



Planning Department <planning@amadorgov.org>

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**Restoring historic building in Jerome, AZ as relates to short-term rentals and enforcement of existing laws for nuisance, traffic, noise, etc.**

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**Terri Sweet**

Sat, Jun 22, 2019 at 10:02 AM

To: Amador County Planning Department <planning@amadorgov.org>, boardofsupervisors@amadorgov.org

<https://indefenseofliberty.blog/2018/08/16/preserving-history-with-home-sharing-in-jerome-arizona/>

## In Defense of Liberty

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In Defense of Liberty Blog

August 16, 2018



<https://youtu.be/FFmGOhNgJvw>

*By Glenn Odegard*  
*August 16, 2018*

Several years back, I came upon an old, abandoned house high above the old copper-mining town of Jerome, Arizona. Thanks to home-sharing, that old house not only fulfilled my dream, but it has also created unforgettable memories for many travelers who have visited Jerome.

That old home was the John Riordan House, which was built in 1898 as a residence for mining executives. When I found it, the house had been vacant and abandoned for more than 60 years. A mudslide all but destroyed the home in 1953; it had no roof or foundation left, not to mention up to a dozen feet of mud and rocks inside the entire house. Amid all the old plaster, wood, and debris littering the house, there were plants and trees growing inside—the tallest of which was a 12-foot tree in the master bedroom that went from the mud floor, through the ceiling, through the attic, and beyond the roof an additional four feet. What once was a beautiful residence had decayed into a greenhouse for six decades.

Five years before I purchased the house, the town of Jerome historical committee records classified the building as “structurally unsound” and in “imminent danger” of collapse. I saw something different—an opportunity to restore this old gem to its original 1889 Victorian architectural grandeur. As a fifth-generation carpenter and general contractor, I knew I had the construction knowledge and tenacity that would be necessary to restore and preserve this old historical house for others to enjoy.

Only one thing stood in my way. If I didn’t have the ability to recoup my financial investment by home-sharing, I would never have had the financial resources to restore my 120-year-old home. Home-sharing is a right that others in Jerome—and throughout Arizona—almost lost for good, as I explain in a new Goldwater Institute video.

Jerome is a jewel in Arizona’s Verde Valley—a beautiful old town that attracts visitors to take in the amazing desert views, the art galleries and wineries, and the local history. Because it’s built into the side of a hill, it’s sometimes called “America’s most vertical city.” It’s a unique place, to say the least.

That’s why I wanted to get involved in home-sharing: to share a piece of the Old West and create an unforgettable experience for visitors who can now get a taste of the turn-of-the-century lifestyle. I restored my home so it looks just like it did more than 120 years ago. Many descendants of residents that were born or raised in Jerome have come back and stayed in the house. They can replicate what their grandparents’ life was like by living in the same environment and having the same lifestyle that their relatives had also experienced.

We have named the house for “Honest” John Riordan—a mining executive who lived with his family of seven in the house from 1919 until 1953. In fact, his two “boys” who grew up in the house from 1921 to 1953 have been among our guests. The brothers, John and Neil Riordan, returned to the house in 2013 to stay overnight. John, now 87 years old, was 27 at the time of the 1953 mudslide and had literally carried his father down the steps to save him after the mudslide hit the house. Neither of them had stepped back in their old family home for over 60 years. When John and Neil returned to the house as guests, they were both in their late 80s. Being able to come back, reminisce, and stay overnight brought back childhood and family memories. Neil even said he felt guilty sleeping in his parents’ old bedroom, even though over 60 years had passed!

Another memorable home-sharing experience was that of two tourists who visited Jerome for a day trip on their first date. They had taken note of the John Riordan House in its abandoned condition just before we started digging it out. They returned to Jerome many times during their year-long courtship and always stopped by to see the restoration progress. Just as the house was developing into a strong, viable building, their relationship was growing, too. Our house was completed just after they were married. Because of home-sharing, they were able to stay in the house on their honeymoon. They plan to return again on future memorable anniversaries.

Home-sharing helped make memories for this young couple, for the Riordans, and for many other visitors. But in 2015, the Jerome town council tried to put an end to home-sharing. They sent a letter saying that short-term vacation rentals were no longer allowed, even though I had previously received all the necessary town approvals and building permits. I had even been diligently paying

all applicable city and state rental taxes associated with the property. Fortunately for me and countless others throughout the state, The Goldwater Institute stepped in to legally challenge the town's new zoning interpretation. Today, Arizona has one of the strongest home-sharing laws in the country.

When travelers can immerse themselves into another's personal environment—by literally living in their homes—they receive a deeper connection to that lifestyle. At the John Riordan House, we have had countless multiple-generation families stay at the house and enjoy the authentic architecture and furnishings. It takes them back to a simpler time. People put down their phones to have conversations, grandparents reminisce and tell stories of their childhood, while the grandchildren can actually see firsthand how life used to be.

Without home-sharing and the preservation of our property rights by the Goldwater Institute, none of these kinds of stories would be possible. As a home-sharer, I encourage my fellow entrepreneurs to have the financial courage to restore, revitalize, or create new, unique lodgings. There are infinite possibilities in cities and rural settings that could offer an atypical experience for travelers on a variety of budgets. The possibilities are endless, whether that be staying on a farm, in a city neighborhood, or in a mountaintop house. Those special experiences can create longer-lasting family memories than if one stayed in a typical commercial hotel.

With the advent of internet home-sharing platforms, travelers have the opportunity to experience unique lodging opportunities like never before. It is a right that both homeowners and guests all across the country should equally enjoy.

*Glenn Odegard is the owner of the John Riordan House, a short-term vacation rental property in Jerome, Arizona.*