

A different system that verifies the business license is valid for short term rentals might involve the integration of a function similar to `check_policy_number` in our project. When a lister attempts to add a listing, instead of just requiring numbers be entered into the field, which leaves an opportunity for fake information, the system should do two things. First, check if the number entered follows the forms valid for a proper business license in the relevant location. Second, the system should involve adding all policy numbers into a database, and periodically it checks with the planning office of that location to see if all the policy numbers are valid. You get three strikes, and if you violate the policy too many times, then you are unable to list on Airbnb. Two arguments that could be used against adopting this system are one: the issue of privacy. Is it ethical to add policy numbers of all listings in a location to a database owned by Airbnb? Will this information have to be made public? Another argument could be that it requires too much from the planning offices. If the system is not automated, then such a large number of policy number checks could overwhelm the offices.

One research question that you could answer or explore using the data collected in this project is how housing affordability impacts housing insecurity. An individual is housing insecure if they spend more than 30% or 50% of their annual income on housing. If I was working with a housing activist organization, I might take the cost associated with each listing, and compare that to income rates in the location.

One factor I believe is important to consider when discussing the legality of web scraping is trespass to chattel. US courts decided that “scrapers” may be held liable, which involves the system scraped being considered as personal property which the user of a scraper is violating. In *eBay v. Bidder’s Edge*, automated auction sniping was considered trespass to chattels.

One guideline that you must consider when deciding to use or not use public data is the reason for the web scraping. Scraping is useful for keeping companies accountable, and making sure they are abiding by their privacy policies and values. Another guideline that needs to be considered is whether or not consent from the person the data is collected from is given. Companies need to be explicit about where the users’ information is going and how it can be accessed by others.