

# Letters: Realtors take issue with SLT VHR rules

To the community,

The South Tahoe Association of Realtors (STAR) is opposed to the moratorium on multi-family units being allowed to operate as vacation home rentals (VHRs), recently adopted by the South Lake Tahoe City Council.

STAR, a not-for-profit trade organization that represents more than 300 Realtor members, wants to make it clear, to the City Council and the public, that we support affordable and workforce housing in South Lake Tahoe and recognize that there is a housing crisis; especially the lack of available long-term rentals. STAR is a member of, and supports the St. Joseph's Community Land Trust, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to make home ownership and rentals affordable today and for future generations. SJCLT acquires or develops properties and programs to help address the lack of affordable housing. STAR collaborated with SJCLT to help them build their first demonstration home, including procuring grant funds from the California Association of Realtors Housing Affordability Fund.

STAR members have also volunteered and served on various Affordable and Workforce Housing Task Force committees in the past, including with Tahoe Tomorrow, the chamber of commerce and other organizations, in conjunction with the TRPA.

These Realtor volunteers and community leaders collaborated to find and advocate for practical solutions.

These efforts halted when the Great Recession hit, and housing prices dropped dramatically. The focus shifted elsewhere.

STAR's mission is to educate its members and the public; advocate for private property rights and home

ownership; contribute to the community's wellbeing; uphold professional standards; thereby providing resources enabling our members to serve the public and work together cooperatively.

While we support affordable and workforce housing development and retention, STAR is opposed to the ordinance recently adopted by the city, which is essentially a moratorium on allowing multi-family properties to operate as a VHR. We agree that these properties are good candidates for longterm rentals, but we take issue with the fact that the city is taking away an owner's option to choose.

The city has already impinged on property rights to such an extent that there is little tolerance for further limitations.

It should be left up to each property owner to make the decision to long term rent or not. VHRs of this size typically are not revenue producers, and are not the source of nuisance issues such as excessive noise, trash or parking, due to lower occupancy.

Only 55 of 1,800 VHRs are multi-family units. Many owners, given the choice of leaving the property vacant or longterm renting, will opt to leave it vacant so that they will still have a place to stay when they visit Tahoe.

This ordinance will not achieve the results desired by the city. We cannot regulate our way out of this incredibly complicated problem that is faced by all popular resort destinations. We implore that the city appoint a special task force and allow Realtors to work with them, and all stakeholders, toward finding alternate solutions to South Lake Tahoe's housing availability problem. A viable solution will have incentives, rather than further limitations on private property rights, with more regulations for property owners to navigate.

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration.

**Ellen Camacho, 2016 STAR president**