

Schedule 7 to the Minutes of the
Public Hearing meeting of
Richmond City Council held on
Monday, December 16, 2019.

ON TABLE ITEM

Date: December 16, 2019
Meeting: Public Hearing
Item: Item #7

MayorandCouncillors

From: Judie Schneider <judieschneider@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, 16 December 2019 08:30
To: MayorandCouncillors
Subject: Proposed Bylaws for STR's (tonight's council meeting)

Honourable Mayor and City Councillors,

I have been renting for the past 13 years. In the last 6 years, being a renter has changed from something I didn't think too much about to being the single most stressful facet of my life.

The fact that Richmond City Council is proposing bylaw changes to allow STR's to operate in townhouses and apartments, avoid having a buffer zone between each and allow renters themselves to be in charge of the business is a case in point for those who hold the belief that our City Council has no idea what the current housing crisis actually means for renters in Richmond.

We are in a housing crisis *specifically* because there is a lack of **long-term rentals**. Airbnb's, demolition of rental homes and the absence of a vacancy tax in Richmond has already resulted in the loss of hundreds of long-term rental homes in Richmond in the past couple of years. These proposed changes to STR bylaws would only lead to even more long-term rentals being pulled from the market because renting short term to multiple tenants is more lucrative for landlords.

At first glance, it would be easy to think that perhaps some of the empty homes might be rented out under these new bylaws and provide a stable home for a family, but what family wants to take out a lease on a single-family home with the understanding that they must rent out some of the rooms to a constant parade of strangers? These aren't separated quarters being rented out—the strangers would be living with their children! This situation is a perfect example of how policies can make the vulnerable even more vulnerable and give the privileged yet another loophole to propagate more wealth (in this case by avoiding the speculation tax).

We must also keep in mind that when a neighbourhood is filled with short-term tenants, the neighbourhood community ceases to exist: school enrolment goes down, neighbours stop being neighbourly and children can't find other children to play outside with on their own street. The long-term consequences are run-down neighbourhoods, school closures and most tragic of all—people forced to live in vehicles or on the street.

I can't think of a single elected member of council who didn't express concern about our city's housing affordability crisis during the election. If the concern was genuine, it is incumbent upon each of them to vote against these proposed bylaws at Monday's council meeting. That would be a baby step (albeit an important one) in taking real action to end our housing crisis.

Sincerely,

Judie Schneider