



REPORT | 06 AUGUST 2018

# Airbnb and D.C.'s East of the River Communities



*Airbnb hosts at Anacostia Arts Center (September 8, 2017)*

**Home Sharing: Creating \$3.75 Million in Supplemental Income for Ward 7 and Ward 8 Families**

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## **METHODOLOGY**

The data used in this report about the Airbnb platform -- specifically guest arrivals, guest city of origin, and host earnings -- are all based on Airbnb internal data for the District of Columbia, and communities located east of the Anacostia River between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018.

# INTRODUCTION

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The District of Columbia, home to dozens of unique neighborhoods, is also one of the country's top destinations for tourism, historical sightseeing and major cultural events. Airbnb makes it possible for visitors from around the world to experience the nation's capital as Washingtonians do — by staying local.

**Of the over 130 hotels operating across D.C., zero of these properties are located east of the Anacostia River in Ward 7 or Ward 8.** In comparison to other parts of the District, areas east of the Anacostia River have historically experienced limited opportunities to attract tourists. As a result of home sharing, these culturally diverse communities — which do not typically benefit from traditional tourism dollars because of the lack of hotels — are now experiencing more visitors and seeing an important economic lift.

Airbnb income that is generated east of the Anacostia River positively impacts everyone from the local shop owner to long-time and native Washingtonians. District of Columbia residents [earned nearly \\$84 million in 2017 sharing their homes via Airbnb](#) and [over \\$50 million in guest spending occurred at D.C. restaurants](#) between September 2015 and October 2016.

The following report explores the positive impact Airbnb is also having on families and small businesses in Anacostia, Congress Heights, Lincoln Heights and other neighboring areas.

Key findings from this report include:

- Between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018, **guests arrivals to these communities grew 65 percent** from the previous 12 months and **totaled nearly 29,300 guest arrivals**.
- During this time, hosts in Wards 7 and 8 **earned a total of \$3.75 million in supplemental income -- an increase of 58% from a year ago** and with the **typical host earning \$4,712**.
- Over these 12 months, **Airbnb guests in these neighborhoods spent over \$8.6 million during their stay** at D.C. cafes, restaurants and retail shops.
- Families represented **14% of the total guest arrivals and totaled over 3,990 -- an increase of 333% from last year**.<sup>1</sup>
- **Anacostia, Buena Vista and Shipley Terrace** are the neighborhoods with the highest number of guest arrivals.

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as families with children 12 years-old or younger.

## WARD 7 & WARD 8 HOST STORIES

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**Growing up in Memphis, Tennessee -- a setting of the early civil rights movement, blues music and soul food -- Levita Mondie was used to living in an area known for its rich history, social impact and cultural diversity. So when she became one of D.C.'s first Airbnb hosts in 2009, Levita knew she was embarking on something really special.**

"I heard a lot about Airbnb during the 2009 Inauguration," said Mondie. "And following my divorce, I was looking for a way to supplement my teacher's salary, and obtain extra income to support my daughters' education and enrichment."

After close to a decade of sharing her Historic Anacostia home with hundreds of guests -- some repeating their stay with her and others extending their visits by weeks and even months -- Levita has recruited half a dozen of her Anacostia neighbors as Airbnb hosts.

"We've really built a community here. If my spare rooms are booked, I can always recommend other hosts on my block to prospective guests," added Mondie. "And being able to do this in Anacostia gives us as chance as Washingtonians to showcase and share with others an area of the District we truly love."

Levita has used her home sharing income to support her daughters' school tuition, commitment to competitive soccer, and looks forward to using this lifeline to save for retirement and pay off her mortgage. And among her favorite guests she fondly remembers helping young activists from the midwest make march signs, sharing her vegan meals with summer interns, and helping travelers from Japan and South Korea navigate the District's Metro system.

"I have really loved Airbnb. It's saved my life from a financial point. And it allows me to do the things I want to do for myself and my daughters," remarked Mondie. "Hosting and southern hospitality is who I am. It's in my roots and feeds into everything I teach my students, daughters and community."

