



September 15, 2014

Mayor Edna B. Jackson
City Manager Stephanie Cutter
2 East Bay Street
Savannah, GA 31401

Mayor Jackson and City Manager Cutter,

As a follow up to our June 24, 2014 letter, the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) has continued to research what other cities across the nation have adopted in regards to short-term residential rentals (STRRs). Attached is a synopsis of information that we feel will be helpful as you review and decide on the proposed ordinance. We have included the original documentation as well, should you wish to review the data.

As stated in our original letter, DNA will support the proposed ordinance with the following revisions:

Sec. 8-3205(a) Residential Use Standards

1. Text should read **PERSONS**
 - The ordinance currently reads ADULTS, which makes it legal to have as many guests as you can fit under the age of 18, in addition to the 2 adults per bedroom plus 2.
2. The **TOTAL OCCUPANCY** should be limited to **eight (8)** people
 - If a property owner would like to rent to more than eight people, the business should be classified as an Inn and subject to all life safety regulations and management.
3. **DENSITY MANAGEMENT**

Precedence of density measures in other cities:

 - Limit total number of certificates available for issue.
 - Limit to no more than one STRR per block face, which is the area between two parallel streets, the avenue and the lane.
 - Distance of 500 feet between STRRs.
 - Percentage of total residential property no greater than 5%.

Please understand, the DNA is not suggesting a ban on STRRs, which many cities with a similar makeup to Savannah are pursuing or have done. What we are asking for is some measure of density control to mitigate the effects of STRRs in our historic Landmark District.

We currently have wards that are greater than 50% STRRs. In the Landmark Historic District alone city officials and industry professionals are estimating that there are several hundred STRRs. The large and growing amount of these rental properties changes the neighborhood feel to an unmonitored hotel distributed across the city.

In addition, a proliferation of STRRs removes much needed affordable housing as well as long-term rental housing and drives up prices for local residents looking to rent.

Definition of "Owner Occupied":

An owner occupied property is one where the person providing a portion of their residing property parcel, such as a garden apartment or carriage house, for an STRR is a full time resident in another dwelling on that property parcel or directly adjacent to it.

Onsite Owners (“Owner Occupied”)

- Onsite owners would be exempt from the certificate cap and/or other density controls, or have preferred status when applying for a certificate.
- DNA feels there should be special consideration for onsite owners who are full time residents of Savannah based on their Homestead Exemption status.

We are requesting the City complete a full review of the ordinance, and its impact, six months after it has been adopted.

The DNA encourages the City of Savannah to continue in this proactive and positive step that this ordinance takes to balance tourism with the preservation of the historic neighborhood fabric of the Landmark District, by developing a Tourism Master Plan. Short-term residential rentals undoubtedly affect the essential character of a neighborhood and the stability of a community. Short-term tenants have little interest in public agencies or in the welfare of the citizenry. They are here today and gone tomorrow without engaging in any activities that weld and strengthen a community. DNA urges you to develop a plan that looks comprehensively at the nature of tourism in our city and its impact on the City of Savannah and the Landmark Historic District.

John Buckovich,
President
Downtown Neighborhood Association

Cc: Savannah City Council Aldermen
Bridget Lidy, Director of Tourism Management, City of Savannah
Daniel Carey, Historic Savannah Foundation
Thomas L. Thomson, Metropolitan Planning Commission
Maurice Norman, President, Victorian Neighborhood Association