

**From:** [Bry Sarte](#)  
**To:** [PlanningAgency](#)  
**Subject:** Vacation Rental Rezoning - 3 alternative ideas for Armstrong Woods Area  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 14, 2023 8:57:30 AM

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## EXTERNAL

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I am a Sonoma County native that has worked for years to maintain a toehold in Sonoma County in the **Armstrong Woods area** and this proposed rezoning dashes our family dream! We took over my father's family-run property that has been used as a gathering by four generations of my family. The only way we can afford it is to keep it running as a vacation rental. When the property was passed to us by my father (following my father's terminal cancer diagnosis and his home burning to the ground in a Sonoma Wildfire); we were notified that we were also losing our vacation rental permit by the County because vacation rentals can't change hands, even from father to son!

Not only has this property been treasured by our family for years, we have operated it as a hybrid second home and vacation rental for 15 years to afford it. It has also been a cherished destination for many Sonoma County and Bay Area families looking for an affordable place to gather in the Russian River area. We have many repeat guests who have made our home their family annual tradition. Losing this property from the vacation pool would drive them from the region. It is such a unique property, there is no substitute in our price point. It will be a loss of tax revenue (we have paid over \$140,000 to the county for TOT) and a loss of the dollars from guests spending time in the region.

For 200 days of the year, this Armstrong Valley is a refuge for our family and has been key for our health and the mental health of our kids. We are not trying to rent the house 365 days a year. Can there be some middle-ground so that **properties that have operated as vacation rentals for over a decade can be rented out for income with a limited occupancy of say 120 days per year?** That would help families like mine who are trying to hold on to family property in an age of ever increasing costs. It would also be much less intrusive to the full time property owners if some of the properties had limits on the number of days for the vacation rental activity. Allowing **the proposed "all or nothing" approach really only benefits those who buy property for the sole purpose of renting it out all the time.** Please consider a change so that there are some vacation rental permits that allow the property to be rented out for 120 days per year. This is better for all of the full time people living there too.

There are very few affordable getaway options for families in West Sonoma County and vacation rentals are one of the only ways ordinary people can afford to vacation with their relatives in this area. Making this a more elitist and exclusive area is not in the public interest. Please help to **keep West Sonoma open to all visitors** rather than force it into a more exclusive restricted environment like Healdsburg or Kenwood. We stepped in so that it could be used and enjoyed by generations of Californians.

Furthermore we believe the **Armstrong Woods area should be removed from the rezoning map.** This is a unique area that supports **sustainability** goals for the County, being positioned to allow biking and pedestrian access to Guerneville and Armstrong Woods - getting more people out of cars. Furthermore, its is the only year-round sunny location in the lower Russian River, not in the shadows of the wooded river banks or the forest making it uniquely accessible year-round. The RR zoning is a relaxed area that is low enough density that it makes it conducive to a variety of uses. Please do not include the RR lots in the rezoning in this area.

Alternatively, we ask you to consider **adjusting the cap to 15% in this area.** That would allow legacy property owners like us to maintain our family home.

I really appreciate your help on this.

Thank you,  
Bry Sarte

Property Owner in Armstrong proposed rezoning area

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