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**Despite residing just a few Metro stops from Capitol Hill and close to national parks, Synta Keeling's east of the Anacostia River neighborhood – Lincoln Heights – has missed out on the economic opportunities brought to the rest of the city by tourism and traditional accommodations, like big hotels. That changed in early 2015 when she learned about Airbnb from a cousin and signed up.**

"I wanted the extra income - but thought it wouldn't work because I was in an unfairly stigmatized area," Keeling explains. "People wanted to be in the center of the city and I had effectively given up."

To most visitors, Ward 7 doesn't look like the rest of the District of Columbia. For one thing, it's one of the few places in the city where residents still have enough space for front yards. For another, it's 98 percent African-American – an observation many of Synta's guests are very quick to make.

But for Synta, whether visitors are surprised, uncertain, or simply unfamiliar, their questions are a chance to share some of the neighborhood's history, identity, and beauty, and provide a new perspective. In Ward 7, the noticeable number of new visitors is providing a much-needed economic lifeline to families that have lived there for generations and Synta is happy to share local knowledge with guests.

"I meet people from all over the world... hosting really destroys stereotypes," she explains. "We all table our own prejudices – what I look for in anybody is that they're open to giving it a shot."

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**Kanita Williams -- a young professional and native New Yorker -- began hosting at her Congress Heights home after graduating law school four years ago. Her Ward 8 neighborhood is off the beaten path for traditional tourists and prior to home sharing, options for travel accommodations east of the Anacostia River were scarce.**

"If Airbnb had existed, I would have used it," she says. "It gives people a unique opportunity to experience different parts of the city – that's helpful, because people feel more comfortable about committing and buying."

While the average Airbnb visit to the nation's capital is four nights, something about Kanita's four-bedroom space attracts people who are hoping to soon call DC their home and on average, guests stick around for roughly six months. As home sharing continues to gain in popularity, Kanita has noticed long-term guests are often staying in the area and investing in homes of their own.

"I tend to get people who are coming in for school or internships," says Kanita. "My space has been full pretty much ever since I posted."

## HOST INCOME

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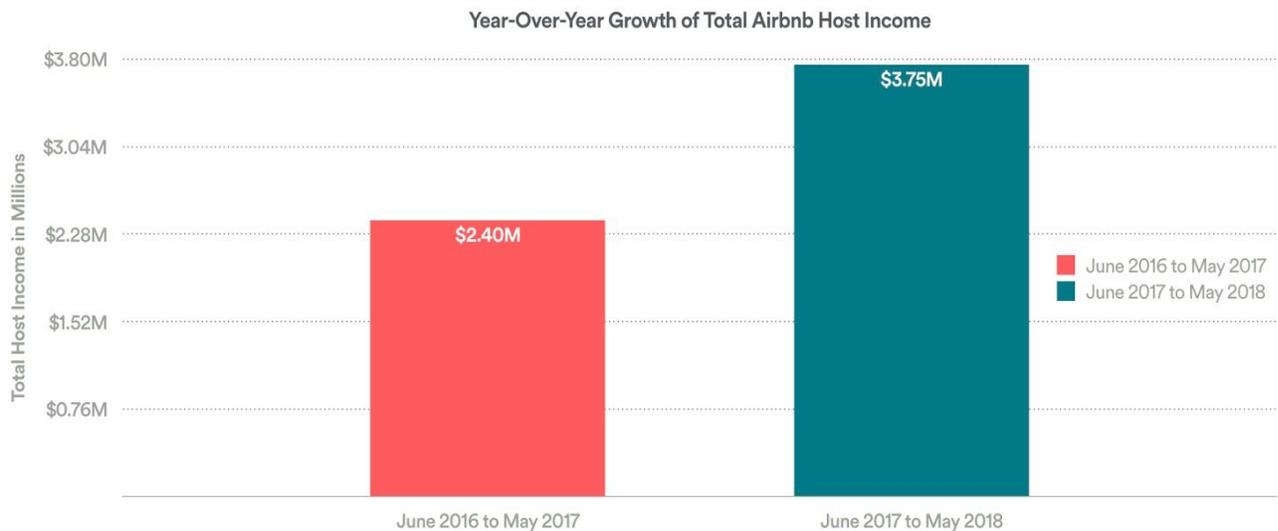
With zero hotels located east of the Anacostia River, Airbnb hosts in these neighborhoods are uniquely positioned to attract visitors to this corner of the District, while also creating tourism traffic and tourism dollars using their most valuable asset -- their home.

