

Moratorium on new short-term rentals in Idyllwild could be extended to summer 2023

City News Service

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North Circle Drive in Idyllwild. The area nearby Pine Cove have a disproportionate number of the short-term rental permits in Riverside County. *James B. Cutchin*

Riverside County supervisors will hold a public hearing next week on whether to extend a moratorium on new short-term rental permits in the Idyllwild area and Temecula Valley wine country.

“These are unique communities that have been inundated with short-term rentals,” said Supervisor Chuck Washington, whose Third District includes both areas. “We need to give special consideration, so we can come up with a ‘carve-out,’ so to speak, in the regulations. The moratorium is not an attempt to shut people down, but it is an attempt to define how inundated they are.”

The board of supervisors approved a 45-day moratorium on Sept. 13. That pause ends in the last week of October. At the Oct. 25 public hearing, the board is scheduled to vote on a 10-month extension, which would last into August 2023.

The county's transportation and land management agency provided supervisors with a report Tuesday saying many residents favor restrictions on short-term rental permits, based on informal surveys taken during two community meetings earlier this month.

One short-term rental property owner, Thomas DeCarlo, called the numbers used "very biased" and asked the board to let the moratorium expire. So did another speaker, Roy Holyfield, who said a moratorium extension would be "unfair to people who are in limbo" on real estate transactions because of it.

Others favored a continuation.

"We maxed out on short-term rentals probably two years ago," Idyllwild resident Joel Feingold said. "People deserve peace and quiet. We have enough (rentals). Put a cap in place."

County staff found about a third of Idyllwild-Pine Cove residents surveyed want to cap the percentage of homes allowed to be used as rentals at 10%. Another 21% want the county to consider housing availability in the area before implementing any new regulations.

Also Tuesday, supervisors adopted new rules for rentals in any unincorporated area in the county. Those rules will also apply around Idyllwild and the Temecula Valley if the moratorium extension is rejected.

The new regulations focus on occupancy limitations, noise controls, parking designations and other health and safety provisions.

Last month, county staff told the board that applications for rental certificates had surged over the previous 13 months, leading to an average of 54 new certificates a month being issued, a disproportionately high number to property owners in the Idyllwild-Pine Cove area and the Temecula Valley.

"If the increase continues, adverse impacts that have the potential to endanger the health and safety of residents, guests and the very environment and resources that attract visitors to the county will increase," read a memo from the land management agency.

Officials said a high concentration of short-term rental properties could prove problematic in the Temecula Valley Wine Country, undermining "the character of the community."

Similar concerns were raised about the Idyllwild area, where 12% of the 1,100 licensed short-term rentals in unincorporated communities are now located.

“The greater the number of short-term rentals in a neighborhood, the greater the potential impacts on the neighborhood,” the agency stated. “The infrastructure in this area remains rural in nature, exhibiting narrow, steep roads and a lack of shoulder parking.”

Short-term rentals are defined as residential dwellings leased for a maximum of 30 days and a minimum of two days and one night.