

Airbnb's CEO is sorry for what he's done to neighborhoods



Brian Chesky — Photograph: Stephen Lam/Reuters



Airbnb, Vrbo, and others began as genuine home-sharing. It turned into big real estate cash cow business with **miserable neighbors, and loss of affordable housing and community.**

“We really need to think through our impact.”

“
We grew so fast.
We made mistakes.
”



Airbnb is now conducting a “serious audit” of who should rent what.

Brian Chesky founded Airbnb to help people make extra money renting spare rooms. He told *The Times* that the company wants a “reset for everything and everyone.”

At the same time, Barnstable is deciding whether to roll out the welcome mat.

The proposal in front of the Town Council includes a zoning change that allows short-term rental businesses in every residential neighborhood, even those that have always been “residential-only.” It says you can have new groups of strangers coming and going next door — even on both sides of you — every three days.

It also says short-term renters can use the backyard as a parking lot. Know what happens when cars drive over and park on septic tanks? Noxious leaks, eventually collapse. What are they thinking?

Everyone supports our rental traditions, but this is not that.

It's been the Cape Cod way for generations: families sometimes rent homes they actually live in to others, usually by the week, sometimes longer. But “homes” run as full-time, commercial hospitality businesses are very different.

At the July 13, 2020 Planning Board hearing, the Director of Planning acknowledged this difference. “When our zoning was originally crafted, we didn't have short-term rental use as we think of it today.”

Here's why we're optimistic: read the oath our Town Councilors took.

With the mission to protect our “quality of life,” Councilors swore to keep uppermost in their minds “my responsibility to the citizens of the Town of Barnstable.” Citizens bought homes expecting neighbors, not the Motel 6. So did our Councilors.

Let's protect our rental traditions and also our residential neighborhoods. Apologies are nice, but nobody really wants one next year.

Go to **BarnstableWatch.com** and speak up.