

Pacific Grove Neighbors United to launch initiative to stop STRs

Pacific Grove residents concerned about vacation rentals disrupting their neighborhoods have proposed a ballot initiative to keep the commercial operations out of their residential zones. A new public action committee, Pacific Grove Neighbors United, will be asking voters to stop the short-term rentals the city has allowed despite scores of complaints from impacted neighbors.

The group will host a campaign kick-off party to start a signature drive and every PG voter interested in signing; helping with the campaign or just seeking information is welcome to attend. The party will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Saturday, January 20**, in Jewell Park, corner of Central and Forest Avenues.

Signature gatherers will soon spread out to the Post Office, the farmers' market, grocery stores, and local events and even door to door in the drive that needs 1,000 valid voter signatures to get the initiative on the November, 2018 ballot.

"We hope folks will take time to join us at the park for the kick-off party and to sign the petition," said Luke Coletti, a spokesperson for the Neighbors United organization.

The organization has also set up a web site, www.pgneighbors.com, to provide details on the initiative and the reasons for it, display a graphic map to show how widespread short-term rentals are now, and to answer any questions Pacific Grove voters might have.

The short-term rentals operate as one-unit motels, renting houses and apartments by the night to different transients. Residents who find their neighborhoods disrupted and degraded by the commercialization have been asking the city to control them for at least three years – or prohibit them as Pacific Grove once did (see [P.G. Ordinance 1913](#), adopted in 1993). Monterey and Carmel wisely continue to ban STRs in residential zones. The City Council has had lengthy hearings and discussions but has continually granted amnesty in order to collect transient occupancy taxes from the overnight tenants.

The Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce recently joined the concerned residents as inns and motels have found short-term rentals impact their occupancy rates.

Pacific Grove Neighbors United believe the city's decision to support short-term rentals conflicts with the historic City Charter, which states: "Pacific Grove is Primarily a City of Homes... and that business and industry shall be compatible with its residential character."

The Ballot Initiative would prohibit short-term rentals – rentals of less than 30 days – in residential districts outside of the Coastal Zone. The Initiative does NOT affect short-term rentals in commercial districts or the area governed by the California Coastal Commission (Coastal Zone). Further, the Initiative does not change the City's existing rules allowing room rentals in resident-occupied single-family homes. The Initiative recognizes the Pacific Grove City Council and California Coastal Commission must regulate short-term rentals within the Coastal Zone.

The City Council has refused to restore the fundamental protections that zoning is meant to provide, most importantly, separating commercial and residential uses. This has compromised Pacific Grove's residential character and now compels Pacific Grove residents to take back control. Further, the City Council in November 2017 loosened STR regulations, disregarding the pleas of residents negatively impacted by the commercial operations and offering no way to rectify the hardships. Consequently, concerned residents formed the action committee for a voter's initiative to take back our neighborhoods and keep them free from commercial intervention. The Initiative wouldn't take effect for 18 months to allow owners of existing short-term rentals time to deal with the restored prohibition.