

June 4, 2019

Dear Harrisonburg Planning Commission, and City Staff:

As the ordinance is currently written, I am in **opposition** to the special use permit for 294 Franklin Street. As I am unable to attend the public hearing, I am submitting my view in writing.

Short term rentals in single-family residential neighborhoods can have well-documented impacts on both the neighborhood character and quality of life for residents. As the former director of planning for the city of Charleston writes, "**The very concept of neighborhood comes into question when your neighbors change every week and have no vested interest in the neighborhood.**"

I can, however, understand why someone in our city would **occasionally** want to rent out their own primary residence during, for example, JMU graduation weekend, or over a holiday weekend when they are leaving town. For this reason, as a step of compromise, I believe that, if allowed, such STR permits should be limited to a **low maximum number of days per year** (say, 14 nights out of 365), to maintain the neighborhood character of primarily single-family residential life. However, it seems that the special use permit as it is currently written would allow an R-1 neighborhood home on a single-family residential street to suddenly allow a constant stream of strangers coming and going, or – worse – for a new absentee owner to “flip” the home into what is effectively a mini-hotel, causing issues with noise, parking, and trash. Who wants to live next to that?

Our street, like many others in our city to be sure, is full of neighborhood children playing with the familiar neighbors they have known for years, riding bikes, and feeling safe. Our neighborhood has a strong collaborative identity with someone often coming over unasked to help with shoveling icy sidewalks or lending a hand sawing up a downed tree limb. We have cooperated for traffic calming and other neighborhood concerns. Please protect the integrity of the neighborhood by denying no-limit short-term-rental applications in single-family neighborhoods like ours, and enforcing the ordinances already on the books.

Planning commission takes seriously the vision of Harrisonburg’s identity and future. For the sake and integrity of all Harrisonburg’s many single-family residential communities, please consider creating a low maximum number of days a home can be rented out per year for short-term rental use, or putting such qualifications on STR permits granted, and denying no-limit STR permits for single-family residential neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time.



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