

May 2012



Special Request Results

Why We Did This Report

This memo responds to a request from Council Member Tovo at the April 20, 2012 Audit and Finance Committee meeting regarding the number of short-term rentals advertised online.

What We Did

To complete this special request, we summarized the number of STR listings on eight websites over an eleven-week period.



For more information on this or any of our reports, email oca_auditor@austintexas.gov

SPECIAL REQUEST REPORT ON SHORT-TERM RENTAL WEBSITE LISTINGS

Mayor and Council,

I am pleased to present this special request report on short-term rental website listings.

BACKGROUND

On April 20, 2012, the Office of the City Auditor presented the Short-term Rentals Audit to the Audit and Finance Committee. This audit identified and mapped 1,500 short-term rentals in the City of Austin.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

Our objective was to track the change in the volume of short-term rental listings on selected websites.

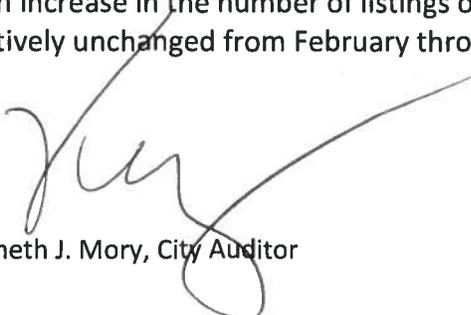
The scope included reviews of eight websites, from February 2011 through April 2011.

WHAT WE FOUND

The Short-term Rentals Audit identified short-term rentals (STRs) using information from website listings and government registrations. The number of STRs was reduced to 1,500 through the following steps:

- Eliminating duplicates (properties found in multiple sources or listed more than once on the same website)
- Combining individual room listings into a single record (e.g. a four-bedroom house might have a separate listing for each bedroom)
- Selecting only properties within the Austin full-purpose jurisdiction
- Selecting only properties for which sufficient information was provided to establish a specific location

Our analysis of website listings, shown in Attachment A, does not take these factors into consideration and comprises all website listings for the given time period. STR listings peaked in mid-March, and then dropped slightly and stayed stable through mid-April. Most of the growth in early March was due to an increase in the number of listings on Airbnb; the other websites were relatively unchanged from February through April.



Kenneth J. Mory, City Auditor

EXHIBIT 1
Listing Counts by Website

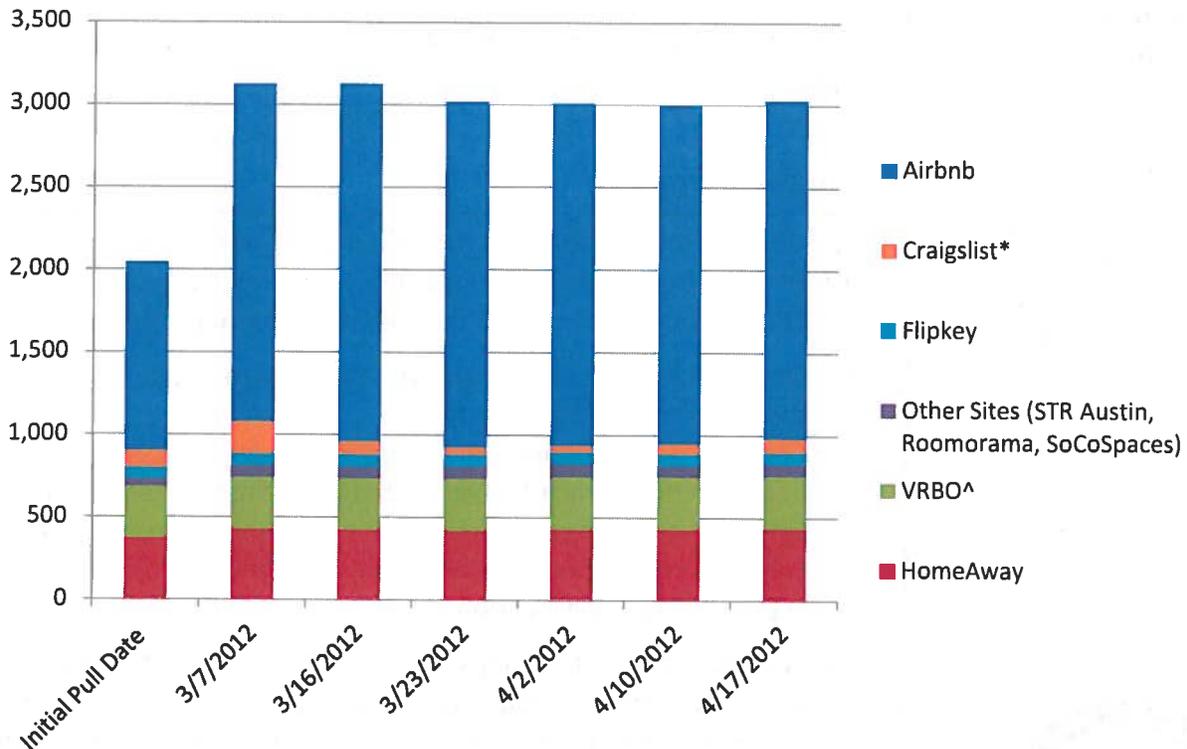
Website	Initial Pull Date	Initial Pull	3/7/12	3/16/12	3/23/12	4/2/12	4/10/12	4/17/12
Airbnb	2/13-2/14/12	1,144	2,044	2,166	2,093	2,075	2,052	2,050
HomeAway	2/13/12	370	426	422	419	426	428	435
VRBO	3/13/12	316	316 [^]	314	316	321	318	320
STR Austin	2/23/12	24	40	41	43	43	33	33
Flipkey	2/9/12	69	72	75	73	73	73	75
Roomorama	2/13/12	18	24	23	23	28	28	28
Craigslist*	2/27/12	102	197	81	48	41	63	82
SoCoSpaces	2/24/12	2	5	5	5	5	5	7
Total		2,045	3,124	3,127	3,020	3,012	3,000	3,030

[^]VRBO listing were pulled on 03/13/2012. The 03/07/2012 number is an estimate.

* Tracking counts for Craigslist will be for a day before the tracking date noted (e.g., data from 03/06/2012 was counted on 03/07/2012).

SOURCE: OCA analysis of selected websites.

EXHIBIT 2
Change in STR Website Listings Over Time



[^]VRBO listing were pulled on 03/13/2012. The 03/07/2012 number is an estimate.

* Tracking counts for Craigslist will be for a day before the tracking date noted (e.g., data from 03/06/2012 was counted on 03/07/2012).

SOURCE: OCA analysis of selected websites.