

New short-term rentals may be banned temporarily in Idyllwild, wine country



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A temporary ban on new short-term rentals could be coming to Idyllwild and other unincorporated areas of Riverside County that have seen a huge boom in vacation homes that nearby residents say disrupt their quality of life.



The Idyllwild City Center, Jay Calderon The Desert Sun

Riverside County supervisors will consider a 45-day moratorium on new short-term rentals in Idyllwild, Pine Cove and Mountain Center, as well as in the unincorporated Temecula Valley wine country, during their meeting Tuesday.

The board of supervisors will also consider a suite of changes to the county's short-term rental rules — following several lengthy public hearings in recent months — during its meeting Tuesday. That proposal includes new occupancy limits, stiffer fines for violations and the possibility of a permit being revoked after a third violation.

More: New short-term rental rules in Idyllwild, rest of Riverside County delayed

More: Idyllwild has nearly half of short-term rentals under county jurisdiction. Some residents are pushing back

The changes were crafted as the number of short-term rentals in unincorporated Riverside County has spiked in recent years, from 268 in 2016 — the year the county adopted a short-term rental ordinance — to 1,084 in July 2022. County officials have estimated double to triple that number are operating without proper permits.

The county's proposal also follows a 2021 grand jury report on the short-term rental landscape, which found the county's current enforcement process to be ineffective, with fines too small to act as a meaningful deterrent. The grand jury recommended increasing short-term rental licensing and renewal fees to fund better oversight.

The areas covered by the 45-day moratorium have roughly 62% of the 1,131 short-term rentals in unincorporated Riverside County as of early August.

Short-term rental permits have also been issued at an accelerated rate over the past year, according to county data. In the three years before the release of the grand jury report in June 2021, the average number of short-term rental certificates issued monthly was eight; between June 2021 and July 2022, the average was 54.

The recent increase in applications “demonstrates a rush to obtain permits that may be inconsistent with proposed or future licensing regulations,” according to the draft moratorium ordinance.

In a memo recommending supervisors adopt the moratorium, county planners wrote: “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.

“Adverse impacts to surrounding neighbors and properties include unpermitted large-scale events, overconcentration that destabilizes the neighborhood quality of life, excessive noise, disorderly conduct, traffic congestion, illegal vehicle parking,

accumulation of refuse and loss of potential housing stock for long-term rentals and permanent residents.”

If approved, the 45-day emergency ban would take effect while county staff assess the “seemingly disproportionate” impacts of rentals and consider whether new regulations are needed, the same memo says.

The proposal would put Riverside County on a growing list of cities and counties in southern California that have recently responded to the growing rental market. In June, supervisors in San Bernardino County approved a 45-day pause on new short-term rentals in Airbnb hotspot Joshua Tree and other communities, while manycities in the Coachella Valley have taken steps to rein in the market.

Where 12% of homes are rentals

Several Idyllwild residents pushed for an emergency moratorium during the board’s most recent hearing on short-term rental rules in late July, arguing the area is becoming oversaturated.

Short-term rentals make up roughly 12% of the houses in both Idyllwild and Temecula Valley’s wine country, according to Riverside County data.

Joel Feingold, an Idyllwild resident who helped petition the county to address rental issues, told The Desert Sun the 45-day moratorium would be a great step, “instead of people trying to get in under the wire ... before the new regulations come into play.”

“There’s plenty (of short-term rentals) now,” Feingold said. “I’m of the belief that it’s a two-pronged thing: Let’s get a moratorium in place until we get the full set – and I’m a big fan of the full set – of recommended upgrades to the ordinance from the planning board to the supervisors.”

The emergency moratorium would begin immediately if approved by the supervisors Tuesday, and would last until Oct. 28. Four of the five supervisors must support the measure for it to take effect as an emergency ordinance.

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, and more information about how to attend the meeting is available at rivco.org.

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