

## Sophia Cassam

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**From:** Barbara Wollman <birdwalker@interisland.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 17, 2021 7:34 AM  
**To:** Vacation Rental Comments  
**Cc:** Barbara Wollman  
**Subject:** vacation rentals

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Less than a year ago I was told that the island economy was 50% construction, 50% tourism. An economy based on only two sources is unstable — as we've seen during the pandemic. I've lived on SJ year-round for 23 years. A friend who has lived here longer than that said that when she moved here there was very little tourism. When I volunteered at American Camp, I visited all the SJ B&Bs — there were fewer than two dozen.

The island needs people who service the locals and who, in turn, need the services of locals. We need our farmers and we need our forests and meadows. We need to preserve the most elusive of all benefits, quiet.

During the pandemic, I saw businesses struggling, and it seemed to me that we could have helped some of those businesses if we distinguished among three types: those that mostly served locals only (e.g., Harbor Rental); those that served both locals and tourists (e.g., Griffin Bay Books and Wendy's auto rental; and those that are almost totally used by tourists. We should have resources to ensure the survival of the first two categories.

Tourists use up our resources. It's not always clear how they benefit us in return. I've been told, for instance, that the bicycle tour people bring their own food. If it's true that they use island resources without spending any money at island businesses, they are a drag on our economy, not a benefit.

Putting a cap on vacation rentals will not cut off tourism to the islands. We will still have home owners who live here only part of the year and boaters who dock, tour, and purchase needed items. If the ferry system allows, we will still have day-trippers — the possibility of a passenger ferry between Bellingham and the islands will encourage day-trippers. Wendy and Susie can supply land transportation for boaters and day-trippers.

Yes, I'm one of those who said, "OK, I'm here, now pull up the drawbridge". But I moved here because the island was rural, peaceful. There were very few cars and trucks on the road. I never crossed to the mainland to shop. Now that we have the hospital on SJ, I no longer need to go to Bellingham for medical services.

We must take every advantage we can of being an island, because once we lose those advantages, we almost certainly will never get them back. Let us concern ourselves with preserving the assets of island life. If anyone needs proof of the dangers of basing an economy on tourism, let them visit Cape Cod, Barcelona and other tourist hot spots. Long lines, traffic jams, noise — all the disadvantages of a city — however, in the case of an island, none of the advantages.

I have only implied the problem of inexpensive rental for some (see reference above to the need for more service people). I hope those who have experienced being ousted from their rental to make way for short-term tourists will speak to that disaster.

One more hope: absolutely no vacation rentals owned by off-island people. Yes, I realize that some of those off-island landlords are using the rentals to earn enough money to retire to the islands. Nevertheless, I oppose any vacation rentals that are not supervised by owners who must endure the down side of short term rental.

Submitted in hope,  
Dr. B. Wollman  
San Juan Island