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# Residents rent homes for game weekends

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**Posted: 10/6/06**

Ole Miss alumni and others traveling to Oxford for the Homecoming game against Vanderbilt this weekend without preexisting hotel room reservations should not despair.

Because of the shortage of options in Oxford and the need for more space, fans now desire more amenities than most hotels offer. Some savvy Oxford residents realizing this trend have begun offering alternative housing accommodation: their own homes.

According to Hugh Stump, executive director, of the Oxford Tourism Council, Oxford and Lafayette County have about 600 hotel rooms, though on average, 40,000 visitors come to town during football weekends.

"You got 60,000 people who want to stay in Oxford because it is one of the best destinations in college football," said Oxford resident Anthony Blake, who has six properties that he deals with for the stopover rentals. "I have turned away a lot of people in the last 30 days because we were out of space. I had the Georgia [game weekend] booked up in March."

Blake said the weekend rentals are similar to a time share and depending on the game, they range anywhere between \$600 to \$1200 though the "high demand SEC [Southeastern Conference] are usually the ones priced more."

Blake first began his venture with a family member.

"I have an aunt in Memphis that owns five houses and she asked me to help her with the rental property," he said.

One of the properties was a fully-furnished unit that she used as a weekend getaway when she traveled to Oxford. Blake began renting the unit after he told her about the demand for housing on a game weekend.

Some Oxford residents make their primary homes available for football rentals.

"There are a couple people that rent their personal properties that I have referred clients to and they secure their personal property [before leaving the home]," Blake said.

He also said that in most instances residents renting personal houses require a security deposit.

Jason Langston, a member of the active military, is one of those citizens who puts his own home on the temporary market.

"I was actually approached by a doctor and his wife from Baton Rouge, La. that wanted to come [to Oxford] for the LSU game a couple of seasons ago," Langston said.

The couple could not find hotel space from Oxford to Memphis, and "it was a fair arrangement and I already knew the people," Langston said.

Last weekend's Georgia game was only the second time he has rented out his home, and stayed with a friend. In the future, Langston said he will maintain his modest approach to weekend rentals because of his friends and family that also visit for games.

"I usually only do it once a season and price is based on the number of people coming into town," Langston said.

Of the seven weekend rentals advertised in Thursday's edition of The Daily Mississippian, six mentioned football games. Two of the six weekend rentals advertised in Thursday's edition of The Oxford EAGLE referred to the games.

Homeowners are not the only people providing accommodations for alternative housing; some developers are also taking interest in the recent trend.

"We realized that there was a market here about a year and half ago," said Collier Swecker, vice-president and manager of Alumni Properties, LLC., a company that has offices in Opelika, Ala. and in Oxford.

Swecker said the company is providing an alternative to hotels by offering four-bed room and four-and-half bath homes that, upon completion will be available for students, alumni or vacationers.

"At other SEC [towns] this concept has sold out and become a fan and student favorite," Swecker said.

In the common area of Grove Hill, they are trying to create a Grove-like atmosphere, with wireless Internet, and other modern services. It will be finished for fall and summer next year.

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