

7/17/15

Dear Councilman O'Farrell,

I am aware that there has been and currently is some very intense controversy regarding short term rental of residence spaces in Los Angeles, neighboring cities and notably in New York and San Francisco, through the Airbnb organization.

I would like to speak directly to this issue from my experience as a Host of Airbnb over the last two and a half years here in Los Angeles.

Before I do, I'd like to share a little about myself. I have lived and worked in Los Angeles since 1970. Most of my life I have been self-employed as a general contractor and also a realtor however in my youth I worked in Los Angeles as an organizer with others in my community to provide much needed services. Together, with friends and committed community members, we established a child care center, food co-op, community law offices and other supportive services in the Echo Park and Silver Lake areas. Building and working with/in community has been a critical focus of my life and work.

I am now 67 years old and am proudly involved in building and connecting with networks of communities worldwide through Airbnb as a Host. Not only am I able to support myself, but I am able to share life, experiences and my amazing Echo Park/LA community with people from all over the world who have a keen interest in visiting and exploring Los Angeles and learning about our culture here. Airbnb came into my life just when I needed it! My financial reserves for retirement had been exhausted as the result of caring for my elderly parents. I was quite despairing as to how I was going to be able to provide for myself as I turned 65. A friend mentioned Airbnb as a possibility. I explored the idea for several weeks and decided to give it a try. It was possible to start up this wonderful business with a minimum outlay of cash and with low overhead. I also went to the LA City Department of Finance and obtained a business license as a short term residence provider and paid my Transient Tax and have continued to do so every month. So in a very short period of time, using only my existing resources, I was able to pull myself out of a financial crisis, generate steady and solid monthly income, provide a warm and welcoming local experience to visitors willing to spend lots of vacation dollars in LA, and provide a steady stream of cash to the LA City Finance coffers. I have made improvements to my property and its street appeal and have grown more knowledgeable of the resources and businesses in my community so that I can better inform my guests of what is available to them on their stay. I can truly say that I am an avid supporter of my local business as an Airbnb host. My guests also enlighten me as to what local businesses they have tried and loved. This completes the circle of synergistic and energetic involvement that I and my guests provide to my community through our involvement with Airbnb as I am able to give our combined feedback to my local businesses, along with any constructive feedback. More than any other money making career that I have had over the years, my Airbnb involvement has dramatically increased by connection to my community in the most positive, interactive ways.

Airbnb's support for their Hosts and Guests is impeccable and 24/7. Their internet infrastructure is mind-blowingly empowering and they are all about community and connection worldwide. In my mind they are one of the most powerful and positive worldwide organizations for building peace and genuine international people to people relationships, that exists. Because their peer review system is integral to

the Airbnb process, most hosts and guests are very concerned about being good citizens and this creates positive social awareness throughout the Airbnb “culture”.

Airbnb is at the forefront of providing leadership in establishing an exceedingly positive model for what the “Sharing Community” can be. There are always challenges when an old paradigm begins to dissolve and a new one takes its place. Fear seems to be at the forefront of this kind of change. As you know, I am sure, a reactive expression of fear often emanates from lack of knowledge and experience with the “New”. Please do not allow fear to play a role in any decision you may make regarding Airbnb. Please listen to those of us in your community who are grounded in the Airbnb experience. Please talk to my neighbors and find out what is really going on. This is the most positive work life experience I have ever had. My neighbors are very supportive of me and refer me to friends and family. Because of Airbnb I am now much more connected to my neighbors than I was before. I now know when new baby community members are about to be born because their grandparents stay at my airbnb “Cottage” and make return visits to see these new little “Echo Parkians”. I get to be a part of these families in a genuinely connected way.

I respectfully submit that Airbnb is a community builder and strengthener. Myself, my community and my business community would feel a profoundly negative effect if we lost the Airbnb connection and the City of LA would lose a very positive cash flow source and a good will generating positive business partner. Please support Airbnb because through its existence it truly empowers both local and worldwide community people in the most positive ways and on so many dense, rich levels.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Stephanie Woods

Airbnb Host