



ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

3:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Ordinance Committee will hold a public hearing on a Zoning Petition by the Cambridge City Council to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Article 4.000 with the intent to amend Section 4.60.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3:40 PM
Catherine Zusy	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3:54 PM

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Ordinance Committee was held on Wednesday, August 27, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:30 p.m. by the Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.

- Councillor Azeem – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Absent
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Toner – Absent
- Councillor Wilson – Absent*
- Councillor Zusy – Present/Remote
- Mayor Simmons – Absent*

Present – 5, Absent – 4. Quorum established.

*Councillor Wilson was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 3:40p.m.

*Mayor Simmons was present and remote at 3:54p.m.

The Chair, Vice Mayor McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to hold a public hearing on a Zoning Petition by the Cambridge City Council to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Article 4.000 with the intent to amend Section 4.60 to redefine short-term rental, add definitions for “operator-occupied short-term rental,” “owner-adjacent short-term rental” and “booking agent,” add conditions of authorized uses to comply with the state building code, fire code, sanitary code, and all other state and local habitability requirements, add requirements to provide booking information and other documentation to the City upon request, and add enforcement mechanisms for violation of the ordinance or state regulations. Present at the meeting were City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, Assistant City Solicitor, Sydney Wright, Assistant Commissioner for Inspectional Services (ISD), Jacob Lazzara, Compliance Inspector, James DeAngelo, and Deputy City Manager, Kathy Watkins.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Jacob Lazzara and James DeAngelo who gave a presentation titled “Short-Term Rental (STR) Zoning Ordinance. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Vice Mayor McGovern opened Public Comment.

Upsana Davies, 12 James Way, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of proposed changes and urged the City to have stronger enforcement policies, similar to Boston.

Emily Pollock, 10 James Way, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of stronger restrictions in short-term rentals.

Sharon Britton, 950 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke against short-term rentals in condo buildings

Helen Walker, 43 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke against short-term rentals in condo buildings and in favor of the current language.

Heather Hoffman, 213 Hurley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of concerns raised by condo associations and offered suggestions towards enforcement.

Carolyn Fuller, 12 Douglass Street, Cambridge, MA, urged the City to focus on enforcement and not increasing more restrictions.

Daniel Pallin, 54 Kinnaird Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments related to enforcement and restrictions, protection of residents, and condo associations.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to close public comment. Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Absent

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Mayor Simmons – Yes

Yes – 7, No – 0, Absent -2. Motion passed.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who thanked City staff for their work on short-term rentals (STR) over the years. Councillor Nolan offered comments related to the concerns around enforcement and the City’s ongoing efforts on enforcement. Councillor Nolan pointed out that there were over 480 violation letters that were sent out, and as a result 234 STR’s either registered or removed their listings, noting that there is some progress towards compliance. Councillor Nolan emphasized the importance of partnering with booking platforms in order to help improve enforcement efforts and help identify properties that are not registered. Additionally, Councillor Nolan spoke in favor of Chapter 40U, which would help to strengthen enforcement efforts, and asked where the City is in the process of possibly adopting it. Megan Bayer responded and shared that the City is working on a response related to Chapter 40U to bring to the full City Council in September. Councillor Nolan reviewed proposed changes to the zoning that she, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, and Councillor Siddiqui worked on. The proposed changes were provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who thanked ISD for being proactive on proposed zoning changes. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler highlighted the need to update the zoning based on changes made in surrounding cities, such as Boston and Somerville. Councillor Sorbinho-Wheeler offered an

