with the times, many others on Atlantic Avenue and beyond have become little more than run-down dumps which contribute to the seedy sense of hopelessness that continues to plague revitalization efforts.

In my view, it's time that our elected and appointed officials come to the realization that we simply must incorporate innovation and alternatives and change the status quo.