

Protect Hamilton County Families: Sign for STVR Regulations & Homeowner Rights

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Sign the Petition



Dear Neighbor:

A lot of thought goes into the purchase of where each of us chose to live other than just the home itself, for most this is the largest investment of our lives. We all look for a place where we feel safe, comfortable and a place we look forward to coming back to whether it is after a hard day at work, an afternoon at an event or returning from a vacation. Some might prefer nature over convenience or the other way around, however one thing the majority does **NOT** want or expect is a constant flow of strangers coming into your neighborhood disrupting the peace and sanctity of your home. This happens when you have short term vacation rentals invade your neighborhood. The renters are on vacation, they are there to have parties, stay up late, and enjoy their down time. They don't care that they are in a neighborhood. That is exactly what Short Term Vacation Rentals (STVR) bring in, a constant disruption to your neighborhood.

Stripped Rights and Uncontrolled Zoning Changes

The Unincorporated areas of Hamilton County are not protected by Municipalities like those that live in Soddy Daisy, Lakesite, Hixson, Red Bank, Chattanooga and other neighboring areas. These Municipalities make their own rules, regulations, laws, etc. for their areas. However, those of us in the unincorporated areas only have the County Commission as our protection. Unfortunately, over the past few years we have had our rights stripped from us; we don't even have a voice in what comes into our neighborhoods. To make matters worse this was done very quietly.

For those that live in A1 zoning in Hamilton County this was only recently uncovered but was done without any notifications whatsoever in May of 2020 when our then County Commission voted to include Short Term Vacation Rental Special Permits in A1 zoning. This automatically put commercial business in our neighborhoods, however at that time "IF" someone started a legal STVR, a sign would have been posted to inform neighbors of the owner's intention of opening a STVR and residents were given the opportunity to object. Sadly, even that process was flawed. For example, my neighborhood has six STVR in less than a quarter mile, all of which skipped the legal process, began renting, leaving the neighbors living among them to deal with the burden. ALL of these businesses are operating illegally. We got no voice and no opportunity to oppose this menace in our lives. And no one has done anything to stop this illegal activity, even though they have been made aware of it. Now once again very quietly this past April, our current County Commission voted to include R1 & R2 zoning for Short Term Vacation Rental Special Permits. What this has done in the Unincorporated areas of Hamilton County has allowed anyone that wants to operate a rental in your neighborhood to apply for a permit without you even knowing about it until the day renters start to arrive! We are not sure how everyone that lives in a neighborhood (even if you have several acres) will feel but those of us that have had them now in our neighborhoods for several years can tell you it is like living next to a Motel 6 daily.

Short Term Vacation Rental have a Negative Impact on Neighborhoods

Short Term Vacation Rentals are for a period of less than 30 days. Most have turnovers of renters at least a couple of times a week and we are not talking about just a nice couple, most have multiple people coming to stay including multiple vehicles and often trailers with boats. Our small narrow streets are no longer safe to take our pets for a walk, children to play outside, or even ride a bicycle. You will be (or are) experiencing a constant change of people you do not know or know anything about coming into your neighborhood. The State of Tennessee refers to these as a Transient Residential House (TRH). Would that make you feel comfortable or safe in your home, your largest investment? After many years of living with them it does not make us feel safe anymore!

STVRs in Neighborhoods have been proven to increase Crime

Multiple studies, including one by Northeastern University, have revealed that neighborhoods with Airbnb rentals experience a notable increase in crime rates. In

Hamilton County, gangs utilized Airbnb properties on Signal Mountain to conceal firearms and stolen goods, while in St. Elmo, the secret service discovered an Airbnb being used for drug production and distribution. Furthermore, two individuals who committed the murder of a UTC student were staying in an

Airbnb in Red Bank, using it as a base for robberies and the crime itself. The presence of Airbnb properties has led to elevated noise disturbances, property damage, theft, and break-ins. These short-term rentals attract potential thieves, jeopardizing community security and well-being. Unfamiliar individuals entering the neighborhood provide opportunities for targeting vacant Airbnb properties or robbing unsuspecting tourists known to carry valuable items and cash, resulting in a surge of crime that undermines safety and tranquility. Additionally, the transient nature of Airbnb guests has created an environment conducive to the discreet operations of sexual predators and human traffickers. The absence of thorough background checks and the failure to incorporate sex offender registries in the vetting process expose neighborhoods to significant risks, as residents live near individuals who pose severe threats to their safety and the overall community well-being. Without proper safeguards, communities unintentionally harbor potential predators who exploit the temporary nature of Airbnb rentals to prey on unsuspecting victims.

WE ARE TRYING BUT WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Short Term Vacation Rentals are a commercial endeavor that the property owner (most of the time this is an out of state investor) has CHOSEN to place next to your home or in your neighborhood to make themselves a nice profit at your expense.

We hope that you will sign this petition for us to present to the County Commission to show that we want our neighborhoods back and that commercial businesses belong in Commercial Zoning!