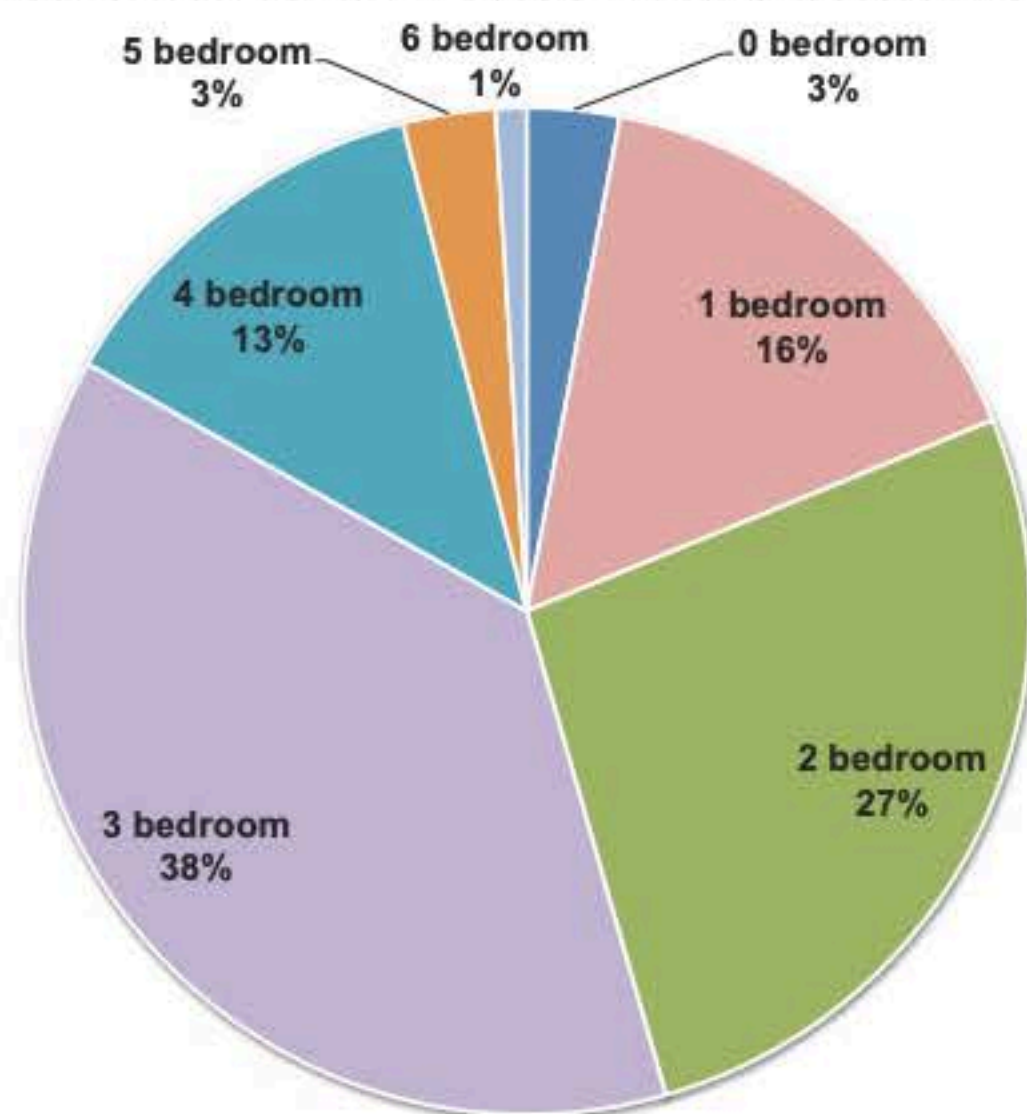
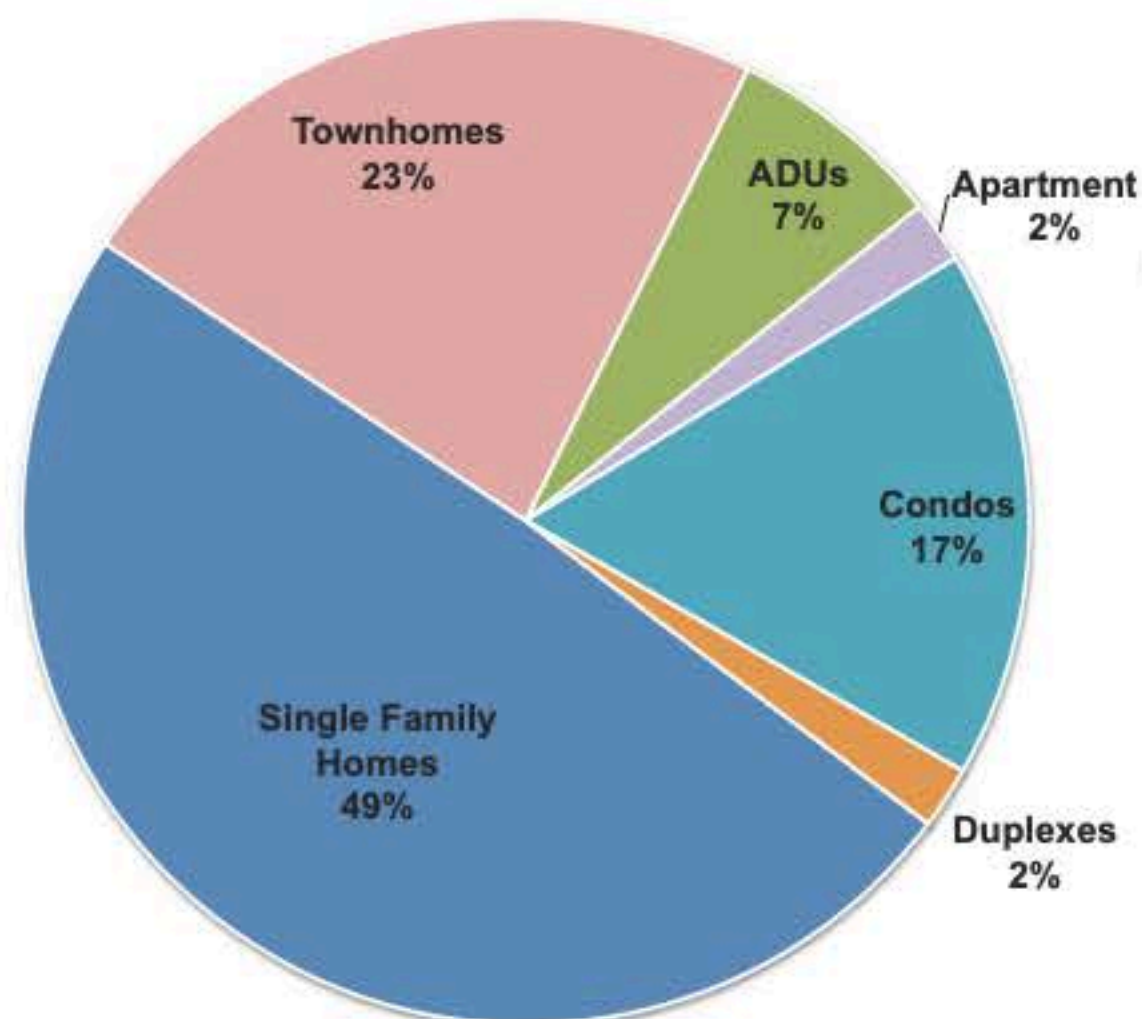


