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To: Gary Helfrich <Gary.Helfrich@sonoma-county.org>

Subject: Vacation Rental conversions Planning Commission meeting 3-17 2022

EXTERNAL

Commissioners

I've reviewed the proposed changes to the county's vacation rental program and I find that it doesn't deal with the devastating negative impacts of VR conversions and their root causes.

When I do a search on Airbnb for Guerneville it shows over 300 hundred listings. The vast majority of those are single-family homes that have been converted to vacation rentals. For decades in California and Sonoma county, residential housing construction hasn't kept up with housing demand. As a result, many residents who in the past spent $\frac{1}{4}$ of their income on housing are now spending $\frac{1}{2}$ or more on housing. The state and regional governments are pressuring local governments to step up housing construction. That is proving difficult. Why have we converted hundreds of homes to VRs while we have a housing crisis? Is it generating enough revenue for the county to mitigate the damage done? What would it cost to replace 300 housing units in Guerneville with affordable housing? \$150,000,000?

Why is this happening? As I see it, it is being driven by the minimal regulatory requirements for VR conversions. While resorts in the area have been working to comply with ADA requirements and recover from the 2019 flood, their neighbors and employees have been evicted from their homes to make way for one-unit hotels. I have yet to find a single Airbnb in the area that is ADA compliant. Surprisingly ADA does have a set of guidelines for one-unit hotels. A one-unit hotel has to have an off-street van parking space with a wheelchair chair accessible path of travel and one wheelchair-accessible ADA unit. ADA has additional requirements for 2-25 unit hotels. What are the VRs if not one unit hotels? Airbnb likes to trot out the retired school teacher renting out the guest room and being able to stay in their home due to the income they earn sharing their home but that is a rare situation. What I see are outside investors converting residential housing stock into remotely managed hotels. The disruptive Airbnb model has turned residential housing stock into a substitute for hotels and resorts and they are able to keep it affordable for investors by bypassing commercial health and safety requirements for pools/spas and ADA requirements for equitable access for those with physical challenges. While Airbnb has made residential housing stock the new hotels, it has also made your car and a space in the Safeway parking lot into "The New" housing.

Why are we doing this?

I encourage you to level the playing field and put neighbors back in neighborhoods.