

## Adam Zack

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**From:** Morgan Chasson <constylatian@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 17, 2021 9:46 AM  
**To:** San Juan County Council; Jamie Stephens; Christine Minney; Cindy Wolf  
**Subject:** No more Vacation Rentals on Lopez

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Good morning Council Members,

I had heard that there was a motion to increase vacation rentals on Lopez Island by 34% in the coming year, and I'm here to say please DON'T. Lopez residents are already struggling as it is to find semi permanent housing, renters jobs on Lopez are tenuous at best due to the housing situation right now. Allowing a 34% increase would put more residents out of their rentals, and out of local jobs as they're forced to move off island. I, myself, have experienced this issue before, having moved off island for half a year before I could find semi permanent residence so I could go back to my job, which I truly enjoy. I also experience this daily when I go to businesses such as Lopez Village Market who are struggling to hire people, and a big part of that is housing issues. The only apartment complex on Lopez is low income housing only and fills up fast. The Land Trust housing are all full, and snapped up the moment they're built (which is at a rate too slow for our budding island).

If anything, I would highly suggest that you decrease the allowable vacation rental percentage on Lopez, especially to those who own houses here who are not residents of the island at all.

I have listed some interesting facts that were posted this morning about vacation rentals and Lopez Island itself and how we absolutely do not need an increase in vacation rental spaces:

- Multiple studies have concluded that Airbnbs lead to gentrification. They increase rents and housing prices and drive out lower income communities.
- Vacation rental owners who live off-island are profiting entirely at the expense of our island community. Many VR owners who live on Lopez do not rely on VRs as a primary source of income but rather as a way to make extra money for travel, etc. Lopezians who rent second homes or cabins as airbnbs could choose to provide year-round housing for locals and still make a sizable yearly income.
- Children of aging locals who would like to move here to help caretake their parents cannot find housing. Young families are leaving the island due to lack of affordable housing. Even the new school superintendent must commute from Bellingham!
- In 2020, the San Juan County Board of Commissioners commissioned a study to compare the San Juan Islands to similar communities such as Aspen, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. The report concluded that in those resort communities, wealthy purchasers of vacation homes changed the character of the communities, raising rents and housing prices which eventually led to a mass exodus of modest income residents. The report also said that the similarities in size, scale, access, environment, and trends make the San Juans look just like Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard did 20 to 30 years ago. <http://www.doebay.net/appeal/socioeconomicgrowth.pdf>
- Lopez Island business do NOT want or need more tourism! Many local shops and restaurants can barely accommodate the business they already have and struggle to find workers. Some businesses have shortened their hours/days and most have help-wanted signs in the window. Last week, two village business closed down for a couple of days because they literally ran out of product!
- Vacation rentals stress our fragile ecosystem, especially our rain-fed aquifers. VR owners are unable to monitor visitor water usage and garbage production, regardless of signs they may leave in rental units. According to surveys,

local residents host visitors for an average of 2 weeks per year. Vacation rentals host dozens, sometimes hundreds, of visitors year-round and must wash sheets and towels and clean units after each set of guests.

· Increasing tourism on the island has NOT improved the quality of life for local residents! Locals must now wait in line for over two hours for a Lopez-only ferry. Locals compete with tourists for island resources, including food and basic supplies. Lopez is not becoming more self-sustainable, but rather adapting to a wealthier clientele who demand all the same resources as a big city.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Morgan Chasson

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