Planning Commission meeting of April 6, 2016

Public Comments (attendee comments)

Summary -not verbatim

Introduction:

- Planning Commission seeking feedback on the topic of short term rentals in the residential areas.
- Short term rental means occupancy for less than 30days (nightly, daily, or weekly rental)
- Short term rentals are not currently allowed in the Residential Zoning Districts in the City or UGA.
- Short term rentals are allowed in the Commercial Zoning Districts.
- Excepting Manson, Chelan County allows short term rentals in the residential districts.

Questions to spark a dialogue

The meeting included questions to spark conversation, and are being explored which included:

- Should short term rentals be allowed in residential neighborhoods?
- What does a neighborhood look like? Is there a concern for the loss of community character with the addition of this use?
- What implications are there with short term rentals; noise, parties, and parking/too many vehicles.
- If short term / overnight rentals are allowed with a Business License, what needs to be included in licensing? For example, regular inspection for rental properties, with penalties for landlords who crowd more occupants in than the City allows?
- Are there areas within the community that would be more appropriate for short-term / overnight rentals?

Public Comments

- Enforce the existing Code. Why bother with new regulations if no strong enforcement occurs.
- Owner occupied. This adds a level of self-policing.
- No snow removal.
- Hire maintenance service.
- Need off-street parking. No street parking. There is a parking shortage.
- Cap the maximum number of occupancy.
- Notice control.
- Must meet fire standards and be safe.

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- Residential short term rentals in single family residence updates to meet the IBC for commercial use.
- Possible loss of services.
- Enforcement – strong penalties and fines for violations
- Property management.
- Rentals pay their share, and funds / revenue to pay for enforcement, inspections, and public improvements (streets and more) … Tax the operations to pay their way to protect neighborhoods.
- Inspections – safety and meeting standards, and violators.
- The Building Codes must be met for this use with codes that control impacts. Require that the home is owner occupied (30% or more).
- If vesting is available, such will need to be addressed.
- Comment on case law. (follow-up: cases (Chiwawa Communities Assn. and Acquavela) confirmed that the two cases relate to CC&Rs (a private restriction on land use), not to city regulation of land use. In other words, the City can regulate vacation rentals - as stated - that the City Attorney has already determined).
- There should not be cars on the streets, and increased traffic will need to be the responsibility of the new rental uses.
- Neighborhood character is made up of: families, kids, maintained property, consideration for neighbors, little noise, available parking, sense of community and vested interest, long term renters or property owners, access to emergency services (safe community), controlled traffic, communications between neighbors, and diversity.
- With renters on "vacation," the attitude is that of being on "vacation," and is disruptive in a residential neighborhood. These are strangers to the area who do not have respect for the folks living there, need to wake early to go to work, have children playing (and seeing "peeing in the bushes"), and have the attitudes of "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas" rather than behaving as good neighbors at their home. It is a differing attitude and behavior (drunkenness, loud, discourteous, belligerent, profanity).
- It is unsafe (strangers, trespass, and altered behavior).
- This new market of short term rentals will be an economic driver to housing. This will create an incentive to convert residential housing (with very limited existing stock) to short term rentals pushing the community living in Leavenworth out.
- Today it is hard to purchase a home due to high housing prices. With short term rental option (which is a money maker for outside entities), the housing prices could skyrocket outside of the range of folks working and living here. The wages here (in Leavenworth and the valley) cannot compete with wages from Seattle…. So, outside buyers that are looking for commercial (money making property) property with a good tourist economy will look to our neighborhoods…. Rather than Commercially Zoned and appropriate lands.

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- Short term rentals will erode our neighborhood, and (allowing new regulations) will exacerbate this impact.
- Short term rental units will create a “lack of community.”
- High housing prices will just be higher.
- Enforcement is critical. Permit tracking and monitory needs to be responsive (current and useful) and available to public. License or permit is needed.
- Coordination with the Police and follow-up (consequences) for violations are necessary.
- Police can be called 24-7. Property owners can’t be called, no one knows how to get hold of them, or they simply do not care.
- Property owners do want to be good neighbors.
- There is damage and litter from short term rentals that neither the renter or owner are accountable. (trash – broken bottles)
- Bad neighbors and bad behavior can occur regardless of the time living in a home. The remedies already exist with disturbances by calling the Sheriff’s Office.
- This can be solved – don’t allow short term rentals.
- Limiting the size of lots does not make sense. This is an equality topic.
- If smaller lot sizes to add to housing densities that encourage stronger residential neighborhoods are in place to encourage long term home owners is the question, than that makes sense. There needs to be more incentives to encourage long term housing and strengthen neighborhoods. (opposite of that of short term rental).
- On-site parking must be required, and this will limit short term rental density as lots will need to be large enough to have the parking. Parking related to occupancy must be enforced, and the owner responsible.
- Health aspects need to be strong and enforced.
- There needs to policy for homes full of long term residency that builds stability and a sense of “neighborhood”
- The market will change, and there is no way to hold back this trend for “air B&B” or other short term rental. It is change.
- Support the commercial enterprise where it works. If you open this commercial activity in neighborhoods, there will be folk buying up homes and converting them to short term rentals. Also, the infrastructure for commercial areas can support commercial uses. For example, streets, sidewalks and more.
- Seniors and folks with fixed income are in jeopardy of losing their home or being able to live here. Priced out of their home. Don’t create new laws that will infringe upon folks who live here. I live in a residential neighborhood, bought (chose) a home in an area that is for residents, expect and enjoy typical residential activity, and not of commercial (ruckus??). I know and choose to live in a residential area. If you want commercial property, buy and choose commercial land.
- Property rights need to be maintained.

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- Empty nesters need income, and renting a room or two allows for income to keep the house.
- Permit fees can be revenue for the City.
- Enforce what is existing, and keep the regulations as they are. There is a process for B&Bs. This is an option. Update the B&B codes.
- As levies are passed absentee owners vote where their primary residence is located, and have to pay taxes of the levy. 40% of housing in the Leavenworth area is absentee or second homes.
- If you want be to commercial, rezone your property rather than just allowing short term rentals in residentially zoned areas.
- Balance between residential and commercial uses.
- Leavenworth is unique. The residential codes that protect long term housing is an island in Chelan County. Protect this uniqueness.
- Does your bank loan change when you convert from a residential loan to a short term rental property (commercial loan)? City has no jurisdiction regarding finances or sales of lands.

Although there were many questions and answers, many have been omitted to keep to the topic.

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