

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: My name is Barbara Schultz and I am the Director of Litigation & Policy for Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. Our headquarters is within a couple blocks of the Stuart Hotel. I have been working on litigation and policy around residential hotels for two decades. I spoke at the ZA hearing in the summer of 2019. I am specifically testifying about the owner's claim that the Stuart is not a Residential Hotel. The City Council adopted the Residential Hotel Ordinance fifteen years ago. At that time, and for the next couple years, HCID designated certain hotels, including the Stuart, as a residential hotel. There was an opportunity then to appeal the determination or apply for an exemption if applicable, and the Stuart chose not to do so. Sometime after that designation, the Stuart owner began violating the Ordinance by unlawfully promoting tourist use. The ZA report noted the use of an online booking site and other practices associated with tourist use. I spoke to tenants at the ZA hearing in 2019 who told me more and more tourists were being housed rather than tenants. The Stuart manager talked at that hearing about renting to tourists. It is a time-honored tradition for residential hotel owners to pay TOT, and then use that voluntary payment as proof that the property isn't a residential hotel. Approving this appeal would be rewarding the owner's unlawful conversion of residential units to tourist use, and terrible public policy. It is extremely important to protect residential hotel units because it is the only housing stock that is exempt from Ellis. So not only are tenants protected, but the units themselves are protected. This is 66 units that should, by law, be used only as permanent housing. The Stuart needs to be protected as a residential hotel.