

Adam Zack

From: Scott Simpson <scottmsimpson@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 24, 2021 11:32 AM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: Fwd: STR Comments for Orcas Island

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From: **Scott Simpson** <scottmsimpson@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Aug 24, 2021 at 11:31 AM
Subject: STR Comments for Orcas Island
To: <cindyw@sanjuanco.gov>

Hi Cindy:

As a homeowner of a short term rental in Eastsound's UGA that is waterfront, rented frequently, and provides income to 6 on-island people, I have the following point of view on the proposed STR regulations.

Overall, the stated "moratorium concerns", in my opinion, don't address the root issues the county is trying to solve, are not necessary at this time given the dramatic IMPROVEMENT since new STR regulations were imposed back in 2018, and seems likely will detract from the local economy than build to it.

Moratorium's stated concerns:

- **Vacation renters don't build "community"**: Similarly, non-resident 2nd home owners on the island don't build community. Approximately 40-54% of housing on the island are 2nd homes and unused until owners arrive. How does limiting STR's drive more permanent residents? Imagine a property on the waterfront -- perfect for families to enjoy and spend time together... either a family will use this for themselves, or share with others via STR, but in no world does this mean that capping STR's mean there will be more on-island residents. This is a weak and irrelevant argument. Vacation renters provide income to local residents and taxable income to provide MORE housing. Why can't county counsel find more win wins? As a civic leader I need you to help us cut through the "us vs them" mentality.
- **Overtourism**: If the main issue is ferry capacity, why not address that issue vs. something theoretical? I get that hermits on the island hate mainlanders, but that is unsolvable. Any local business HAS to want more tourism, right? Damage to the environment from tourism is unproven and illogical. Long-term rentals with piles of junk in their yards is more damaging to the environment and sense of tranquility.
- **VR's are a primary source of growth**: Yes, the world changes. Can't stop people's preferences. America was built on capitalism and following trends and peoples choice. If STR's are more desirable than (unsafe) hotel experiences, shouldn't we embrace this, extract the most \$ for our local economy, and use this as an opportunity to regulate them like hotels for a good experience all around? Heck, raise STR taxes and give it to the ferry system.
- **Housing**: The unstated but I think real concern is that STR's will take away from affordable housing. Most STR's are premium properties in premium locations -- this means they would never be "affordable housing". To

address the root issue, use STR income to create housing subsidy \$ for locals, offer incentives for property owners to develop more units on their property, offer incentives for long-term rentals alongside of STR's.

County's proposed actions:

- **No STR's in UGA:** Again, the new regulations are working, why go to this extreme now? Further, why not add incentives for owners to CHOOSE long-term rentals? Why not charge more STR taxes in order to fund another "Aprils Grove" housing development?
- **STR caps:** Unexpected life circumstances happen, putting a cap in place will not allow owners a viable alternative solution. For example, during COVID I lost my job, if we couldn't STR then we would have had to foreclose on our Orcas mortgage. Again, fix the root issues. This also doesn't seem necessary given the results post 2018-regulations. Also, how will un-used/inactive/no-longer-qualifying permits be redistributed?
- Long-term housing regulations: Why not adjust the current code to allow (and incentivize) ADU's and second homes to be used for long-term rentals?

The unfortunate, but equally true "truth" about long-term rentals:

- The loudest, most annoying (music, crowds of people gathering during covid) and crummiest looking properties with junk in them are long-term renters. Permitted short-term rentals are always higher quality properties, add more visual impact to the community and are FAR LESS of an annoyance than long-term renters who don't care about the property nor their detractor on the community.
- If you like, I am happy to send photos comparing and contrasting STR properties vs. LTR properties.
- Long-term renters are FAR FAR FAR more damaging to a property than short term renters. I own both, and long term rentals have much more maintenance costs involved... these individuals simply don't care and have no vested interest in keeping things looking nice and in good condition.

Items not addressed, but should be in my opinion:

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- **Provide incentives to landowners in UGA (as well as rural zones) to build MORE rentable units** on their property (e.g. ADU's or additional homes).
- **Provide conditional use permits for STR's in the UGA (and elsewhere on the island) *if* they also make a long-term rental available on that property.** This is a win-win allowing for STR's while incentivizing more long-term housing.
- **Unsightly items on properties that are in plain view from the streets** throughout the san juan islands *detract from the beauty of the islands* . Derelict vehicles, debris, and other unsightly items are a major detractor to the area. The current regulations are frankly not strict enough. Junk items should be required to be behind a fence that BLOCKS visibility from all public roads. Chelan County has implemented this and the view from the roads as dramatically improved for the better. Let's class-up the island a little bit; I would hate to see the San Juans erode into what you see along the highway near Ocean Shores!
- If **better local transportation options** were available, I can guarantee there would be MUCH FEWER CARS ON THE FERRIES! I hate waiting for and praying for a ferry reservation. If there was a safe bike trail from the ferry to eastsound, I would use it as a walk-on! Same for reliable shuttles from ferry to downtown or other "hubs" on the island. For less fit individuals, make "electric" bicycles available to use between the ferry and eastsound (either subsidized or pay per use).

Cindy - I would welcome a conversation to discuss the above live. Please contact me at 425-246-4034. My last comment is to please please consider proposing more "win wins" than what I'm seeing. There are solutions to every single stated concern WITHOUT going to extremes like "caps".

-Scott Simpson