additional review of the proposed changes from himself and Councillor Nolan, emphasizing the need for stronger regulations. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler pointed out that there should be clarification in the zoning language on the definition of “primary residence”. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler offered suggestions on how the City can improve transparency and enforcement by creating a more accessible list of STR’s and data-sharing with booking platforms such as the agreement Boston has made. Sydney Wright responded by providing a brief overview of the approach the City is using with the various booking platforms and STR’s, noting that the City has asked that platforms encourage voluntary compliance with properties. Sydney Wright pointed out that the data-sharing agreement between Boston and booking platforms was a result of litigation and not a voluntary agreement and explained some of the challenges that could arise if Cambridge had mandated sharing. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler stressed that it is something that should be investigated further to help ensure effective enforcement in Cambridge.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who shared her appreciation for everyone who has been working on STR’s. Councillor Wilson asked for clarity on what the process of enforcement looks like for both the property owner and ISD. Jacob Lazzara provided a brief overview of the enforcement and resident complaint process, and shared information on Host Compliance software. He shared that residents are only expected to report complaints, and the software helps flag potential violations, which then would initiate ISD’s enforcement process. Councillor Wilson asked for more information on what a property owner should be doing to become compliant. Jacob Lazzara explained that once a violation is found ISD will issue a citation and provide time for the property owner to respond. Jacob Lazzara added that if the violation is not resolved, there would be an additional violation that includes fines, which can be added on a day-to-day basis until there is compliance. Councillor Wilson asked if there were any concerns from City staff about the proposed amendments from Councillors Nolan and Sobrinho-Wheeler. Megan Bayer explained the concerns related to the language on condo association approval and shared that it could be challenging for ISD to be involved in disputes between condo owners. James DeAngelo added that the definition of “operator-occupied” could create some confusion and unnecessary extra steps.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who thanked staff for their work and asked for an overview on what the registration process looks like. Jacob Lazzara responded and explained that the registration process in Cambridge is very simple, and includes an online application that requires minimal documents, an inspection conducted by ISD, and \$100 registration fee. James DeAngelo added that renewals are annual. Councillor Zusy asked for more information on the difference between owner-occupied and owner-adjacent STR’s. James DeAngelo provided an overview of what determines an owner-occupied property versus an owner-adjacent property and what is required of the property owner. Councillor Zusy shared her support for the Host Compliance software to help reduce non-compliant listings. Councillor Zusy provided suggestions regarding concerns related to condo associations.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Azeem who shared that he was mostly supportive of the proposed amendments from Councillors Nolan and Sobrinho-Wheeler and had a clarifying question related to primary residence and how long an owner could be away from their primary residence. Sydney Wright explained that short vacations would not change someone’s primary residence status, but living somewhere else for a significant portion of the year would. Megan Bayer provided information on what is allowed as far as STR’s when an owner is away. Councillor Azeem asked how accurate the data is related to the 90% of unregistered properties on booking platforms and if the City expects that number to decrease. James DeAngelo shared that the City is continuing to collaborate with online booking platforms which would hopefully begin to reduce the unregistered listing. James DeAngelo also pointed out that some owners will create multiple listings for the same property, which adds to the increase in the total number of unregistered properties.

Vice Mayor McGovern thanked staff for their work and emphasized that the STR ordinance should not make it difficult for residents who are responsible for renting out their property, but enforcement should be increased for those that are not being compliant. The Vice Mayor asked if it would be possible for Cambridge to ask for booking platforms to provide proof of registration when they are creating a listing, similar to what Boston does. James DeAngelo noted that platforms do not currently require proof of registration, but some platforms will show what the requirements are for cities and towns and direct them to where they need to go to register. Sydney Wright added that Boston requires Airbnb to show registration numbers that are incorporated with the City’s system, but that came out of litigation and a legal agreement. Sydney Wright shared that it is something

that Cambridge could discuss with booking platforms in future conversations. The Vice Mayor spoke in strong support of having an arrangement similar to Boston to help with enforcement and for listings to be compliant. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that in the ordinance language there are terms being used as “owner occupied” and “present” and asked if they define the same thing or if there should be clarification in the language. Megan Bayer shared that the ordinance does not define these terms, so they are common meanings, with “occupy” meaning reside in, and “present” meaning physically present. Megan Bayer added that definitions could be added to the language for clarity. The Vice Mayor shared that clearer definitions may be needed for everyone to understand the language. Vice Mayor McGovern spoke in favor of condo associations having the ability to disallow STR’s but does not believe the City should be involved with mediating those disputes. The Vice Mayor asked if condo bylaws banning STR’s would override the City’s ordinance. Megan Bayer explained that if condo documents have language that prohibit STR’s in their buildings, ISD would be able to deny applications on that basis. Megan Bayer explained where it could be challenging for condo associations and provided suggestions on how condo associations could move forward. Vice Mayor McGovern shared concerns about the 90-day maximum, noting that Boston uses 120 days, and that many visitors that come to Cambridge may need more than 90 days. The Vice Mayor suggested Cambridge review extending to 120 days.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who provided comments that were in support of 90 days and explained why 90 days would not limit someone from staying in Cambridge longer.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who provided further review and clarification on the proposed language that is being brought forward for consideration. Councillor Nolan provided additional suggestions for language in the ordinance related to defining owner-occupied type rental and limits of stay in certain STR’s. Sydney Wright explained that by considering those suggestions, it would fundamentally alter the already proposed amendments in the zoning petition. Councillor Nolan stressed the importance of enforcement and recognized that it can be challenging.

