Measure FF

City of Santa Rosa

Measure Question

Simple Majority Needed to Pass

To maintain locally controlled funding for services, such as keeping city parks clean safe/well maintained, repairing potholes and maintaining streets, enhancing senior/youth programs, and for general government use, shall City of Santa Rosa's measure be adopted increasing the existing transient occupancy tax charged to hotel, motel and lodging guests by 2%, until ended by voters, providing $1,200,000 annually and all funds staying local?

What Your Vote Means

YES	NO
A "yes" vote on Measure FF is a vote to increase Santa Rosa's current TOT rate by 2% beginning January 1, 2025.	A "no" vote on Measure FF is a vote to reject a 2% increase in Santa Rosa's current TOT rate.

For and Against Measure FF

FOR	AGAINST
Natalie Rogers Mayor, City of Santa Rosa	NO ON EE AND FF Eric Fraser, Chair Adina Flores

Local Ballot Measure: FF

City Attorney's Impartial Analysis of Measure FF

The Santa Rosa City Council has placed this measure on the ballot. If voters approve it, Measure FF would amend the City Code to increase the City's Transient Occupancy Tax ("TOT") from 9% to 11%. The tax is paid by guests staying at Santa Rosa hotels, motels and other lodging establishments, ensuring that Santa Rosa visitors contribute to City services. Santa Rosa's TOT rate was last adjusted in 1993.

Increasing Santa Rosa's TOT rate is estimated to raise $1,200,000 annually until ended by voters. All funds generated would go in the City's general fund and could be used for any general government purpose, including but not limited to keeping City parks clean, safe and well maintained; repairing potholes; maintaining streets; enhancing senior/youth programs; and/or providing emergency/public safety services. Tax revenues cannot be taken away by the State.

Any new revenue generated by Measure FF would be subject to the City's existing charter-required annual independent audit and review of City revenues and expenditures.

A "yes" vote on Measure FF is a vote to increase Santa Rosa's current TOT rate by 2% beginning January 1, 2025.

A "no" vote on Measure FF is a vote to reject a 2% increase in Santa Rosa's current TOT rate.

To be adopted, a simple majority of voters voting on Measure FF must approve the measure.

s/ Teresa. L. Stricker
City Attorney

The above statement is an impartial analysis of Measure FF. If you desire a copy of the ordinance or measure, please call the City Clerk's office at (707) 543-3015 and a copy will be mailed at no cost to you.

Continue to next page for arguments

Local Ballot Measure: FF

Arguments and rebuttals are the opinions of the authors. They are printed exactly as submitted, including errors.

Argument in Favor of Measure FF

Vote Yes on Measure FF to keep Santa Rosa a vibrant and thriving destination for visitors and residents alike.

Measure FF only impacts guests staying in hotels and motels in Santa Rosa and does not increase taxes on residents.

Specifically, voting Yes on FF increases Santa Rosa's hotel tax paid by visitors to ensure they contribute to maintaining the roads, infrastructure, and public safety services they utilize while staying in Santa Rosa. The current 9% hotel tax rate was last adjusted 31 years ago. Measure FF increases the rate to 11%, bringing it in line with Sonoma County cities.

Funds from Measure FF will repair potholes and maintain Santa Rosa's 512 miles of local streets. It will keep city parks clean, safe, and well maintained.

Measure FF requires guarantee fiscal accountability with mandatory audits and full public disclosure of all spending. Importantly, all funds raised will stay right here in Santa Rosa, benefiting our local community.

Measure FF ensures hotel guests pay their fair share, so the burden does not fall entirely on homeowners and residents. Bringing Santa Rosa's hotel tax rate in line other cities in Sonoma County ensures Santa Rosa benefits from local tourism.

Vote Yes on FF to maintain essential services in Santa Rosa without increasing taxes on most residents.

s/ Natalie Rogers
Mayor, City of Santa Rosa

Rebuttal to Argument in Favor of Measure FF

Vote No on Measure FF to fight waste and corruption!

The city is being deceptive. Why?

They claim this is a hotel/motel tax, but it's a Transient Occupancy Tax, meaning guests at short-term rentals (STRs) pay this tax too. The City was offered, but declined, to take in taxes directly from booking platforms over ten years ago, showing their disdain for financial responsibility and efficiency.

