

Adam Zack

From: Chris Greacen <chrisgreacen@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, July 31, 2021 5:31 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments; San Juan County Council
Subject: Moratorium on vacation rentals on Lopez, please

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Dear Honorable Planning Commissioners and County Council,

We have a full-on housing crisis on Lopez Island, brought on in part by vacation rentals. Home owners who would otherwise rent out homes to locals are renting them by the day or by the week at much higher prices to tourists. There are lots of tourists, but local businesses are limited in their ability to sell services to them because it is proving impossible to hire enough staff. Local businesses can't hire staff because staff need housing, which is all gobbled up by the vacation rentals. Haven Restaurant, I have heard, is only able to offer take-out sandwiches because they can't find staff.

One of the hats on Lopez Island I wear is Lopez Island School Board Director. We hired a new Superintendent who has been working with the school since June and has been unable to find a house to rent or buy. Only now, after more than a month of commuting from a long-stay hotel in Burlington has he finally been able to find a place to make an offer on.

I suggest consideration of an immediate moratorium on vacation rental permits so that at least the problem won't continue to get worse. This doesn't solve the problem, but it allows us to catch our breath and start towards a solution -- which will likely involve changing zoning and other requirements to allow for clustered homes outside the urban growth area. We need to understand what has worked in other areas and what strategies stand a high chance of success for adaptation to the San Juan County context. I personally like the idea that vacation rental permits can only be issued to those who can demonstrate a year-round presence on the islands. But this alone isn't enough.

Best wishes,

Chris

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