From:	Bruce Williams
To:	CD STRComment
Subject:	Leavenworth businesses say they and their employees are hurt by our housing shortage; we need to significantly reduce the number of STR"s in our community
Date:	Wednesday, September 2, 2020 2:36:51 PM
Attachments:	Lack of housing is impacting our businesses, 2019.pdf

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Dear Planning Commissioners,

I am copying, and will also attach, a letter sent last year by multiple Leavenworth businesses and organizations to the City of Leavenworth City explaining how they and their employees are being hurt by the shortage of housing in the Leavenworth area. **Please read this, look at who signed it and think about this** as you decide what to do about STR's.

STR's are not just an issue with homeowners putting up with noise, rude behavior. At least in the Leavenworth area, they are a key factor in our local housing crisis. Ultimately, a town that doesn't have housing for its workers, young families and middle class families becomes a very different community - more of a resort, and less of a town. We need you to take steps now to reverse this situation by significantly reducing the number of STR's in our community

If you talk to workers and young families in the Leavenworth area, you hear the same thing: the lack of housing is the number one problem they face. For many of them it will mean they cannot stay.

While the housing shortage is caused by multiple factors, it is clear from the following information provided by Berk Consulting that the rapid increase in STR's in the Leavenworth area has significantly reduced the supply of housing available to local residents:

- When STR's become more than 5% of an area's housing stock, they hurt housing for residents;
- In the rural portion of Zip Code 98826, more than 15% of the housing stock is in STR's;
- the number of STR's has increased rapidly in recent years.

We need to restore the housing stock for residents. If you or others feel that we need more tourist accommodations, those should be in commercial or tourist zoned areas, not residential areas.

To restore housing in residential areas for actual residents, please:

- prohibit STR's on lots less than 8 acres;
- sunset all existing STR's in no more than 2 years;
- if you, tourist businesses or STR owners think we need more STR's, go through proper zoning procedures to create commercial or tourist areas for them.

Thank you.

Bruce Williams

July 23, 2019

Leavenworth City Council and Mayor Farivar City of Leavenworth

PO Box 287
Leavenworth, WA 98826

Dear members of the Leavenworth City Council and Mayor Farivar,

We write to you today as a group of local business leaders who share a common threat – our businesses are being affected by the lack of available Leavenworth-area housing for our employees. We bring this to your attention simply with the intent to inform you so you may make decisions on behalf of our residents and businesses with the full knowledge of the problem we face.

Our experience is that there is not enough housing in the Leavenworth area to house the employees who work in our businesses. This problem has worsened in recent years.

Here is what we hear from our employees:

- Many employees would like to live in the Leavenworth area, but cannot find housing that is available to rent.

- When a unit becomes available to rent or buy, many employees report that it is too expensive for them to afford. While we think of this as a problem specific to lower paying service jobs fueled by tourism, we also hear from middle and upper management, professionals and some business owners that cost is a barrier to both renting and buying in the Leavenworth area.

- Young single people often rent out rooms in a shared house to afford housing. When these people start to have families and want to find their own small "starter" homes, they find extremely limited options to rent or purchase.

- Some employees have a pet, which they report makes it even more difficult to find a rental.

- A growing number of employees who commute from down valley express dissatisfaction with living outside of the community where they work. Many employees value being part of community life, and don't feel they are able to participate meaningfully because of where they live.

Here are some of the ways this lack of housing for employees affects our local businesses:

- Businesses have a harder time retaining employees: With more workers commuting from farther away, our businesses are finding that retention rates are

dropping. Employees sometimes work in Leavenworth until they can find comparable work closer to their homes, often in the Wenatchee area.

- Lack of housing causes skilled workers to turn down jobs: Businesses like Cascade Medical and Cascade School District have had skilled workers turn down employment because they can't afford the price of housing.
- Some management staff are leaving their jobs, citing lack of housing, not lack of employment opportunities, as their main reason. Many of these employees have young families and find they cannot find a starter home or apartment in the Leavenworth area.
- Lack of community connection impacts customer service: Employees in the tourism economy are expected to have knowledge of the local area to share with customers. When employees live further away, they have limited knowledge of local hikes, the best local kid-friendly experiences, or other interesting local tidbits to share with our visitors.
- Employees are more transient: Employees know how difficult it is to find housing in the Leavenworth area, and businesses are reporting that Leavenworth is attracting a more transient employee. These employees may only stay for a few months or a season before moving on to a new location. These short work stints increase training costs and decrease morale.
- Employees drive individual cars to work: This causes a host of issues including employees who are tardy due to weather, increased costs for employers who pay for employee parking spaces, or pay employees to get to work early so they aren't on the road during peak traffic times. Many of these employees also park in downtown spaces and commute during peak traffic times, adding to traffic backups and parking shortages. This challenge is not easily mitigated with current public transportation options due the number of work shifts that begin or end when bus service is not available.

Lack of community connection increases division: There are pros and cons to any economic engine. In recent years, employers have noticed that employee dissatisfaction based on the lack of housing has led more employees to take a jaded stance towards the tourism economy, which affects workplace morale, customer service and the overall positive environment our businesses hope to foster in Leavenworth.

As business leaders, we're eager to offer support and participate meaningfully in the dialogue surrounding housing. Both a strong community and economy are important to us, and we appreciate your time to grapple with this important community issue.

Sincerely,
The following Leavenworth-area businesses and organizations:

Bill Motzenbocker on behalf of Cascade School District
Carl Evans on behalf of Kris Kringl
Carl and Gavin Evans on behalf of Stein and Bavarian Bistro and Bar
Chuck Reppas on behalf of Prey's Fruit Barn
Dana Schafer on behalf of The Little Kitchen Shop and The Personalize Shop
Deb Hartl on behalf of Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort
Diane Blake on behalf of Cascade Medical Center
Eric and Lisa Worthen on behalf of Dan's Food Market
Jordan Brown on behalf of Enzian Inn
James Weimann on behalf of Rhein Haus and the Alpen Rose
Jesse Boyd on behalf of Bavarian Lodge
Kaylin Bettinger on behalf of Upper Valley MEND
Ken Marson on behalf of Marson & Marson
Kristen Wood on behalf of Icicle Ridge Winery
Laurie Brennan on behalf of Posy Handpicked Goods
Lindsey and Noah Dahlstrom on behalf of Argonaut Coffee and Argonaut Kitchen

Nancy Bywater on behalf of Mount Stuart Physical Therapy and Balance Point

Kyrial Dreis and James Wiley on behalf of Borealis Builders
Pam Brulotte on behalf of Icicle Brewing Company and Munchen Haus
Paul Jinneman on behalf of Icicle Village Resort
Price Gledhill on behalf of SOUTH restaurants
Taelor Carvitto on behalf of the Oil and Vinegar Cellar
Todd Smith on behalf of Syndicate Smith

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