

# STRs are commercial operations and belong in commercial districts (5)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Airbnb, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues October 7, 2018

(#5 in a series of posts on Airbnb)

*Barbara Diamond enjoys retirement as Lehigh University Director of Foundation Relations by engaging in various activities and organizations hopefully for the betterment of the community. Her particular interests at the moment are preventing gun violence, local government ethics reform, and Bethlehem Democratic Committee work.*

Dear Gadfly, I have watched Mr. Brew's video a couple of times (and have taken note that it appears embedded in a number of the *Morning Call* articles about this issue, as well as a slide show of one of his short term rentals [STRs]. I'm still waiting for the *Call* to do a video featuring opponents' arguments!) In response to his statement that he is preserving the historic houses for posterity, I say that all of us who reside in these houses are doing that without turning them into businesses that create negative impacts for immediate neighbors and the neighborhood as a whole. There is a considerable body of evidence about how damaging this is for neighborhoods, easy to find online. That is why cities across the country and all over the world are passing ordinances to regulate STRs. They are commercial operations and belong in commercial districts not in residential neighborhoods. They instantly cause residences around them to lose value — who wants to live next door to one? They remove houses from available residential housing stock so that individuals and families, the very foundation of a neighborhood, are closed out. The houses he bought were all previously single family residences. He did not “rescue” them; they did not need rescuing. As to his implication that his only alternative would be to turn them into apartments, I actually would prefer that because they would be homes for people who would be my neighbors, part of my community rather than be weekend destinations for people with no investment in my neighborhood or community. But that is not his only alternative. If he can't get the rent he wants, he can sell them so that they can become a home for people who will cherish them.

Barbara