

# Myths abound about TVR industry

## THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



As the discussion about transient-vacation rentals, or TVRs, continues in County Council Plan-

ning Committee meetings, all, including those in the vacation-rental industry, agree that the protection of neighborhoods is critical. Yet, when it comes to discussing the protection of neighborhoods, we continually seem to be addressing hype versus reality, and it is time to debunk some of the common myths that surround this conversation.

Let's examine five widespread myths about alternative accommodations:

• **Myth 1.** They cause traffic problems. When it comes to traffic, we generally are the problem. Residents often have multiple cars per household and frequently drive one person per car, whereas, most visitor families have one car for multiple people.

• **Myth 2.** They cause parking problems. When planning was done for residential areas a long time ago, no one dreamed that there would be so many cars per household. So, it is easy to see why parking is a concern. Residents often have to park their additional cars along the street. However, visitors use less parking than we do. Again, as visitors typically use one car per family, there is less parking in the neighborhood from visitors than local residents with multiple cars. And, if regulation is in place to require parking on the property, it will prevent visitors from taking up on-street parking spots.

• **Myth 3.** They cause noise problems. Visitors often come to Maui for peace and quiet. The

majority occupy alternative accommodations with no neighborhood complaints. They have fewer on-island friends and relatives than we residents do; so when it comes to noise in neighborhoods, we are often the culprits. However, whether there is excessive noise from locals or visitors, laws already exist to address neighborhood noise concerns. A phone call to 911 can solve the problem when laws are being broken.

• **Myth 4.** They take away from affordable housing and rentals. There is no question that affordable housing is a challenge and Maui's housing prices are high. A number of properties are offered as alternative accommodations for this very reason: to help pay mortgages. Due to their value, these alternative-accommodation homes typically are not in "affordable" areas and ordinarily would not be offered as "affordable rentals," even if we did away with this industry. While some think we may see an increase in long-term rentals as TVRs come to an end, the number of homes that might be offered as long-term rentals is so small that it would be relatively meaningless to our overall housing picture. Shutting down TVRs will not add significantly to the supply of long-term rentals, change the value of our real estate, or create more affordable housing. However, ending of the industry could bring further property sales and more off-island ownership.

• **Myth 5.** They ruin neighborhoods. Alternative accommodations are often indistinguishable from other homes in most neighborhoods, and suggestions that visitors staying at vacation home are "strangers" who might abduct children, steal from neighbors or commit violent crimes are unfounded. Normally, local assaults and crimes are caused by residents.

TVRs are part of an increasing international tourism trend and have been a growing market segment for Maui. They bring a class of visitors who, for a variety of reasons, prefer not to stay in hotels and who offer a substantial economic contribution: reportedly as much as \$319 million annually and as many as 3,478 jobs.

The efforts to terminate TVRs already have hurt our economy, this segment of the visitor industry, and countless small island businesses that depend on the industry. We routinely hear from businesses on the north shore and

Upcountry that they are suffering. Those who downplay the challenges that these businesses experienced from the closing of TVRs should update their research, and get out and talk to these businesses. All with whom we have spoken have noted that the hurting began as TVRs were shut down and before we experienced additional visitor losses from airline challenges. Now, with reduced visitor counts, their businesses are impacted severely.

Stopping the TVR industry does not make sense to us, particularly in this time of economic slowing. Therefore, we will con-

tinue to take a stand and work on solutions because this is an important small-business and economic issue. We will pursue fair and reasonable legislation to allow appropriate alternative accommodations throughout Maui, while protecting neighborhoods. Much of the propaganda is unfounded, and, with reasonable regulation and enforcement, this industry can co-exist peacefully in neighborhoods and support our economy.

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*