

Adam Zack

From: Ingrid Gabriel
Sent: Wednesday, July 21, 2021 4:14 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: FW: Short-term rentals on Lopez

From: Jane Ward <jazirehjane@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 9:49 PM
To: San Juan County Council <councilvm@sanjuanco.com>; Jamie Stephens <jamies@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: Short-term rentals on Lopez

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Dear San Juan County Council, and Representative Stephens,

Greetings. I am writing to request that the county consider the extreme lack of affordable year-round housing on Lopez at this time, as it considers allowing a large increase in short-term rentals on the island.

Short-term rentals put a huge strain on our rural community. The profits they generate do not pay for the increased used of scarce resources such as water. And as you know, the high quality of life that we enjoy on Lopez depends in large part on active volunteers, people who work and also “give back” to the community. There is no way to have a complex interdependent community that is healthy if there is no place for ordinary working people to live.

I rented my house for over a decade to a woman who cleaned houses for a living. She owned her own company and took on the clients she wanted. They were mostly older women, widows, still living independently and needing some help. But my renter knew them well. She not only worked for them, she looked out for them. She took care of their pets when they went away, called them if they were in the hospital. She was a friend.

This is the kind of relationship-based interaction that is not possible when a big company manages the house for profit, the owners of the house live in another state and the renters are just there for the weekend. They don't care about the neighbors, the aquifer, or the special fragility of the ecosystem here. They don't expect to have any relationship with the island or islanders other than as consumers. They bought a place for the weekend, a pretty backdrop, and all the things that mean so much to us aren't even part of their reality.

But the ecosystem, natural AND human, is of the utmost importance to those of us who live here, who cherish this place. We have tried to create systems to provide long-term stable affordable housing, creating the Lopez Community Land Trust and now Housing Lopez. But the need outstrips the ability to provide, and we need much more leadership from the county, state and federal governments to address this problem. Opening up Lopez to many, many more short-term rentals is sending us off in exactly the wrong direction.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Sincerely yours,
Jane W. Ward

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