



City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ROSALYNN C. BLISS
MAYOR

April 30, 2019

The Honorable Chair James Lower, and
Members of the House Local Government and Municipal Finance Committee
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative Lower,

The City of Grand Rapids opposes HB 4046 (Sheppard) which would eliminate all local zoning over short term rental (STR) properties. The City uses zoning to define appropriate uses of land to ensure adequate provision of goods, services, and housing within our community. This includes a balance among the various uses of property while considering things like parking, traffic, noise and nuisances; protecting health and safety; and maintaining the desired quality of life and character of each neighborhood for our citizens. It is for these main reasons that the City opposes this preemption to local zoning decisions.

The reality of entire-home rentals by owners that hold multiple properties is not "home sharing" in the sense of a family renting their home for a little extra income for a few short periods of time a year while staying on the premises or nearby. This is a commercial enterprise. Homes in residential neighborhoods are being converted into mini-hotels. Neighborhoods will not only lose dwelling units; the quality of life will be impaired. Issues of parking, traffic, noise, and nuisance – the very things that zoning is designed to protect against – will be stripped away under HB 4046.

Homeowners buy in residential neighborhoods to be away from commercial uses. Zoning is the mechanism that separates such uses from one another. If zoning is removed as a proactive protection for homeowners, then the burden is shifted to neighbor residents to call and complain. Why should neighbors be burdened to call the police department when a different group of people is renting the house next door every weekend, and there is not an accountable party on the premises? Residents purchased in a neighborhood understanding what uses were, and were not, allowed. It is not unreasonable for them to expect that their investment and accompanying quality of life should be protected.

Safe urban neighborhoods rely on neighbors knowing one another. Neighborhood watch groups are established to ensure that unusual activity is reported to the police. People coming to stay at a STR do not offer the comfort of safety and security for residents. In addition, renters who stay only a few days at a home will be less concerned about the property itself or neighbors. Absentee landlords, LLC's, and investment companies become the point of contact for complaints.

Additionally, under HB 4046, such units would be exempt from standard life safety requirements found in the Michigan Building Code and local ordinances for full-time rental properties, bed and breakfasts, and hotels. These regulations were put in place to protect the sleeping spaces of non-owner occupants; providing some assurance that where renters and guests are staying is safe.

The Zoning Enabling Act was specifically crafted to ensure local decision-making so that citizens could determine how *their* community will grow and develop. The City respectfully requests your careful consideration and opposition to HB 4046.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rosalynn Bliss".

Rosalynn Bliss

C: Members of the House Local Government and Municipal Finance Committee, Honorable Senator Winnie Brinks, Honorable Representative Rachel Hood, Honorable Representative David LaGrand