Vice Mayor McGovern and Megan Bayer reviewed what the next steps on the zoning petition could be, which were keeping the petition in the Ordinance Committee or forwarding the petition to the full City Council with either a favorable or no recommendation.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Interim City Clerk Crane called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent
Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes
Councillor Nolan – Yes
Councillor Siddiqui – Absent
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Toner – Absent
Councillor Wilson – Yes
Councillor Zusy – Yes
Mayor Simmons – Yes
Yes – 6, No – 0, Absent – 3. Motion passed.

The Ordinance Committee adjourned at approximately 5:15p.m.

Attachment A – Communications from the public.

Clerk’s Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1066?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication transmitted from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to Short-Term Rental Ordinance Amendments.

A communication was received from Jacob Lazzara, Assistant Commissioner for Inspectional Services, transmitting a presentation related to the Short-Term Rental Zoning Ordinance.

A communication was received from Councillor Nolan and Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, transmitting proposed amendments to the Short-Term Rental Ordinance.

A communication was received from Jeff Roberts, Director of Zoning and Development, transmitting a Planning Board Report on the Short-Term Rentals Zoning Petition.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Angela Jones <shopmail1983@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 4:04 PM
To: City Clerk; City Council
Subject: Concerns About Classist Impacts of Cambridge Short-Term Rental Laws

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council,

I am writing to express my concern about the inequities built into Cambridge's current short-term rental laws. While the stated intention of these regulations may have been to protect housing availability, in practice they appear to disproportionately favor wealthy property owners at the expense of residents of more modest means.

As it currently stands, those who own multiple units or larger properties are permitted to rent them out full-time, even when they do not live in them. And you have on means of checking that if someone says they are just renting a room that they aren't renting the entire place. It's ludicrous to think they aren't and impossible to enforce. I have personally stayed in several of these units and can confirm that the owners were not residing there. At the same time, residents who own smaller homes—such as studios or one-bedroom apartments—are heavily restricted, limited to renting out their space for only a small portion of the year.

This creates a system rooted in classism. Wealthy individuals with multiple properties or multi-bedroom homes can generate substantial income year-round, while working-class residents, including artists and others who travel for work, are penalized for trying to make ends meet. The message is clear: you must already be a millionaire to benefit from short-term rentals in Cambridge, while those struggling to stay afloat are excluded from meaningful participation.

I urge the Council to reconsider the fairness of these laws. A more equitable framework would allow all residents, regardless of the size of their home, to have reasonable opportunities to rent their space without being subjected to restrictions that primarily harm those with the least resources.

No one person or group should be allowed more than one short-term rental, and no one should be restricted due to size which equals income. Make it fair. You get one listing but are not restricted by size. That's it. I am an artist who travels half the year. I can only rent my space for a measly few calendar days b/c all I can afford is a mortgage on a studio? And at least I own. I'm not renting out spaces for profit. I'm just trying to home share, as the platforms intended, to make ends meet.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I hope you will revisit these policies with equity and fairness in mind.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Emily Braunstein Pollock <emily_braunstein@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 3:33 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment for Ordinance Committee

My name is Emily Pollock and I live at 10 James Way.

I would like to encourage the ordinance committee to adopt even stricter restrictions on short-term rentals. Cambridge has a huge housing market problem, and losing units to full time short-term rentals is just making that problem worse.

We should consider adopting policies more like Somerville's, which states that "The purpose of these regulations is to allow Somerville residents to operate short-term rental units, but to also ensure that those units remain part of the housing stock and do not negatively impact the neighborhood" (<https://www.somervillema.gov/strs>)

Their restrictions include limiting short term rentals to:

- Only the occupants primary residence, specifically excluding adjacent units
- Rental to only one group or customer at a time
- A limit of 90 days per year if the occupant is not present (unlimited if they are)
- A single listing per website, per residential unit, with a requirement that multiple listings must be consistent to prevent rentals to multiple groups at a time

Policies like this would allow people to rent out spare bedrooms, or to rent out their whole home for the summer or other vacation period, without removing units from our housing stock.

It is important also the the ordinance committee adopt restrictions that are easily enforceable by ISD. We know there are short-term rentals out there that violate our existing rules, but absent easily enforceable regulations, ISD can't do anything about it. It is equally important that the city be aware of the limitations of working with booking platforms, such as AirBnb. These platforms have historically not been willingly cooperative with cities trying to enforce local regulations. We either need to plan on avenues to enforce their cooperation, or write our regulations such that they can be enforced without the cooperation of booking platforms.

Thank you.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Emily Braunstein Pollock <emily_braunstein@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 3:31 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment for Ordinance Committee Meeting

The written version of my public comment for this afternoon's meeting is below.

