

From: [Martin Pena](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#); [PlanningAgency](#); [Susan Gorin](#)
Cc: Soldroyd645@gmail.com
Subject: Planning Commission Public Hearing Comments: File: ZCE23-0001, Vacation Rental Rezone
Date: Wednesday, March 15, 2023 4:04:05 PM

EXTERNAL

Sonoma County Planning Agency, Supervisor Gorin,

I plan to attend the public hearing in person on March 16, and would also like to submit my public comments for the record in support of the Planning Commission's recommendation for approval of zone change within Kenwood neighborhood for parcels listed in Exhibit A of Attachment IL.

These changes are long overdue. This area, on the northwest of Greene Street in Kenwood was burned in 2017 during the Nuns fire with a majority of the homes either destroyed or severely damaged, causing displacement of many residents for several years. Five years later, we still deal with the aftermath of the fire with vacant lots, houses still in construction (with continued noise and traffic associated with rebuilding), and others still trying to restore their homes to the pre-fire condition. The road to recovery has been long - physically, mentally, and emotionally for full-time residents.

While dealing with fire recovery, the neighborhood has had to deal with the influx of vacation rentals. Several of houses that were destroyed and rebuilt as vacation rentals were specifically designed and marketed to enhance their appeal as luxury vacation rentals and party houses. Because of the high fees charged (in some cases approaching \$1,000 per night including fees and taxes), many of these tourists feel entitled to use the property without regard to rules and regulations, and do not respect the residential nature of this neighborhood. This has caused conflict and confrontation between residents and tourists. Some of the problems experienced include hosting more guests than permitted, more cars parked than permitted, excessive noise, amplified music, late night noise, not dealing with trash properly, just to name a few.

While the Sonoma Permits enforcement group seems to have good intentions and continues to improve their processes and make enhancements to performance metrics, it should be made clear that the primary burden of enforcement falls upon the local residents to report, document, and follow up on these issues. And, with overconcentration of vacation rentals, it becomes difficult to identify the property that is violating the rules, presenting another burden for residents who try to report issues.

With these issues in mind, I am grateful that the Staff Report recommends the Kenwood Vacation Rental Exclusion (X) Combining District to prevent local overconcentration.

I also want to express my complete agreement with the following Staff Report findings, in particular:

- At this time, 17.5% of the parcels developed with single family homes in this neighborhood in the northwest area of Kenwood are operated as Vacation Rentals, which is significantly higher than the countywide average (4.5%) and is detrimental to maintaining the residential character of this neighborhood
- Increased conversion of homes in this area to Vacation Rentals will result in a loss of housing stock
- The area of Kenwood outside of the proposed rezoning area is within a Vacation Rental Exclusion Vacation Rental Exclusion (X) Combining Zone resulting in an increased demand to convert single-family home into Vacation Rentals in parcels outside of the Vacation Rental Exclusion Vacation Rental Exclusion (X) Combining Zone
- Applying a Vacation Rental Exclusion Vacation Rental Exclusion (X) Combining Zone to the parcels shown in Exhibit A provides uniform regulation of Vacation Rentals within the Kenwood neighborhood

I request that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors move forward with these recommendations.

Finally, I do have a concern and potential disagreement with the following statement posted on

<https://permitsonoma.org/vacationrentals>)

The moratorium on new vacation rental permit applications that has been in place since May 10 is set to continue, potentially through May 9, 2023. Applications that were submitted prior to May 10, 2022, will be able to move forward under the regulations at the time of submittal.

Given the already 'overconcentration' of vacation rentals and lodging businesses in Kenwood, myself and other neighbors feel it would be inappropriate to grant additional vacation rental permits, regardless if submitted prior to May 10, 2022.

Very Sincerely,

Martin Pena
PO Box 503
Kenwood, CA 95452

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