

## **Opinion: Mayors unite: Vote yes on Measure B**

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It is most unfortunate that so much misinformation is being given out by the opponents of Measure B, such as that Cottage Hospital could not be rebuilt to its 60-foot height.

Measure B is on the ballot because almost 12,000 concerned voters petitioned for it. We signed because we wanted to stop more of the out-of-scale buildings that we've watched destroy views and Santa Barbara's small-town character.

Measure B will lower building heights in the central downtown core to 40 feet and to 45 feet in other commercial and manufacturing zones. It will not affect residential buildings.

Scare tactics are being used to make voters think that it will cause sprawl, prevent affordable housing, will be less sustainable, will stop the building of additional hospital space and will prevent the rebuilding of taller, older buildings damaged in a disaster. None of that is true.

People are being told that by voting no on Measure B and keeping the 60-foot height limit, they will have affordable housing. Santa Barbara has had a 60-foot limit since 1930. If the ability to build to 60 feet is all that is needed, why, then, doesn't the city have all the affordable housing it can use?

Santa Barbara does have a remarkably high amount of permanently affordable housing -- 11 percent of its housing stock -- perhaps more than any other city in the state. Almost every last bit of it is in buildings less than 40 feet high.

The city limits the number of floors in a building to four no matter how tall it is. The main thing that can't be built in 40 feet that can be built in 60 feet is luxury condos. We don't need any more of those.

Lower buildings are better for the environment. They use fewer materials to construct and less energy to heat and cool. They are more sustainable.

The 60-foot limit didn't stop development around the city. Because density remains the same, lower height limits will have no effect on sprawl.

Opponents to Measure B say that the new Cottage Hospital pavilions couldn't be rebuilt if destroyed. For that alarmist statement to be true, the buildings would have to lose 75 percent of their market value (not 65 percent as stated in a recent op-ed) before they couldn't be rebuilt.

Cottage is being built to California's up-to-date seismic safety standards. It has been designed to remain standing even in a major earthquake. The odds of less than 25 percent market value remaining after an earthquake are mighty slim. Simply, Cottage can be rebuilt. (Residential buildings can be rebuilt even if completely destroyed.)

Older non-residential buildings such as Trinity Church and the Lobero Theatre have been earthquake-retrofitted. That being so, it is very unlikely any other building will lose 75 percent of its value in the event of a disaster. These, too, could be rebuilt.

We are perplexed by Cottage's continued assertion that it must have 60 feet for the remaining, maybe-sometime-in-the-future, fourth pavilion. That pavilion is neither fully designed nor even part of the hospital EIR, and its need, if any, is far down the road.

If needed, it could be like other hospitals being built around the state. Some have 13-foot stories; 15-foot stories are common. Surely the architects for Cottage are capable also of designing hospital buildings of three 15-foot stories that would fit within Measure B's 45-foot limit.

Measure B is hardly extreme. Carpinteria has a 30-foot maximum height. Goleta has a maximum height of 35 feet with a maximum of 25 feet in its Old Town. A 40-foot limit in our Old Town and 45 feet elsewhere for non-residential buildings in the city of Santa Barbara will maintain our cherished small-town character.

Next time you are downtown, notice that many of the buildings are one and two stories. That's part of what gives this city its small-town feel. It's part of what attracts tourists and residents alike, and tourism provides 50 percent of the city's income.

Few cities in the world are privileged to have a setting like Santa Barbara's. Help maintain its environment, its economy and its livability for all Santa Barbarans, now and in the future. Vote yes on Measure B.

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