My name is Emily Pollock and I live at 10 James Way.

I would like to encourage the ordinance committee to adopt even stricter restrictions on short-term rentals. Cambridge has a huge housing market problem, and losing units to full time short-term rentals is just making that problem worse.

We should consider adopting policies more like Somerville's, which states that "The purpose of these regulations is to allow Somerville residents to operate short-term rental units, but to also ensure that those units remain part of the housing stock and do not negatively impact the neighborhood" (<https://www.somervillema.gov/strs>)

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- A single listing per website, per residential unit
 - with a requirement that multiple listings must be consistent to prevent rentals to multiple groups at a time
- A limit of 90 days per year if the occupant is not present (unlimited if they are)

Policies like this would allow people to rent out spare bedrooms, or to rent out their whole home for the summer or other vacation period, without removing units from our housing stock. This is the difference between a policy that still lets people get some extra income from unused space without allowing people to run full time hotels.

It is important also the the ordinance committee adopt restrictions that are easily enforceable by ISD. We know there are short-term rentals out there that violate our existing rules, but absent easily enforceable regulations, ISD can't do anything about it. It is equally important that the city be aware of the limitations of working with booking platforms, such as AirBnb. These platforms have historically not been willingly cooperative with cities trying to enforce local regulations. We either need to plan on avenues to enforce their cooperation, or write our regulations such that they can be enforced without the cooperation of booking platforms.

Thank you.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Anna Briccetti <a.briccetti@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 1:58 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Airbnb Enforcement Needed!

We need more long term housing stock in Cambridge, and so I'm writing today to urge the City Council to take more action to limit short-term rentals:

Please update the STR ordinance to:

- Cap unhosted/entire unit rentals to 90 days per year (like Somerville already does)*
- Limit STRs to one unit per owner and only primary residences*
- Require booking platforms (like AirBnB) to share data with the City so illegal rentals can be identified and shut down.*

*Thank you,
Anna Briccetti*

Erwin, Nicole

From: Deb Nicholson <deb@eximiousproductions.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 1:17 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: In support of enforcing restrictions on short term rentals

Hi,
I'm writing to support Sarah Dewart's longer letter. We desperately need more long term housing in Cambridge.

With no enforcement, outside people will continue to buy up housing stock that we can't spare and use it for Airbnb rentals. Absentee landlords and short term neighbors don't participate in our communities. They don't shovel snow, they don't take in trash bins and they don't help out when something happens.

Please do whatever you can to make sure we have enough housing stock for long term residents.

Thank you,
Deb Nicholson
Resident and home owner at 338 Norfolk Street

Erwin, Nicole

From: Jim Gray <james.h.gray@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 11:53 AM
To: Huang, Yi-An; City Council; McLaughlin, Peter; Bayer, Megan; City Clerk
Cc: Jim Gray
Subject: Short-Term Rental Ordinance Amendments

Dear City officials,

As a resident directly affected by illicit STR activity, I greatly appreciate efforts to strengthen the City's related ordinances. The proposed amendments are a step in the right direction, but as far as I can tell, still lack strong enforcement mechanisms.

This is an issue that affects all of Cambridge: We need more long term housing stock in Cambridge, and so I'm writing to urge the City Council to take more action to limit short-term rentals:

Please update the STR ordinance to:

- Cap unhosted/entire unit rentals to 90 days per year (like Somerville already does)
- Limit STRs to one unit per owner and only primary residences
- Require booking platforms (like AirBnB) to share data with the City so illegal rentals can be identified and shut down.

Sincerely,
Jim Gray
2 Michael Way

Erwin, Nicole

From: Sarah D <sbdewart@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 10:40 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Short-term rental ordinance
Attachments: short-term rental problems.docx

Dear City Manager, City Council Members, ISD Commissioner McLaughlin, and City Solicitor Bayer,

Thank you all for bringing the Short-Term Rental Ordinance update to the Ordinance Committee today. Our neighborhood, and many others, have gone from neighbors who stay and know each other to blocks with numerous unregistered short-term rentals with *no host present*. And no host reachable or accountable! The current system has encouraged investors to buy up property and only rent to short-term guests. It is undermining our trust in you and in the ordinance if there is no way to limit these rentals and enforce the ordinance.

If you care about the lack of housing in Cambridge: one of the most immediate and cheapest way is to allow fewer air bnb type rentals and open up those units to provide for more permanent housing.

Thank you for addressing this issue, I and my many neighbors appreciate anything you can do to rectify this situation. I would have gathered their signatures except I just found out about this meeting last minute.

