

H-23 Correspondence - Dianne Sundstrom

From: Dianne Sundstrom <dianne.sundstrom@verizon.net>
Subject: Short term rental ordinance at Council agenda 1/21/2020
Date: January 15, 2020 at 9:11:53 AM PST
To: Suzie Price <suzie.price@longbeach.gov>, Suzie Price <suzie@suzieaprice.com>, Christopher Koontz <Christopher.Koontz@longbeach.gov>, Jack Cunningham <jack.cunningham@longbeach.gov>, Mayor <mayor@longbeach.gov>, Linda Tatum <linda.tatum@longbeach.gov>, Kjell Stava <Kjell.Stava@longbeach.gov>, Diana Tang <Diana.Tang@longbeach.gov>
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Dear Mayor, Councilwoman Price, Development Services staff, and all Council members,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the very liberal short term rental ordinance that is set to be approved at the Council meeting on January 21, 2020. I attended several of the community meetings on this subject and voiced my concerns to both staff and Councilwoman Price, to no avail. I do not object to short term rentals and support rentals in owner-occupied homes/dwelling units — referred to in the ordinance as “hosted stays”. However, allowing an individual to have up to 3 short term rental units is excessive by any definition.

This ordinance is being approved at a time when the Mayor is stating the City needs an additional 8,000 housing units (last year’s State of the City address) and where the issue of all housing, including affordable housing, is at the forefront of discussions across the country, the state, the county and our City. An article in the Grunion Gazette on January 9, 2020 quoted Christine Petit as saying the city is in a “severe housing and homelessness crisis.” In 2019 the City’s homeless population was 1,894 people, rent has risen 28% in the last decade, and the rental vacancy rate has shrunk from 5.2% to 3.8% during that time (according to a report released by the City in 2018).

In addition to opposing the ordinance as written, I have the following questions/comments:

- Why was the license fee requirement dropped from the STR ordinance? These are, after all, businesses that should not be exempt from licensing requirements.
- I was active in helping to shape the Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance and recall how those supporting ADUs were very vocal in their support because such units would provide long term housing for families and others. Now I understand the argument has changed and ADUs are also folded into the STR ordinance. The ordinance has been written to make it easy for ADUs to be used in this capacity - "For properties with two (2) existing legally permitted dwelling units (e.g., a single-family dwelling and an accessory dwelling unit or a duplex), the term "primary residence" shall refer to the parcel of land and both units on that parcel".
- Rather than the Mayor and the Council taking a stand on limiting STR properties, the onus for limiting such rentals in our neighborhoods now falls on us. It’s easy to shift responsibility for this difficult task to others and pit neighbor against neighbor. As stated in the ordinance: "Property owners of residential property in any census tract within the City may petition to prohibit un-hosted STRs by obtaining the signatures of two-thirds of property owners within their census tract." My census tract is very large and the task of organizing an effort to limit STRs seems almost insurmountable even to a highly motivated person.

It seems to me that the last thing Long Beach needs is to lose housing. But that's exactly what this ordinance will do. According to Kjell Stava, short term rentals could remove almost 2,000 housing units from the pool of long term housing units.

I would like to hear from the Mayor and Councilwoman Price how this ordinance and their support of it reflects responsible governance. To me, it appears to be a capitulation to the loudest voices in the room. And there were many of those voices at every meeting I attended clearly decked out in their Airbnb gear.

Thank you for considering my opinion and I hope the Mayor and Council see fit to make some needed changes to this ordinance.

Regards,
Dianne Sundstrom