

Comments from Cherie Kraus on the Minor Use Permit Hearing for 438 Neal St, Grass Valley of Jan 24, 2024 and the upcoming Planning Commission Meeting for March 19, 2024

1. Myself and several of the High Street/ Neal Street residents requested an appeal of the Minor Use Permit, but were not able to attend the hearing on Jan 24, 2024, but were assured by the City that we would be able to participate in the meeting via Zoom. That option wasn't working for the meeting, so at least four of the neighbors were denied access and didn't have a chance to have their voices heard. I was asked by nine residents of the High Street/Neal Street/West Main Street neighborhood to spearhead the appeal of that decision. The application fee of \$440 was made by contributions by these residents. The supporting document attached to the Appeal Form was prepared by August Brooks, a resident of High Street, and signed by 15 residents of the neighborhood.
2. The Minor Use Permit Hearing Staff Report of Jan. 24, 2024 as prepared by Lucy Rollins indicates that the Director approved the Minor Use Permit in accordance with the Conditions of Approval. The Report findings describes that the applicant is compliant in seven areas, but it did not address item #10 of The City of Grass Valley Vacation Rental Home Standards which states "The vacation rental home shall operate without unduly interfering with the surrounding neighborhood". The report also recommends "the Director determine the project Categorically Exempt pursuant to Section 1530, Class 1 of the California Environmental Quality Act". Based on the comments that the residents of High Street & Neal Street the neighborhood will be unduly interfered by the following:
 - a. We believe that this project should **NOT** be granted a Categorical Exemption due to the potential negative impact it could have on a significant historical neighborhood and would be a violation of The City of Grass Valley Vacation Rental Home Standards item #10. "The vacation rental home shall operate without unduly interfering with the surrounding neighborhood"
 - b. Street parking and traffic on High Street is already a huge problem. Residents often are unable to access street parking for themselves or their guests. The Vacation Rental may have a few off-street parking spots for the renters use, but what about the renters' guests. Because a house that size is bound to have visitors. Residents' driveways are often blocked by street parkers. Speeding traffic has made it hazardous for residents to get in & out of their own driveways.

- c. It has come to the attention of the High/Neal/W. Main Streets residents that the owner of 438 Neal Street resides in Carmel Ca. and is the owner of approx. 30 residents spanning 2 states, 8 counties, and 9 cities. Also, it has been observed by the High/Neal/W. Main Streets residents that this owner has rarely been seen at 438 Neal Street and we are aware that the owner has employed a property management company to oversee the house. It seems highly unlikely that if a problem arose at the 438 Neal Street vacation rental in the middle of the night or a holiday weekend that there would be a prompt response by the owner or property manager. In that case, the neighborhoods only recourse is to access 911.
- d. It is a documented fact that a vacation rental home will have a negative impact on property values in the neighborhood. The High Street residents are primarily senior citizens relying on the value of their property. Some in the neighborhood are already expressing concerns that attempts to sell their homes, in the future, will be detrimentally affected by a vacation rental property closely located.
- e. Neal Street & West Main Street (with High Street between them) are main arteries of Historic Downtown Grass Valley. High Street and the adjoining intersections of Neal Street and West Main Street are a significant historical neighborhood. Over 90% of these homes were built between 1862 - 1917. Many of them are original Victorians, "Painted Ladies". The area was once called Nob Hill for its location and prominent residences. References to this historical neighborhood are made by several historians. In her book "Images of Grass Valley" Dr. Claudine Chalmers states that the upper area of West Main was known as Nob Hill as early as the late 1860's and was occupied by stately Victorian homes once owned by mine owners, lawyers and doctors. According to Sandra Owen who grew up in and owns the house at 107 High Street High, Block Street was the original name in the late 1800's. This historic neighborhood deserves recognition, respect & preservation not exploitation.

The following residence of the High Street/Neal Street/W. Main Street have agreed to be appellants:

Cherie & Richard Kraus owner/residents at 115 High Street 1890 original location of miner's shack current neo-Victorian built in 1992 by Ray Shine.

Phil & Holly Champagne owner/residents at 117 High Street original Victorian 1890

Annabelle Robins, John McAlister, Michael McAlister owner/residents at 116 High Street home originally built in 1870

Debra Fordyce owner/resident at 112 High Street 1900 original location of the High Street Market, remodeled to a residential home 1997

Cheryl Wicks/Curt Romander owner/residents at 128 High Street original Victorian 1890

August Brooks resident at 111 High Street home originally built in 1880

Tom & Lazelle Larkin owner/residents at 435 W. Main Street original Victorian 1881

Daniel Walmsley owner/resident at 114 High Street original Victorian 1890

Michael (Bruce) Bottrell owner of 120 and 122 High Street homes built in 1890

Eli & Emily Gallup owner/residents at 432 Neal Street original Victorian 1881

Heidi Raudy owner/resident at 515 West Main Street original Victorian 1862

I respectfully submit my comments to the attention Lucy Rollins Senior Planner/City of Grass Valley via email.

