

City Talk for June 22, 2022
City Manager's Office
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Short term rentals are one of the most uncomfortable issues in Sedona, whether you support them or wish they would all go away. Regardless of where you fall, the city is seeing how our community has been changing very quickly. As of the end of May, 14.3% of the city's housing was short term rentals. By comparison, in January of 2022, 12% of housing was short term rentals.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2017 and with the passage of Senate Bill 1350, the city was no longer allowed to ban short term rentals. While we have been able to gain some authority to regulate short term rentals like what is listed below in this article, the city has been dedicated to promoting legislation at the state level that would allow communities greater regulatory capacity, but we have not yet seen success.

To assist residents having issues with neighboring short term rentals, the city launched a 24/7 hotline in September 2020. I have helped with the city's short term rental program for the past two years and work with short term rental owners to make sure all operating properties are registered and we have their emergency contact on file so that if an issue arises, we have the right person to talk to address the problem. Hotline flyers were mailed to the entire city encouraging residents to help the city collect data on short term rental issues. Over the last year, I have been reviewing the notes from all complaints called or emailed into the hotline, routing code related issues like trash or lighting violations to the city's code enforcement team to follow up with properties that are out of compliance. Those reviews happen daily to ensure that code enforcement officials can follow up as soon as possible.

How exactly is what the city is doing helping the issue? We are collecting critical data and are requiring connection and communication with property owners. Requiring short term rental owners to register is not just a compliance process, it is an educational process. In speaking with owners, we educate them on what the city requires around emergency contact registration and why it is important. Most owners I speak with are all for the process and glad to know how to be better neighbors. And although the total percentage of properties registered fluctuates because there is a lot of selling and buying of properties in Sedona, the most recent report showed we were around 90% compliance for emergency contact registrations.

The complaint hotline is another education and communication tool, and much more. The hotline collects firsthand reporting as it happens, rather than second or third hand anecdotal information after the fact. Complaints called into the hotline are recorded and that information is kept with each property's registration, so we have an accurate history that can be reviewed for repeating patterns or larger issues. At the time of complaint, the hotline agent calls the emergency contact, either speaking to the contact directly or leaving a detailed message describing the issue. If the issue requires further action, like for example a noise concern, the hotline agent will also call the Sedona Police Department and ask for a follow up visit that evening.

In my daily review of complaints, I share all code issues with the code enforcement team so they can reach out to the property owner. Property owners may not be aware of the issue of a trash can prone to being tipped over by javelinas leading to trash strewn in the street. Part of the process of coming back into compliance is being educated on what it takes to maintain compliance. I invite residents to continue using the hotline as the main source of short term rental issues so we can keep reaching out to owners

to get issues resolved, and to record real data on short term rental impact on our community. This data in turn is being used to help fight for laws that will give us more authority to the city to regulate short term rentals. Call the hotline at 928-203-5110 or visit www.sedonaaz.gov/str for the online incident reporting form.

As of July 1, I will be transitioning into the full time position of short term rental specialist for the city, and I expect to engage more deeply with the tools we currently have, while supporting my colleagues who are working at the state level. Sedona is breaking new ground in Arizona. Other communities in Arizona are following our lead in creating registration/hotline programs. I look forward to continuing to build on the momentum we have started.