Number of bedrooms in vacation rentals located in town.



Dwelling types being used as vacation rentals in town.



Number of vacation rentals per owner located in town.

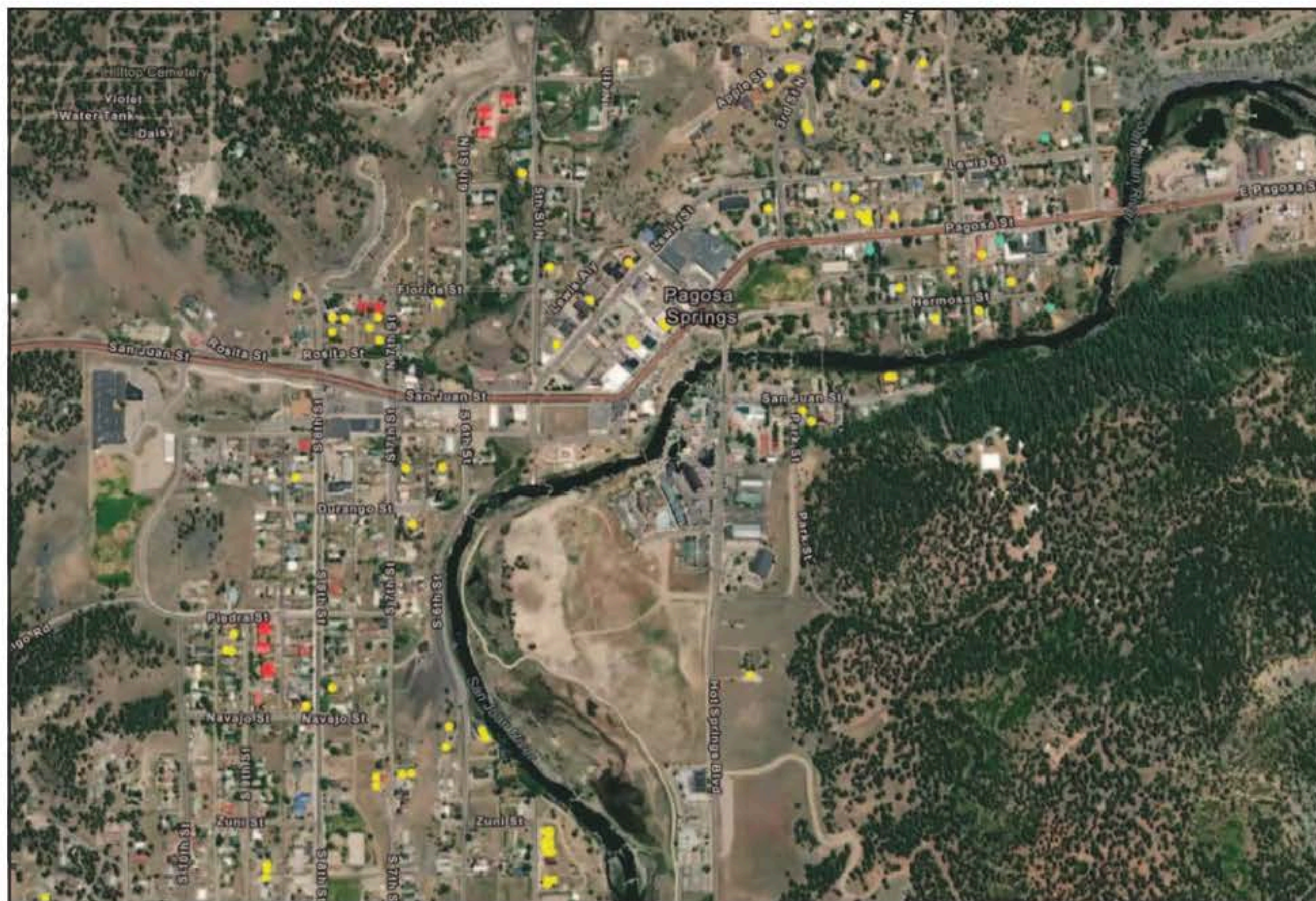
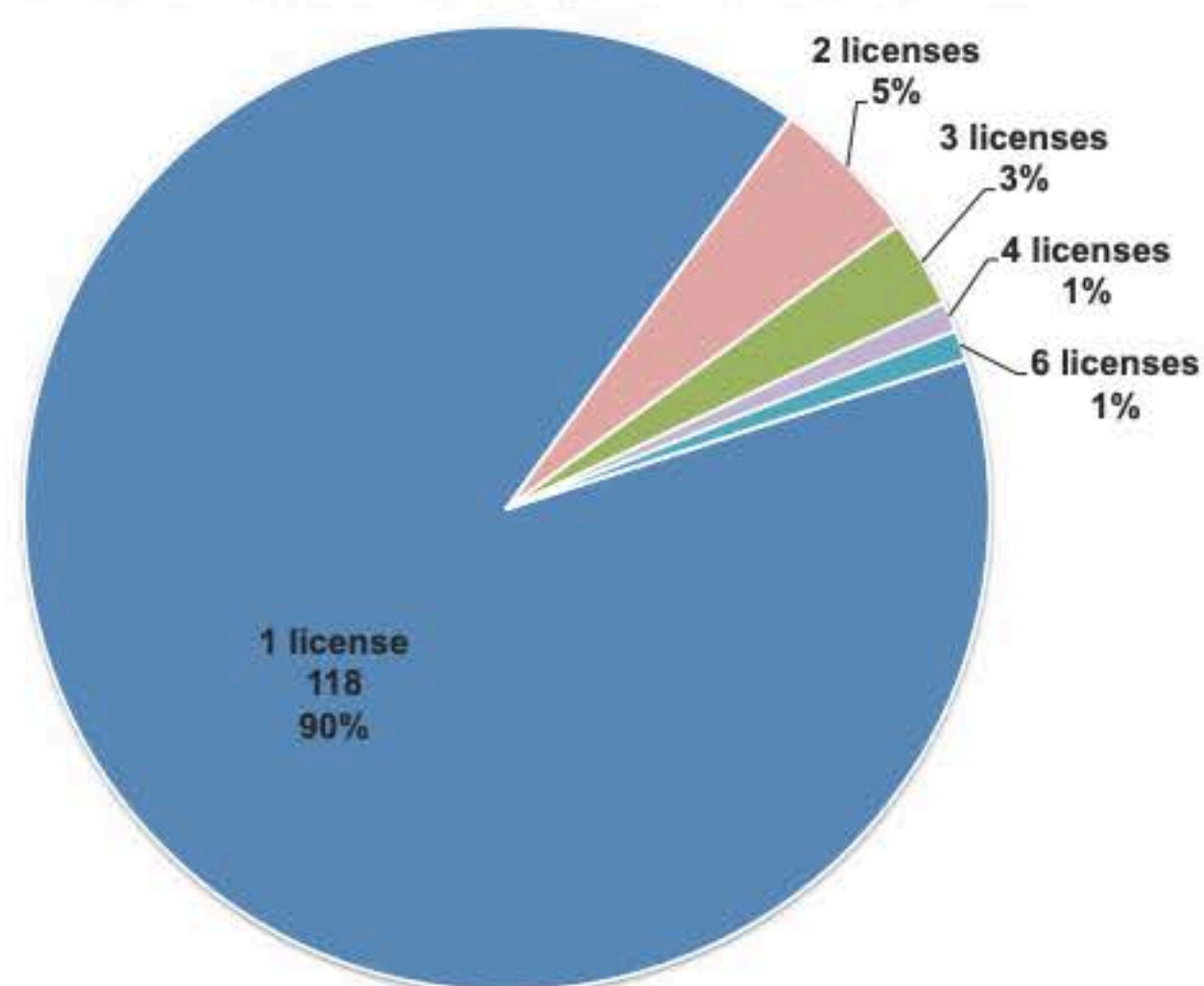