Sincerely,

Cherie Kraus

115 High Street

Grass Valley CA 95945

March 17, 2024

Debra L. Fordyce
110 High Street
Grass Valley, CA 95945

City of Grass Valley
Community Development Department Planning Division
125 East Main Street
Grass Valley, CA 95945

I'm writing this letter in support of the appeal of the Planning Director's decision to approved application 23PLN-0046 regarding a Minor Use Permit for a short-term rental located at 438 Neal Street,

As a homeowner in the vicinity of the proposed short-term rental located at 4838 Neal Street, I have a vested interest in the activities and conditions surrounding the potential rental.

First and most obvious is the lack of parking in our neighborhood and the traffic on High Street. Parking is already at a premium, and many times when guests to my own home visit, there is very little parking available. The property being considered for this short-term rental has the potential to have more autos than off-street parking available based on the number of bedrooms and limited driveway and/or garage parking. In addition, High Street has over the years become a very common thoroughfare for neighboring areas. Speeding autos (and the biggest violators are the Nevada County Connects bus service drivers) make it necessary to use extreme caution when pulling out of garages/driveways.

Although there are rental homes in our small neighborhood, I feel that since these are typically rentals with long-term lease agreements, that occupants have a vested interest in maintaining respectful and considerate noise levels. Where short-term occupants may not have an interest in maintaining neighborhood relationships. Due to this, it's not far fetched to consider that the short-term rental could very easily at times have noise levels that detract from the quiet neighborhood we all work hard to maintain.

My understanding of the property owners is that they have 30+ additional properties that they have ownership of. Although I understand investments, I don't know that short-term rentals support preserving the small town feel and quality of our historic neighborhood.

I also understand that the property owners do not live local to Grass Valley. Although utilizing a property management company will likely be involved in managing the occupants of the short-term rental, what resources and/or local contacts will be available to the surrounding residents to mitigate any immediate challenges?

Respectfully request that consideration be given to the above concerns and that the Community Development Department Planning Division require answers to the questions and concerns brought forward by all current residents who have expressed their apprehensions regarding the proposed short-term rental property at 438 Neal Street, Grass Vally, CA.

I can be reached at (530) 913-6879 or debrafordyce@comcast.net with any questions regarding this letter of support.

Respectfully,

Debra L. Fordyce
Debra L. Fordyce
Homeowner, 110 High Street

Good evening,

My name is Phil Champagne.

I am writing on behalf of myself and my wife Holly.

We had hoped to attend this evening's meeting concerning the proposed vacation rental on High Street but are currently traveling in Australia.

Holly and I have lived in our home on High Street for over three decades now.

Some of our neighbors have lived on High Street for over half a century.

Some have lived on High Street for their entire lives.

Much will be said this evening about the historic nature of our neighborhood, and the beliefs we hold concerning the negative effects that a vacation rental will have on our property values.

Other issues concerning additional parking woes, increased traffic and noise have either been, or will be discussed as well.

Suffice it to say that we share the concerns of our neighbors on all of these issues.

Rather than address those issues further, I would like to speak instead about something that is mentioned briefly on the appeal form.

It concerns the topic of vacation rentals in the city where Heather and Justin Aldi live. That city is Carmel California.

I'm speaking to this simply for reasons of comparison.

Does Carmel allow vacation rentals?

Well... yes, they do.

However, they have a very specific guideline for vacation rentals, which reads as follows:

"no home or subordinate unit may be rented for less than 30 consecutive days in the Residential District"

Simply put, this means that no more than one group will be allowed to rent a vacation home for less than a period of 30 days.

This guideline does not allow the **‘revolving door’** type of vacation rental.

In the **revolving door** model, it’s not uncommon to have 5, 6, perhaps 7 or more groups cycle in and out of a residence over the course of a month. Not to mention the other ancillary activities that accompany such an arrangement, such as house cleaners and the like.

A good question to ask might be, “Why does Carmel have this type of restriction when it comes to vacation rentals”?

Well, they provide their reason in one simple line, and I quote...

“To preserve the residential character.”

That’s a line that’s worth repeating...

“To preserve the residential character.”

With this guideline it’s clear that they understand the disruptive nature of vacation rental properties.