The total tax to transients would be 16%, not 11%, when two other taxes are added.

Known as BIAs and assessed in the 2000s, these taxes were never voter approved, were to sunset but didn't. Now, we have colossal slush funds, administered by the City but fueling various government and semi-government agencies, who cannot account for the tens of millions of dollars fleeced from visitors and residents over the past decade.

A 16% total tax would: (1) Be the highest tax in Sonoma County, and among the highest tax in the state and nation. A huge cost easily seen and compared at time of booking. (2) Directly impact visiting families, workers, professionals, evacuees, residents – everybody who seeks accommodations. (3) Be damaging to visitor serving businesses and our local economy. (4) Be "regressive" as the costs are passed to consumers. (5) Adds resources into a mismanaged and corrupt BIA scheme that must be reformed first.

They say they "guarantee fiscal accountability". We say they haven't in the past and have the research to prove it.

Vote No on FF

NOONEEFF.COM
s/ Eric Fraser, Managing Director

Local Ballot Measure: FF

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Argument Against Measure FF

Vote No on increasing the transient occupancy taxes (TOT). This appears to be a small increase, yet it actually is huge.

Combined with other taxes (Santa Rosa and Sonoma County Tourism Business Assessments – SRTBIA and SCTBIA), transient visitors would pay as much as Healdsburg, and more than 90% of the other cities in California!

Who pays? Who is a transient? Policy makers would have you believe taxpayers are "tourists", but research shows they are more likely your family members, friends, employees and workers. Transients are people who stay somewhere in Santa Rosa for 30 days or less.

Santa Rosa residents also pay the TOT. You are also a tax-paying transient when you need to stay outside your home because of an evacuation, personal emergency, power-shut off, or to be close to medical services.

The cost of lodging will go up more than 2%, as businesses pass along increased costs plus administrative expenses. Visitors with families looking for affordable accommodations will look elsewhere.

Hotels, motels, and short-term rentals all pay the required TOT already. However, elected officials and political insiders exclude themselves from paying TOT when transients stay at their properties.

The SRTBIA and SCTBIA are wasteful programs, mired in insider deals, and appear to have never been independently audited. The SRTBIA launched in 2014, and the SCTBIA launched in 2010 has collected tens of millions of dollars over the years. Where did this money go? We may never get a clear picture. Insist that the SRTBIA and SCTBIA are independently audited before the City's TOT is increased.

Money paid to the SRTBIA and SCTBIA means less money for the City's general fund and our local economy.

Draw the line around government corruption and vote "No".

For more information visit: NoOnEEFF.com

NO ON EE AND FF
s/ Eric Fraser, Chair

s/ Adina Flores

Rebuttal to Argument Against Measure FF

Voting Yes on FF to increase Transient Occupancy Taxes (TOT) is a smart move for Santa Rosa's future –and is largely funded by tourists. Concerns about the increase overlook broader community benefits and mischaracterize several key points. Measure FF provides much-needed funding for Santa Rosa to reduce impacts to neighborhoods where there are short-term vacation rentals.

Comparing Santa Rosa's proposed TOT to other cities without considering local economic factors and tourism demand is misleading. Santa Rosa's unique appeal as a Wine Country destination justifies a competitive tax rate that helps maintain and improve city services and infrastructure.

TOT revenue comes from out-of-town visitors. During local emergencies, many hotels also offer discounted rates or waive TOT fees entirely – helping local citizens in times of crisis.

Regarding affordability, a slight increase in lodging costs is unlikely to significantly deter visitors, especially given Santa Rosa's strong value proposition compared to neighboring tourist hotspots.

The assertion of widespread corruption and lack of auditing in tourism programs is unsubstantiated. These programs are subject to oversight and contribute to Santa Rosa's economic stability, promoting the city and supporting local businesses.

Importantly, the TOT increase would directly benefit Santa Rosa's General Fund, supporting essential services like public safety, road maintenance, and parks. This investment in our community's quality of life ultimately enhances its appeal to both residents and visitors.

Voting Yes on Measure FF is an investment in Santa Rosa's future, ensuring our city can continue to thrive and provide top-notch services to residents and visitors alike.

s/ Natalie Rogers
Mayor