

My name is Tina Lassen. I am a resident of Hood River, a board member of Livable Hood River, and a City of Hood River planning commissioner. I'm writing you today to urge you to **oppose Senate Bill 621**, which would prohibit local governments from enacting ordinances governing vacation rentals.

In a state as diverse as Oregon, local governments are in the best position to address the unique needs of their residents and their local economies. Hood River has benefited greatly from revisions we made to our zoning code in 2016 that address short-term vacation rentals. These sensible regulations improve housing accessibility and affordability, benefit our local economy and schools, and protect the livability of our residential neighborhoods.

Here's why our residents and our City officials worked together to craft short-term rental (STR) regulations:

**Vacation rentals exacerbate our housing problems.** Hood River has a significant housing shortage, well-documented in the city's *2015 Buildable Lands Inventory and Housing Needs Analysis*. Too many Hood River residents can't find a home to buy or to rent. At the same time, we watched more and more of our neighborhood homes purchased by non-residents. By 2015, one of every 10 dwellings in Hood River was a short-term rental and/or vacation home—and the number was growing every year.

Without STR regulations, outside investors could count on a lucrative stream of vacation rental income to finance their investment properties. In Hood River, 68 percent of vacation rentals were owned by people who live outside of Hood River County. Hood River residents trying to buy a home were losing to out-of-town investors. Hood River residents who were long-term renters were getting kicked out for more lucrative short-term renters. STRs were turning our residential neighborhoods into a Monopoly board.

**Vacation rentals hurt our economy.** Hood River employers were some of the most ardent supporters of STR regulations. Several testified that Hood River's housing shortage is a major hurdle in hiring. The proliferation of STRs also takes business away from our local hotels and B&Bs, which, as local employers, keep Hood River tourism dollars in Hood River, where they belong.

Without homes for our workers, our economy can't grow. Without homes for families, our school enrollment numbers shrink and our schools lose funding. It was a negative spiral that needed to stop. We recognized that when you lose your residential neighborhoods to non-residents, you soon lose control of your city's future.

**Vacation rentals denigrate the quality of our residential neighborhoods.** Without STR regulations, our residential neighborhoods were increasingly disrupted with loud parties and the constant turnover of people coming and going. It was affecting our residents' quality of life, and unsettling (especially for parents of young children) to not know anything about the strangers next door.

Hood River's short-term rental regulations are a zoning matter. They simply say you cannot run a commercial business of transient rentals in the middle of a residential neighborhood. People who live in a residential neighborhood have a reasonable expectation that they will live among other residents—not bachelor parties. With Hood River's STR regulations, we encourage vacation rentals in the commercial zone, where they're a more compatible use.

**We worked hard—and our regulations are working!** Hood River spent more than a year studying and crafting its short-term rental regulations. Local residents made their voices heard, submitting hundreds of pages and hours of testimony to our Planning Commission and City Council. As a result, we have addressed the unchecked growth in vacation rentals with sensible, equitable regulations that serve our community well. Investment properties are reverting back to homes for residents. Peace is returning to our neighborhoods. And tourism? It's thriving—with Transient Room Tax nearly doubling in Hood River County since 2010.

The solution might be different for other communities. But this clearly is an issue best debated and decided at the local level, as Hood River has successfully done. I urge you to oppose SB 621. Thank you.

Tina Lassen

Hood River, Oregon

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