Sincerely,

Sarah Dewart

336 Norfolk Street, apt #1

Dear City Manager, City Council Members, ISD Commissioner McLaughlin, and City Solicitor Bayer,

Thank you all for bringing the Short-Term Rental Ordinance update to the Ordinance Committee today.

Our neighborhood, and many others, have gone from neighbors who stay and know each other to blocks with numerous unregistered short-term rentals with *no host present*. And no host reachable or accountable! The current system has encouraged investors to buy up property and only rent to short-term guests.

It is undermining our trust in you and in the ordinance if there is no way to limit these rentals and enforce the ordinance.

If you care about the lack of housing in Cambridge: one of the most immediate and cheapest way is to allow fewer air bnb type rentals and open up those units to provide for more permanent housing.

Thank you for addressing this issue, I and my many neighbors appreciate anything you can do to rectify this situation. I would have gathered their signatures except I just found out about this meeting last minute.

Sincerely,

Sarah Dewart

336 Norfolk Street, apt #1

Erwin, Nicole

From: John P <mail@jpatrick.net>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 8:47 PM
To: City Clerk
Cc: City Council
Subject: Re. Zoning Petition to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Article 4.000 with the intent to amend Section 4.60.

Dear Members of the Ordinance Committee,

I would like to thank Councilor Nolan and her aide, Patrick Hayes, for bringing to my attention one of the proposed amendments to Cambridge's Short-Term Rental Zoning Ordinance (Article 4, Section 4.60). As a co-convener of the Cambridge Condominium Alliance, I am particularly concerned about the Inspectional Services Department's (ISD's) request to remove the following sentence from Section 4.67(1):

“If the operator is not the owner of the property, the operator shall provide written evidence that the owner and the condominium association, if applicable, has consented to the short-term rental use of the property.”

I strongly urge the Committee not to strike this sentence. At minimum, it should be replaced with a clearer requirement that requires condominium approval for any applicant, whether owner or tenant:

“If the operator is seeking to register a property that is part of a condominium, the operator shall provide written evidence that the condominium association has consented to the short-term rental use of the property. If the operator is not the property owner, written consent from the owner must also be provided.”

There are several reasons why such a specified requirement is essential:

1. **Condominium governance limitations.** In the absence of this provision, condominiums without explicit restrictions on short-term rentals in their governing documents would lose an important tool to regulate such rentals. Most condominium associations would prefer to limit or prohibit short-term rentals. However, Massachusetts legal precedent suggests that rules restricting individual unit usage are likely unenforceable unless incorporated into the condominium's governing documents. Amending those documents typically requires a supermajority of proportional ownership (often 75%), which is extremely difficult to achieve—particularly in associations where more than 25% of units are not owner-occupied.
2. **Weaker enforcement.** In her June 23 letter to City Manager Huang, City Solicitor Bayer wrote: “We believe that the changes proposed will provide a more effective regulatory process for short-term rental facilities in the City.” In fact, eliminating this requirement would have the opposite effect by reducing ISD's ability to enforce the ordinance as intended.
3. **Consistency with Planning Board concerns.** In her August 22 letter to the City Council, Planning Board Chair Mary Flynn emphasized the importance of clarifying the ordinance, encouraging registration of short-term rentals, and equipping ISD with the tools necessary for enforcement. Removing the requirement for condominium consent undermines these goals.

I fully support the other proposed amendments—particularly Section 4.64(14), which specifies penalties for noncompliance (an effective incentive for registration), and Sections 4.67(1) and (3), which reinforce requirements for valid identification, proof of primary residency, and code compliance.

Finally, I encourage the City/ISD to consider maintaining a list of Cambridge condominiums that prohibit short-term rentals. This would greatly streamline ISD's work, since registration applications could be immediately rejected if they originated from a condominium address that restricts short-term rentals.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to retain—and ideally strengthen—the requirement for condominium association approval in Section 4.67(1).

Thank you for your attention and for your continued work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

John Patrick
950 Massachusetts Ave. Apt 508
Cambridge, MA 02139

Erwin, Nicole

From: Ben Davies <ben.r.davies@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 6:32 PM
To: City Clerk; City Council
Subject: STR Zoning Ordinance

To Cambridge City Council STR Rental committee,

Clearly the STR ordinances are both unenforceable and ignored.

I'm both a resident and owner of a rental property in Cambridge. By following the STR ordinance I'm forgoing ~\$50k in potential rental income because I follow the rules that we, as a community, have agreed to.

We should either abolish the STR rules or make them enforceable and I the proposed 90-day limit. It is both i) easily enforced and ii) allows residents to make additional incomes while rendering AirBnB only rentals uneconomic.