Illustration courtesy Town of Pagosa Springs

Town of Pagosa Springs vacation rental locations are marked with yellow and light blue circles on the map. Additional units are located on the west side of town but not shown on this map. Pie charts on the left were created from data pertaining to vacation rentals located in the town limits and provided by the town.

Town council discusses short-term rental pros, cons and solutions

By Joe Napolitan
Staff Writer

The Pagosa Springs Town Council convened for a work session on Thursday, April 29, to discuss short-term rentals (STR) in the town, beginning with a presentation by Town Manager Andrea Phillips that included a map of all STRs in the Pagosa Springs area.

"Looking at the map we can see that there are hot spots and clusters. This is one of the complaints I hear from the community quite loudly: the degradation of the sense of a neighborhood," said council member Mat deGraaf. "I'd like us to give consideration to density restrictions and limiting the vacation rentals to ... how many can be in one place."

Community members who attended the meeting shared similar sentiments.

"I have seen our neighborhood start to deteriorate with

how many short-term rentals we have," explained Kelly Lewis, a resident in Mesa Heights.

Lewis explained she and her neighbors were always hopeful that a home wouldn't become another vacation rental whenever they saw one listed for sale.

"I would love to see density become something you guys look at, specifically for residential neighborhoods. Unlimited in commercial areas and the transitional zones is totally fine with me, but when it comes to residential neighborhoods, I'd like to see our community stay more intact," Lewis said.

