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CF#14-1635-S2, CPC-2016-1243-CA - ARGUMENT AGAINST THE 90 DAY PROPOSED LIMIT FOR AIRBNB

1 message

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Mon, Jun 20, 2016 at 7:27 PM

To: mayor.garcetti@lacity.org, cpc@lacity.org, justin.wesson@lacity.org, councilmember.wesson@lacity.org

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Dear Mayor Garcetti and esteemed Council members,

My name is Robin Smalley. I have lived in my home at 1622 N Curson Ave for almost 27 years. Both my daughters, Hannah (26) and Sophia (23) were raised in our home and my husband and I are proud that it is the oldest house in the area, built in 1906, two years older than our neighbor up the street, Wattles Mansion.

For 27 years we have had a love affair with our home and have painstakingly restored it to its original beauty, bringing back its gorgeous mahogany woodwork, built-in china cupboards, maintaining its unique three-dimensional stained glass. We are close to our neighbors as our children all grew up together and the wonderful new families that have moved in all want to have that similar small-town feeling for their own growing families. We know each other, we support each other and we are there for one another.

When we first moved in, our house was a design disaster, having been through the eras of cottage cheese ceilings and shag carpets. One of the coolest things about the property was the working stable that sat in the rear of our property. Throughout the years, that stable has served many purposes...my husband's architecture studio, the office where I began my nonprofit organization, home for the neighborhood playgroups, playroom for the children, party room as they grew into teenagers (and we could keep them and their friends close by having a separate – but close – place where they could be together and stay out of trouble. Then it was a guest house that we made beautiful mostly for my elderly father to be when he couldn't be left alone. Eventually, the kids were launched, my father passed away and the Cottage (as we now call it after its transition from the Stables) remained empty.

My husband, Jeff, and I love to travel. We first got acquainted with airbnb when our youngest daughter graduated high school five years ago and our gift to her was a family holiday to Italy. As you can imagine, hotel rooms for four is an impossible expense so we decided to give airbnb a try. Our apartment in Rome was amazing, our host made the trip extra-special, and we were hooked! Since then we have stayed in airbnb's from as far away as Japan, South Africa, and Turkey, and as close as New York, DC, and La Jolla. We wanted to be able to provide the same warm, welcoming, neighborhood experience to travelers ourselves. And frankly, making ends meet grows increasingly challenging. I founded a wonderful nonprofit, mothers2mothers, based in Cape Town, that works with pregnant women and new mothers throughout sub-Saharan Africa. I am blessed to do amazing work, but a big salary is not one of the rewards! Jeff is an architect and work has slowed. We could never imagine giving up our home, and with the extra income from our airbnb, we don't have to.

Airbnb calls us "Superhosts" which I love, because our hosting is very important to us. We have now been doing this for over two years. We average 23 nights/month. It has alleviated much of our financial stress but more, it has given new depth to our lives. I can honestly say that in all this time, we have not had one, NOT ONE!, negative experience. Many of our guests are from out of the country and the Cottage strikes a chord with honeymooners. They come from China, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland. I'd venture to say we have gotten guests from most of the 50 states. They are young and old, visiting local family, PhD graduate sons, celebrating anniversaries. We keep a notebook updated with all our favorite local restaurants, hikes, dry cleaners, florists. Our local businesses love them and so do we. We have been invited to visit them and are seriously considering a journey to St Petersburg to stay with the most adorable young couple!

The income from airbnb allowed us to pull out the thirsty grass in our front yard and put in a most gorgeous draught resistant garden of olive trees and lavender which the neighborhood loves. Everyone knows we have an airbnb and no one has ever, ever complained because there has never been a reason to (wish I could have said that about my girls during their teenage years!) We regularly purchase a parking permit especially for our airbnb guests, I have registered the Cottage with the city as a business, I am law-abiding and pay taxes on the extra income we have derived. Our airbnb has never hurt or inconvenienced anyone. Quite the opposite, our guests add richness to our lives with their presence, to our property by allowing us to upgrade it, and to our neighborhood businesses.

If you decide that we will be limited to 90 days/year, we will close down...it simply won't be worth it to only stay open 3 months/year. We will never rent it out to a longterm renter...it isn't what we want because we need the Cottage to be available to our family and we would never want people staying on our property when we aren't at home. Our maintenance will stop, our money problems will escalate, and likely at some point when we get older and our income declines, we will have to sell. We have sworn never to sell our beautiful historical home to the developers who will raze it and put up a horrendous McMansion. I hate to think it's possible but it could come to that.

This is our home, we own it, it is our property. The world is a frightening place these days and what is "American" is now up for debate. For me, telling me what I can and can't do with my own property, as long as no one is hurt by it, is distinctly un-American. 90 days seems completely arbitrary and makes no sense. If you must, crack down on people who are absentee airbnb hosts, who rent out "party houses." We run the kind of airbnb you should be supporting...it makes the community stronger, supports our rights as homeowners, supports the businesses in the area, and brings warm hospitality to travelers in a world that has increasingly become a frightening place in which to experience new cultures

We spent time with David Ryu during his campaign. He didn't seem like the kind of candidate to curtail homeowners' rights, We voted for Mayor Garcetti...he seemed like he supported small business owners. Please don't punish us for the sins of a very few people who have abused the very same thing that has enabled us to look at our retirement years without fear. Do away with the proposed 90 day restrictions...it is unjust, makes no sense, and will, ultimately, force us out of a community that has been ours for almost three decades.

Warmly,
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