

Short-term rental ban narrowly fails in La Quinta. What's next?



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Short-term vacation rentals will remain in La Quinta’s residential neighborhoods, after a contentious ballot measure that would have banned them in most of the city failed narrowly.

[Measure A](#) — a proposal to phase out short-term vacation rentals by the end of 2024, except in a few exempt areas — was narrowly defeated in last month’s election, with 51% of city voters opposed and 49% in favor.

The two sides were separated by 308 votes, out of 15,108 total votes cast, according to certified results from the Riverside County Registrar of Voters, which the city council recognized during its meeting Tuesday night.

The ballot question sparked significant debate within the tourism-driven city, with rental owners saying it's their right to rent out their properties, and some neighbors contending these rental homes disrupt neighborhoods and hamper residents' quality of life.

The proposed ban [was leading](#) in initial results on Election Night last month, but the “no” vote took the lead about a week later. Eddy Estrada, a representative from the “No on A” campaign, said short-term rental owners in La Quinta were pleased with the final results, while aware the discussions on rental rules aren’t over.

“We're very happy that the voters, in essence, understood the importance of short-term vacation rentals in the kingdom and, in the end, rejected (Measure A) and truly believe in property rights and doing what's right for the city,” Estrada said.

The question headed to voters after Neighbors for Neighborhoods, or N4N, a group of local residents opposed to vacation rentals, [collected more than 3,000 signatures](#) earlier this year to get it on the ballot.

In a statement after results were certified, N4N officials said they were “disappointed La Quinta will not join the other four valley cities that have protected their residential communities from commercial nightly rentals.”

“N4N will continue monitoring the city SVTR program and work to assure the City Council honors their campaign commitment of no new permits in residential neighborhoods and to improve Hotline hours and code enforcement,” the campaign said.



Don Shoffstall, a lead organizer with N4N, told The Desert Sun it's too early to say whether the group could try to revive its proposal for the 2024 cycle, but added the group is keeping its website up "for a reason."

N4N representatives also noted the fundraising gap between the two campaigns. The “No on Measure A” group vastly out-raised its counterpart, with roughly \$193,000 in total contributions, [including hefty donations from Expedia and Airbnb](#). The “Yes on A” campaign committee drew roughly \$26,000 in total, largely from retired La Quinta residents.

“Unfortunately, our grassroots effort couldn’t overcome the infusion of over \$200,000 from industry lobbyists, outside investors and corporations,” the campaign said. “7,400 voters and thousands of snowbirds have told us they want short term vacation rentals restricted from residential neighborhoods.”

The N4N group formed in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic increased the popularity of short-term vacation rentals locally — leading to an uptick in complaints from residents about noise, parking, trash and other issues.

The La Quinta City Council responded by approving a moratorium on new short-term rental permits, eventually agreeing to turn that into a permanent ban on new permits, except in specifically zoned areas. La Quinta has also raised permit fees and adopted stiffer fines and penalties for those who violate the city's rental rules.

The council, which includes two members who wrote the official argument against Measure A, has noted those steps have led to a drop in rental complaints filed with the city, arguing the current restrictions would continue to be effective and a ban was unnecessary.

Council members also focused on the potential financial hits Measure A could cause because of projected drops in city tax revenue and tourist spending. A recent city-commissioned report found La Quinta could lose more than \$100 million in annual visitor spending by 2031 should the measure pass, though proponents of Measure A believed those projections were overly dire.

La Quinta was not the first city in the valley to face such a ballot question. In 2018, Palm Springs voters [rejected](#) a measure that would have banned vacation rentals in the city's residential neighborhoods, while last year, voters in Cathedral City [approved a similar measure](#) phasing out the city's short-term rental permits.

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