Another community member, Ayriana Rackham, reflected her sentiments, stating, "I agree with the density aspect of it. Strictly residential neighborhoods I think need to be capped at some certain point in time. I do like the idea

■ See Rentals A8

Rentals

■ **Continued from front**
of mixed-use being uncapped.”

Rackham suggested avenues where STRs might be used to the community’s advantage, such as adding a \$25 per-booking charge that would be pooled in a community slush fund to build affordable housing.

Phillips’ presentation defines vacation rentals as “a lodging use of a furnished dwelling unit, or portion thereof, for less than thirty (30) consecutive days per rental.” The rental may be the entirety of the house or apartment, a separate detached unit, or a room or area within the home/unit.

The presentation goes on to explain that in Pagosa Springs there were 111 STR licenses issued, 14 pending/under review, and six non-

compliant rentals as of April 28. This equates to 15.4 percent of the 840 households. By comparison, the city of Durango reported that 1.5 percent of all households were STRs in 2017.

“I believe that our motto of being a refreshingly authentic mountain community becomes diminished the more that we dilute our community,” deGraaf said.

Other concerns discussed by the council included reports of nuisance arising from STRs.

“Our planning staff is receiving a lot of these complaints that tend to be around parking, occupancy being greater than what it should be, noise, trash, things like that,” Phillips said. “We really need to nail this down in terms of finding a better way to deal with those complaints ... to determine whether that license should be

suspended or revoked.”

“We have three to four problem properties, two that have been more problematic than the other two,” said James Dickhoff, planning director. “Relatively small numbers, but those small numbers do take a lot of time on staff’s part.”

“It seems more problematic for the units where the owners don’t live here, even with the management companies being 60 miles or 60 minutes away,” added Dickhoff.

Sixty-five percent of the vacation rental owners do not live in Pagosa Springs, Phillips noted in her presentation.

“I think they just have their own set of problems. Short-term renters I don’t think are necessarily more problematic,” said council member Shari Pierce. “I think we can come up

with a way to encourage the people who are more bothered by these things to call in and not fear retaliation, that we’re willing to help the rules be enforced.”

Dickhoff explained that issues could possibly be resolved if the owners managed the property better. Many of the complaints happen after hours when planning staff is not there to respond and police are often unable to resolve any issues.

Some council members suggested implementing complaint fines that could be passed from owners to the renters. Others believe owners or managers need to live closer to town.

“I think the person in charge of their rental needs to be way closer than 60 miles,” Pierce said.

“They need to have somebody who can address the issues. I think we can probably make it mandatory that they have somebody local that can address those complaints in a timely fashion. If they continue to be problematic, I think it would be

easy to escalate that level of enforcement,” said Mayor Don Volger.

The mayor explained that the intention is not to be too hard on STR owners, but rather to encourage responsible ownership.

“The owners, by and large, are very responsible. It’s not just painting the whole thing as the owners of properties need to be watched very closely because they’re potentially very bad. No, they’re potentially very helpful for the community,” Volger explained.

Phillips mentioned in her presentation that lodging tax accrued \$1.2 million between town and county collections in 2020 from all types of lodging establishments.

She estimated that about 27.4 percent of that revenue came from vacation rentals and property management companies.

“Short-term rentals have a lot of benefits in our community. It creates jobs in cleaning, contractors and management, and increased sales tax and lodgers’ tax revenues... it can

be a great opportunity for people to invest in the community,” explained council member Madeline Bergon. “All of these things are really positive, but there are also negative issues that go along with that. The biggest issues that we hear are that STRs are a business, they’re a commercial presence in residential areas.”

Phillips outlined researching density policy and information from other communities, as well as honing in the compliance and complaint process system as items moving forward. Also included was the development of a list of survey questions used to gather input from the public as an action item.

“I really think it’s important that we make every attempt to get as much community engagement around this as possible. It’s their voices and their experiences that ultimately are driving this entire conversation,” deGraaf said. “I would like to see the community really get engaged around this in whatever capacity possible.”

Pipeline

■ **Continued from front**

Schmidt mentions in his agenda brief that promises of inexpensive

tempted to mitigate problems by swapping pumps from one location to another. There is only

and if we needed to do more than that, we’ve identified a supplier of a bypass pump that we would