I support the 90 day ordinance.

Best regards,
Ben Davies
15 James Way

Erwin, Nicole

From: Upasana Unni <upasanaunni@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 4:46 PM
To: City Council; City Manager; Bayer, Megan; McLaughlin, Peter
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Please strengthen Short-Term Rental enforcement in Cambridge

Hi City Council,

I want to thank you all for bringing the Short-Term Rental Ordinance update to the Ordinance Committee tomorrow. This has taken a lot of effort and I am excited to see the progress.

However, I want to share my concerns about the City's ability to truly enforce illegal short-term rentals based on how the ordinance update is written. According to AirDNA (the best cross-platform data source for short term rental bookings), there are likely ***1500+*** rentals in Cambridge listed on short-term booking sites, with significant growth in the past year, but only ~175 rentals registered with ISD (see image below).

There are egregious cases where some "hosts" have **4 listings in Cambridge of up to 15 bedrooms**, (1, 2, 3, 4), none with an STR registration permit number, but ISD has no way to contact the owners to enforce laws because AirBnB won't share the address of the listing.

I think our neighbors in Somerville have enacted sensible limits to ensure short-term rentals don't dominate their housing market. Here are my suggestions to further amend the STR ordinance so ISD has real enforcement power:

Somerville Ordinance text

- **A 90-day limit on owner-absent "unhosted" short-term rentals**
- **Only primary residences can be listed as STRs**
- **Only one unit per owner can be listed as a STR** (including only one listing per booking website)

A 90 day limit would allow ISD to confirm through rental records that the unit was not fully rented out without the owner present 90+ days a year and gives a hard line allowing enforcement actions.

The City also needs to take steps with AirBnB, VRBO, and so ISD can get confirmatory rental records directly from booking sites because ensuring accurate records is going to be the next hurdle to be solved. I urge you the City Solicitor to bring suit to the booking platforms so ISD can enforce compliance with the updated ordinance.

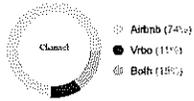
Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I appreciate all of the hard work that has been going into this ordinance update.

Sincerely,
Upasana Davies
12 James Way

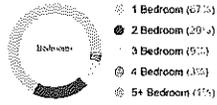
Cambridge Performance Details

Total available listings
1.580

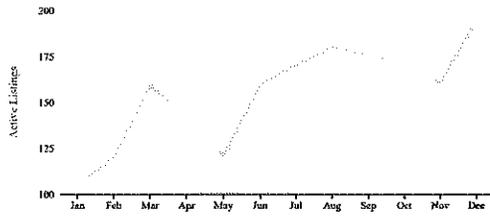
Listings by rental channel



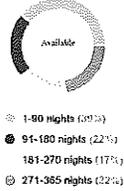
Listings by rental size



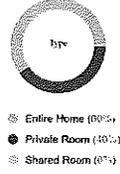
Rental growth in the last 12 months



Listings by annual availability



Listings by rental type



--
Upasana Davies
516.424.1846

Erwin, Nicole

From: Carolyn Fuller <carolyn.fuller2018@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 22, 2025 4:42 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk; McLaughlin, Peter; Huang, Yi-An; Bayer, Megan
Subject: Zoning Petition to amend Section 4.60 in Article 4.000 August 27, 2025 @ 3:30 PM

Dear Ordinance Committee,

I'm writing today in regards to Ordinance Committee's public hearing on a Zoning Petition by the Cambridge City Council to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Article 4.000 with the intent to amend Section 4.60.

Currently the proposed amendment for Section 4.64 - 9 reads:

"An operator of an operator-occupied short-term rental must be present in the unit for the duration of the rental while renting up to three (3) individual bedrooms. If the operator is away from the unit, they must rent out the unit in its entirety to one party."

This wording is problematic for 2 reasons:

- As written, an operator of an operator-occupied short term rental could not even run an errand for the duration of the rental.
- As written, the entirety of the unit includes the operator's private spaces.

For example: My husband and I would not be willing to have a guest using any part of the 3rd floor of our home because we have a very shy cat who thinks of our 3rd floor as her private domain and would be traumatized if strangers entered her space. Also, our basement is not outfitted to be safe for guests. So we'd be unwilling to take the risk of STR guests having access to that space.

Here is a possible rewording that avoids both of these problems:

The operator of an operator-occupied short-term rental must be present overnight in the unit for each night of any short term rental while renting up to three (3) individual bedrooms. If the operator is away from the unit overnight, they may rent to no more than one short term rental party while they are away.

