



AIRBNB(OSTON)

As rents and home prices in Metro Boston climb, the growing popularity of the online booking service “Airbnb” is causing concern among policymakers and community leaders.

The concern stems in part from the perceived impact on housing affordability. Some argue the service tightens the rental market by making units unavailable to residents. Others, including Airbnb itself, claim the service empowers households to earn additional income which defrays the cost of housing.

There is some statistical support for both perspectives. In Boston, data show most participants list their entire housing unit, and most are available for more than 60 days per year — suggesting that many hosts have dedicated their units or rooms to Airbnb rather than living in them or renting them out most of the time. There are also signs that hosts may be

using the service to help cover their rent. Outside Boston, most listings are for a room instead of a full unit, and only 10 percent of hosts in the region are “power hosts,” or those listing more than one entire unit.

With the growing sharing economy, it’s clear more efforts are needed to understand the impact of services such as Airbnb and to modernize regulations.