Home sharing via Airbnb positively impacts everyone from native Washingtonians and recent college graduates to burgeoning small business owners. The [nearly \\$84 million earned by D.C. Airbnb hosts during 2017](#) is supplemental income and an economic lifeline that helps them cover their mortgage, save for retirement, pay down school loans and stay in the communities that they love.<sup>2</sup>

Between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018, residents of Anacostia, Shipley Terrace, Fort Davis and other east of the Anacostia River neighborhoods **earned a total of \$3.75 million in extra income -- an increase of 58% from a year ago**. And the **typical Airbnb host in these communities earned \$4,712** from home sharing -- **a growth of 71%** compared to \$2,748 during June 1, 2016 and May 31, 2017.

## Total Airbnb Host Income

### Hosts East of the Anacostia River



<sup>2</sup> [REPORT: D.C. families earned nearly \\$84 million from Airbnb in 2017](#), January 11, 2018

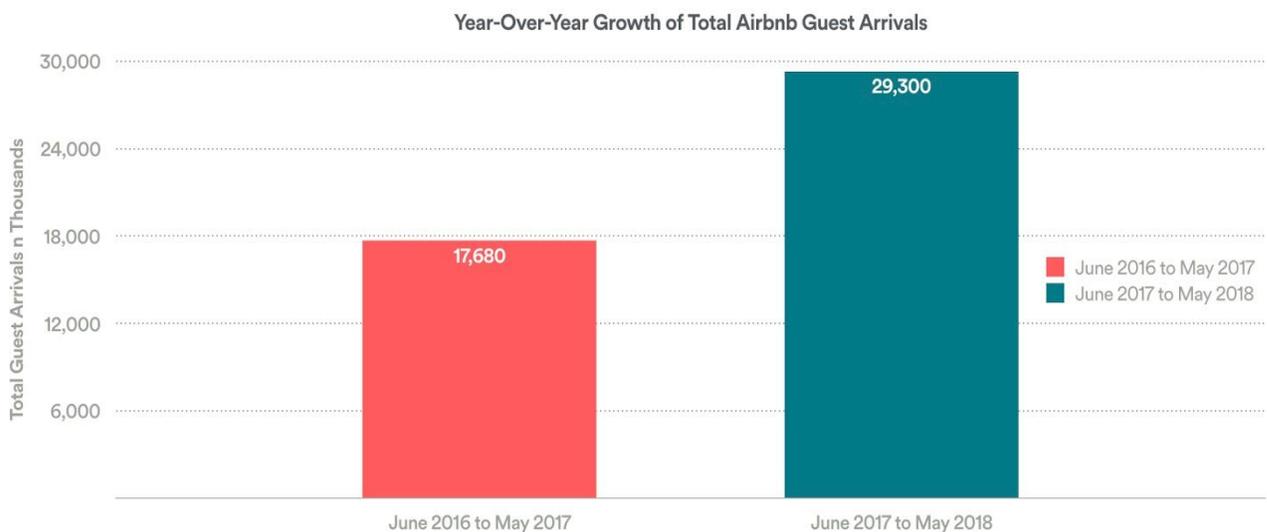
## GUEST ARRIVALS

Airbnb also creates new opportunities for travelers to stay in neighborhoods like Congress Heights, Lincoln Heights, and Benning Ridge. By giving local residents a pathway to extra income and helping them share their spare rooms and homes with the global community, more Ward 7 and Ward 8 families and small businesses are gaining a connection to D.C.'s tourism industry.

Between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018, **guests arrivals to these east of the Anacostia River communities grew 65 percent** compared to the previous 12 months and **totaled nearly 29,300**. And families with children 12 years-old or younger represented **14% of the total guest arrivals and totaled over 3,990 -- an increase of 333% from last year**.