Carolyn Fuller
carolyn.fuller2018@gmail.com

Erwin, Nicole

From: City Clerk
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 9:08 AM
To: Erwin, Nicole
Subject: FW: Testimony at Aug. 27 Cambridge Ordinance Committee meeting
Attachments: STR Statement to City CouncilSB.docx

Paula M. Crane
Deputy City Clerk
City of Cambridge

-----Original Message-----

From: Sharon Britton <sabritton@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 6:03 PM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@Cambridgema.gov>
Cc: Helen Walker <hwalker434@rcn.com>; Kathy Dalton <kathyldalton@gmail.com>; Marilee Meyer <mbm0044@aol.com>; John Patrick <johndpatrick@gmail.com>
Subject: Testimony at Aug. 27 Cambridge Ordinance Committee meeting

Dear City Clerk. Please file this copy of testimony given at today's ordinance committee with the committee minutes.

Thank you, Sharon Britton

Statement to Ordinance Committee of the Cambridge City Council,
Wed. Aug. 27, 2025, 3:30 pm. Sharon Britton, co-convener of the
Cambridge Condominium Alliance

Good afternoon, City Councilors and City staff.

My name is Sharon Britton, I live at 950 Mass Ave, unit 508, and I am a co-convener of the Cambridge Condominium Alliance, an affiliation of 28 of the city's larger condo associations comprising about 3,000 individual units and owners.

I am here today to ask that AS YOU AMEND the language of the Short Term Rental zoning ordinance, that you do NOT delete the section that requires those applicants who live in condo buildings to demonstrate that they have the approval of their boards.

Moreover, I ask that the language be strengthened to require that not just tenants, but condo owners as well, are required to obtain their board's approval.

STRs are not compatible with condo living. A heavy churn of anonymous transient tenants who are oblivious to the rules and traditions of a condo community is intrusive and unwelcomed in a place where we live in close quarters and share common space. The unpredictable ebb and flow of short-term tenants undermines the secure, accountable, and neighborly atmosphere that makes our communities desirable places to live.

And not insignificantly, condo boards have no direct authority over the actions of these transient renters.

Many condos—like mine—were established with governing document bylaws that prohibit both short-term rentals and the subletting of rooms in apartments. But other older condos did not anticipate this threat that the city

is now attempting to regulate. Adopting such a new rule for these boards can be nearly impossible when a vote of 75% of ownership is required to amend bylaws. Without that bylaw protection, participating in the city's STR review process can be helpful. Doing so would allow a condo board to deny a request for an STR as part of the city's application procedure, by citing, for example, a rule prohibiting commercial activity, an argument that has been supported by case law.

We recognize that administering these multistep applications puts a huge burden on the Inspectional Services Department staff. For relief, I suggest the department allow condo boards to register their buildings as prohibiting STRs. This would enable ISD to eliminate applications for those addresses out of hand, thus avoiding many unnecessary reviews.

Establishing such a "No STR list" could significantly reduce Cambridge's short-term rental market, helping to preserve the supply of permanent residential housing and protecting condo communities from the inevitable pain associated with transient rentals.

Thank you for listening.

And thank you also to Councillor Patty Nolan and her staff for making the Condo Alliance aware of this proposed change and for giving us the opportunity to comment.

Good day.

Sharon Britton

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

Erwin, Nicole

From: City Clerk
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 9:08 AM
To: Erwin, Nicole
Subject: FW: Comments at Ordinance Committee 8/27/25 re: Short-Term Rental Zoning Petition

*Paula M. Crane
Deputy City Clerk
City of Cambridge*

From: hwalker434@rcn.com <hwalker434@rcn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 7:04 PM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@Cambridgema.gov>
Subject: Comments at Ordinance Committee 8/27/25 re: Short-Term Rental Zoning Petition

Dear City Clerk,

Dear City Clerk,

Please file my comments regarding the Short-Term Rental Zoning Petition with the record of today's Ordinance Committee hearing.

With many thanks,
Helen Walker
43 Linnaean Street

Dear Members of the Ordinance Committee,

Thank you for the chance to speak.
And thank you to Councillor Nolan for informing the Cambridge Condominium Association about today's meeting.

As probably true for many condo associations whose governing documents were written in the early 1980's, our Master Deed has no mention and no restrictions on short term rentals. Adding a new restriction in our Master Deed limiting use of units would require a vote of 75% of ownership. Our association could not raise that number of votes. Previously we had wanted to limit absentee ownership by requiring one year of residence prior to renting out a unit, and we could not raise the votes for that.

