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19 January 2022

Sonoma County Planning Commissioner
Commissioner Cornwall, District 1
Commissioner Gilardi, District 2
Commissioner Ocana, District 3
Commissioner Deas, District 4
Commissioner Grady, District 5
Santa Rosa, California
Sent via email 1/19/22 (PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org)

RE: *Vacation Rentals (1/20/22 Planning Commission Meeting)*

Dear Commissioners:

As a 30+ year housing advocate (Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, Sonoma County Housing Advocacy Group, El Nido Teen Center, Vineyard Workers Services, Interfaith Shelter Network, Community Housing Sonoma County), I have studied the causes and remedies (Claremont Graduate School) and worked on the front lines of homelessness and a national housing shortage. Tragically, irresponsible policymakers, greed, and ignorance have worsened the human suffering. The expansion in scope and breadth of these social problems, for more than 30 years, can be directly attributed to these failures of leadership.

I will cut to the chase here and say simply: Converting dwelling units built for, zoned for, intended for, and taxpayer subsidized for: **RESIDENCY** – is simply, obscene.

Of course Sonoma County is short thousands of desperately needed homes. Of course the current RHNA number seems to be so staggering. Estimates as high as 2,000+ Sonoma County homes (permitted and not) are no longer available for people to live in because they have been converted into commercial businesses serving a single population: Tourists desiring short-term accommodations that lack onsite management (the perfect way to party away from your neighbors).

Why would our civic leaders adopt, promote, extend a program that takes housing from the marketplace? Why would our civic leaders elect to ignore the complaints of their constituents about noise, ghost homes, crime, loss of community cohesiveness, volunteers, students attending local schools, and many other destructive impacts?

Transient Occupancy Tax is a unique source of revenue. It streams into the General Fund and can be spent as civic leaders choose. Follow the money, ignore the price. That is the truth of it. That is the price we who have lived the nightmare have paid.

My suggestion: Hold to the meaning of words. "Residential" does not, contrary to the thinking I have witnessed from some currently serving on the Board of Supervisors, mean "Commercial Short-Term

Vacation Rental.” These businesses have no place in neighborhoods and should be “converted” back to their intended and zoned for use: Residential Housing.

In so doing, hundreds, perhaps thousands of residential properties would once more become available to the people who live in Sonoma County. Please do not make it more profitable for Sonoma County and investors to steal our precious housing!

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Nitasaka', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deborah C. Nitasaka, M.A.