With that being said, let’s get back to High Street.

If there were a few words that I would use to describe High Street they would be words like...

Clean, quaint, charming, historic, neighborly, safe, and my personal favorite... quiet.

When the sun sets on High Street at the end of the day, people tend to settle into their homes, lights get dimmed, and folks take care not to disturb their neighbors.

When the sun sets on a vacation rental, that’s when the party starts.

Alcohol flows, voices go up and music gets amplified.

Anyone who has ever stayed near a vacation rental knows this to be true.

This evening, we are asking you for something that's very important to us.

We are asking you to hear the voices of the people from your community.

We, the residents of High Street and Neal Street, have deep concerns about this business being allowed to operate in our neighborhood.

And let's be clear about this, it is in fact, a business. One that will be owned and managed by real estate investors who live half a state away.

We are here to ask you to help us, to assist us, in our endeavor **'To preserve the residential character of our neighborhood.'**

Thank you very much.

Phil Champagne

Comments for public record pertaining to the filing of a petition for a minor use permit for a short term vacation at 438 Neal St., Grass Valley CA by Heather Aldi, Owner in response to appeal claims by Cherie Kraus filed on Feb. 8, 2024

After reviewing all claims by Ms. Kraus and carefully examining all city requirements for Use Permits and Minor Use Permits 17.72.060 and other statutes pertaining to Ms. Kraus's claims, Heather Aldi asserts that none of the complaints are relevant, legal or logical and moves to dismiss Ms. Kraus's appeal. The following evidence will show that all attempts have been made to understand and address the complaining party's basis for appeal.

Ms. Kraus complains of the legal profession of the owners of the property. There is nothing in the City of Grass Valley's statutes that disqualifies a person holding a valid real estate brokers license from petitioning for a minor use permit.

Ms. Kraus complains that the primary residence of the owners is in a city that does not allow short term rentals. There are no restrictions listed by the City of Grass Valley on where the applicant for a minor use permit may choose to reside.

Ms Kraus complains that the owners have chosen to employ a local woman to help manage the property. The City of Grass Valley specifically requires "The owner OR manager must live within 30 miles of the vacation rental home." Jenny Scicluna's residence is on record and satisfies this requirement.

Ms. Kraus complains that this will allow vacation accommodations to open in an entirely residential neighborhood, but fails to mention that there are other AirBnB properties listed on the same street and numerous others within a quarter mile range of this property, both permitted and unpermitted. She also fails to mention that the property is a short 2 block walk from the commercial center of town. This will bring additional tourism dollars to the local economy and is advantageous to small business owners in the Grass Valley community at this location.

Ms. Kraus complains of the review system on AirBnB, but her logic has no bearing on any established rules or regulations set forth by the City of Grass Valley.

She also complains that the house will no longer be used as a residence, neglecting to mention that it has been over 2 decades since it has been used as anyone's primary residence. Additionally, this has no bearing on any rules or regulations set forth by the City of Grass Valley.

Ms. Kraus claims that utilizing this home will bring down property values, showing a lack of understanding of how property is valued. It is a matter of public record that Heather and Justin Aldi paid more per square foot for this property than any other sale within the City of Grass Valley going back 3 years, thereby raising all comparable values in the area. It is also a matter of public record that permits were pulled to take care of long neglected trees that were threatening neighboring roofs and fencing as soon as escrow closed. There is no requirement

in any real estate contract that owners of nearby properties must disclose the use status of nearby properties. There has been continuous maintenance and improvements of this house since Heather and Justin have taken possession. Her basis for the claim of devaluing the neighborhood has no foundation in fact, precedent or law.

Ms. Kraus is concerned about parking, but the owners have proven that the required 3 off site parking spaces to correspond with 3 bedrooms have been provided. Additionally, there will be less street parking used by occasional guests than there would be if the Aldi family used the home as their primary residence with 4 family members of legal driving age who all own their own vehicle. This claim is also nonsensical.

Lastly, Ms. Kraus complains that sometimes people might arrive late, but there are no curfews in effect in this neighborhood that restrict any resident of any home from arriving or leaving their property at any time of the day or night. The sound of a door opening and closing does not violate any noise ordinance set forth by the city. One cannot reasonably expect to live within city limits, 2 blocks from the commercial center of town, and not ever hear a car or a door or other sounds of city life. The sounds Ms. Kraus may or may not hear from guests cannot be expected to be more or less than what she may hear of a permanent resident in this neighborhood.

Heather Aldi requests that all rebuttals be entered into public record and any additional concerns that actually pertain to City rules and regulations be the only thing brought into question at the upcoming hearing.