But we do want to limit short term rentals. Our current Handbook rule depends on City policy, notifying would-be operators that the City requires Board approval, which will not be forthcoming. We cannot enforce this, as a **rule** rather than as a **provision in the Master Deed**, without the City providing the

backstop. Please keep the current language requiring Board approval for all short-term condo rentals that are registered with the City.

I second Sharon Britton's idea that ISD could keep a list of condo associations that don't approve short-term rentals, if this would streamline ISD's task.

I know Council is concerned about owners who depend on the extra income from short term rentals. Two of my neighbors each rented out an extra bedroom to a college student. That approach was far preferable to short term rentals from the point of view of maintaining a stable residential environment. Furthermore, it provided housing to people with a Cambridge connection first, which should be our goal.

Thank you

Erwin, Nicole

From: City Clerk
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2025 9:08 AM
To: Erwin, Nicole
Subject: FW: Comments to include in minutes
Attachments: Pallin public comments on hearing Aug 27, 2025.pdf

*Paula M. Crane
Deputy City Clerk
City of Cambridge*

From: Danny <dannyjpallin@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2025 10:22 PM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@Cambridgema.gov>
Subject: Comments to include in minutes

Dear Clerk's Office,

I was a Public Commenter during today's Ordinance Committee meeting. Attached please find a written copy of the comments I gave there. Please include these in the records of the meeting.

The attached document does not contain contact details but in case you need those to file this, please see below.

Thanks,
Daniel Pallin
52 Kinnaird St
Cambridge MA 02139
DannyJPallin@gmail.com
(617) 671-5594

These are written comments submitted with the intention that they be included in the public record of the Ordinance Committee meeting on August 27, 2025, at 3:00 p.m.

To: Cambridge City Council

Re: Ordinance Committee meeting on August 27, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. pertaining to a Zoning Petition by the Cambridge City Council to amend the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in Article 4.000 with the intent to amend Section 4.60

From: Daniel J. Pallin
Kinnaird St, Cambridge MA 02139

Honorable City Council Members:

In today's hearing, Inspectional Services Department (ISD) staff stated that there are roughly 600 short-term rental properties in Cambridge, of which 175 are registered. In registering a unit, ISD staff conduct a detailed review of each application. A staff member makes a personal visit to inspect. So ISD has personal knowledge of all of the registered units. The owners are regular Cambridge people renting out part of their house to make ends meet.

What about the remaining 425 units that aren't registered? We know they are breaking the rules, but we don't know anything else, because they didn't fill out the registration papers. We can guess that they're absentee landlords using buildings as hotels, and we can guess that many do not live in Cambridge.

Why are we going after the 175 compliant owners as a way to get at the 425 noncompliant ones? It seems uncalled-for and cruel. Who is standing up for those 175 compliant Cantabrigians?

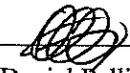
Today's discussion conflated **increased enforcement with tightening of restrictions**. It's a really important distinction. There is no logical connection between laxity of enforcement and increasing restriction. **Unlike increased enforcement, tightening the rules can only harm Cambridge residents who are already compliant.**

In my case, I live in a two-family house. My family occupies one unit, and we rent out the other unit on Airbnb. Our short-term rental unit is fully registered and compliant in every way. (In fact, an ISD inspector was there today, for our 5-year reinspection!) If you make it really nice, you get more money from a short-term rental than you do for a long-term rental. We depend on the income and would likely leave Cambridge if we were forbidden from continuing short-term renting. Also, we had long-term tenants before, and it made us uncomfortable. Long-term tenants are housemates, while Airbnb guests just come and go and don't get in your hair. And we don't feel guilty hosting visiting professors or businesspeople for a week, any more than we felt guilty about hosting graduate students with 2-4 year leases.

It was suggested that short-term rentals should be limited to 90 or 120 days. Nobody can afford to own a place in Cambridge and rent it out for only 3-4 months a year. So this has the effect of outlawing short-term rentals. Why do we want to outlaw short-term rentals? If there are 175 units, converting them to long-term rentals for people who don't live here now but would like to is not going to help anybody who lives in Cambridge today. **And it's such a small number that any potential benefit is outweighed by the harm done to the law-abiding Cambridge residents who own the units.** Does anyone seriously believe that 175 more units will impact the housing shortage? Going after the 175 compliant owners of short-term rental units makes no sense. It will benefit no one and will immediately harm 175 legit Cantabrigians.

I understand that enforcement is ugly, and difficult. But please do not pretend that tightening the rules will increase compliance. The black market will persist unless you go after it, and there is simply no reason to penalize the 175 of us who are playing fair.

Respectfully,



Daniel Pallin
August 27, 2025