### Total Airbnb Guest Arrivals

#### Guest Arrivals East of the Anacostia River



The following is a breakdown of the east of the Anacostia River neighborhoods with the highest number of guest arrivals during this 12-month period and the percentage increase in these guest arrivals from the prior year.

NEIGHBORHOOD	WARD	AIRBNB GUEST ARRIVALS	YEAR-OVER-YEAR INCREASE
Anacostia	8	2020	38%
Buena Vista	8	1730	230%
Shipley Terrace	8	1325	47%

<b>Fairlawn</b>	8	1255	16%
<b>Benning Ridge</b>	7	1250	105%
<b>Marshall Heights</b>	7	1175	85%
<b>River Terrace</b>	7	955	134%
<b>Mahaning Heights</b>	7	920	132%
<b>Fort Davis</b>	7	835	234%
<b>Twining</b>	7	775	41%

## SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES

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An October 2016 report found that Airbnb guests spent \$4.5 billion in that past year on restaurants and dining out across three dozen major U.S. and international cities -- with [over \\$50 million of this guest spending occurring at District of Columbia restaurants](#).<sup>3</sup> In fact, 90% of our D.C. hosts recommend their neighborhood grocery stores or cafes to their guests.<sup>4</sup>

**And Airbnb has made it a personal mission to connect hosts and guests to small businesses by partnering with local organizations like [Go Anacostia](#) and the [Anacostia Arts Center](#) and hosting tours with [Ward 8 shops and eateries](#) like [Check It](#), [District Culture](#), [Turning Natural](#), and [The Anacostia Playhouse](#), and [Mamma's Kitchen](#) -- businesses that don't typically benefit from tourism dollars.**<sup>5</sup> Between June 2017 and May 2018, **Airbnb guests in east of the Anacostia neighborhoods spent over \$8.6 million during their stay** at D.C. cafes, restaurants and retail shops.<sup>6</sup>

Mike Sterling, Jamaican food aficionado and owner of Historic Anacostia's Caribbean Citations, [knows first-hand about the positive and powerful economic impact home sharing creates](#). Sterling prides himself on establishing strong relationships with local Airbnb hosts who regularly recommend his business and others in the area to their Airbnb guests.<sup>7</sup>

"All the business owners on the block respect me. Everyone wants to shake my hand or give me a hug. Building relationships is the best form of advertisement. It's the best way to make business move," he said.

<sup>3</sup> [REPORT: Airbnb guests spend \\$4.5 billion on local restaurants in major cities](#), October 20, 2016

<sup>4</sup> Based on 2017 Airbnb Annual Community Compact Survey

<sup>5</sup> [DC hosts support local businesses in Historic Anacostia merchant walk](#), September 8, 2017

<sup>6</sup> Based on 2017 Airbnb Annual Community Compact Survey

<sup>7</sup> [DC 8 small business spotlight: Caribbean Citations, Ward 8's community-driven eatery](#), August 4, 2017

**For Ward 7 small business owner and Airbnb host, [Rachel Pace](#), Airbnb has given her a unique way to support her community and fund her burgeoning coffee enterprise, Penny Brew.<sup>8</sup>**

Originally from Pittsburgh, Rachel bought a house in the Deanwood neighborhood after relocating to the District of Columbia, but felt her new surroundings were missing a cultural element present in other parts of the nation's capital.

Combining her fervent passion for great coffee with her love of community, Penny Brew was born. The pop-up coffee shop and eatery is based in Ward 7's Riverside Community Center. And beyond being the savvy business owner of Penny Brew, Rachel is also an Airbnb host and lists her one bedroom basement apartment on the platform.

"I've always been a coffee enthusiast and I noticed there wasn't a sit down coffee shop in the area. If I wanted good coffee, I had to go across the Anacostia River," added Pace. "Penny Brew's slogan is: quality coffee, small eats, and community," explained Rachel. "Community is the most important pillar of them all."

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<sup>8</sup> [DC 8 small business spotlight: Penny Brew, Ward 7's dedicated coffee pop-up](#), July 14, 2017