Mill Valley 2040, General Plan Advisory Committee 26 Corte Madera Avenue Mill Valley, CA 94941

by e-mail to Danielle Staude: dstaude@cityofmillvalley.org

November 8, 2012

Dear GPAC Committee Members:

At our final meeting of the Land Use & Mobility Working Group, two members were opposed to the Housing Element's proposal to allow efficiency apartments—"micro-apartment units"—which are often sized at 220 to 350 square feet. Each would include a full bathroom and kitchen. The concern was that such a space is inhumanly small and would be unlivable.

As I told the group, my husband and I lived in a 15-foot diameter, prefabricated wooden yurt in Big Sur in the early years of our marriage. Actually, it was 12-sided—a dodecagon with each face measuring four feet for an interior area of 179 square feet, not counting the bathroom.

We did have deck space outdoors, beautiful views, and a high conical ceiling with domed skylight, which imparted an airy feeling. One friend who visited from the city was taken aback by the small space and blurted, "Wow, you guys must get along *really* well!" But we loved it.

Before our baby was born, we built an outdoor clothes closet and a 5-foot wide addition wrapped around three faces of the yurt. One third was a closet, two thirds was office space. This brought our indoor living area to 224 square feet. We raised our daughter there till she turned three.

As a former sailor, Harald cleverly maximized the space with shelving, fold-up baby furnishings, and eventually a baby gymnasium. He made a tiny sliding board and ladder that hooked onto the footboard of our captain's bed, a trapeze that lowered from the ceiling on a pulley, and a soft rope swing that stored against one wall on a hook. Madelaine loved her gym and used it heavily.

When we moved to Mill Valley and rented a two-bedroom apartment of 830 square feet, the same friend as above advised us facetiously to explore the vastness one room at a time, holding hands for courage. We raised our daughter to college age in this apartment. The only real conflict became hosting parties for teenagers—a role we largely foisted onto other families.

I suggest Mill Valley create micro apartment guidelines that emphasize high ceilings, skylights, and a variety of storage spaces; placement of windows, doors, and extra electrical outlets to accommodate high shelving and loft beds; use of sliding interior doors to avoid conflict with furniture; use of outdoor decks and balconies; and easy access to community green space.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Thomas-Matej 28 Gomez Way #12

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Mill Valley, CA