

HOME IMPROVEMENT

WRITERS PICKS « 80

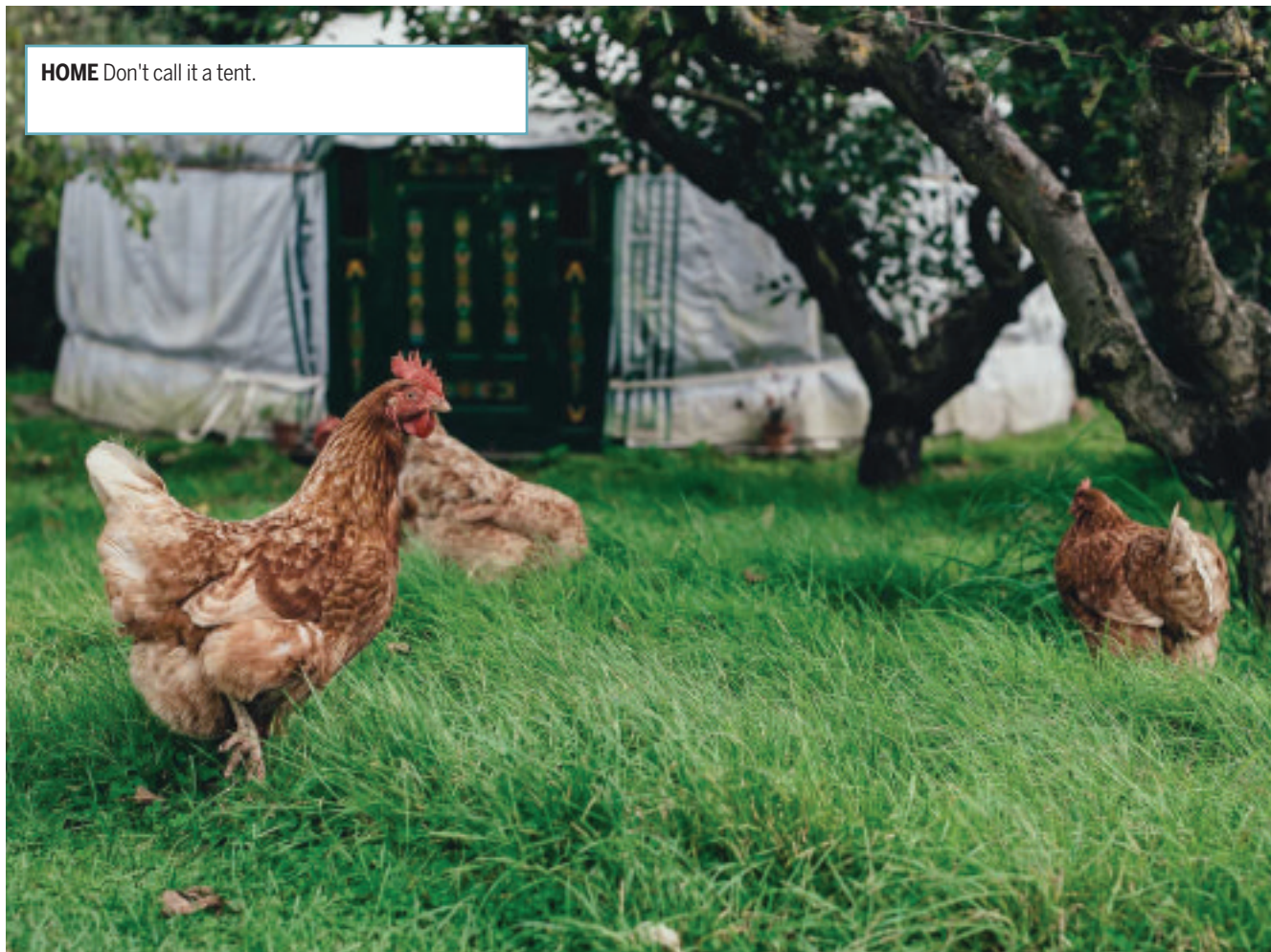


Photo by Annie Spratt

HOME Don't call it a tent.

BEST CAMPAIGN TO LEGALIZE YURTS

As if out of nowhere, a movement cropped up last fall to legalize tiny homes in Sonoma County.

The face of the campaign, Copperwoman Saso, a 70-year-old West County musician, penned a song about the county's unjust policy towards unconventional yet affordable forms of housing. The music video for "Stop All Government Evictions" has received just over 50,000 views on YouTube.

"I've spent plenty of time without a home; and now I've landed a safe one of my own," Copperwoman sings. "Permit Sonoma has red-tagged me; why is my own government evicting me?"

Copperwoman's song was the theme of a campaign organized by the Sonoma Independent, a self-described "public interest solutions and advocacy website." The resulting Stop All Government Evictions effort sought to "urge our (county) supervisors to reform code enforcement laws to allow people to live simply, safely and ecologically in trailers, tiny homes, yurts and converted barns."

Although it started with a focus on tiny homes, the campaign has broader implications about housing justice.

It's well known that the North Bay has a housing crisis. The most common solution proposed is building a variety of new housing units. That's great in theory, but politicians have been espousing the need for new housing for years (possibly decades), and we never seem to build enough to meet demand.

If we're trying to avoid increasing the local shelterless population, maintaining existing housing is arguably just as important—and usually significantly lower cost—as building brand new housing.

There are good reasons for code enforcement if someone is living in dangerous conditions, but that need should always be balanced with the need to keep people housed.

Rock on, Copperwoman. —W.C.



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