

Letters: Limiting heights sends city message

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Many opponents of Measure B say it doesn't go far enough to address the problem of bulky, dense, view-obstructing, canyon-creating development -- and they are right. The problem is, state law prohibits a grass-roots initiative from dealing with more than one element, so of all the elements necessary for aesthetically pleasing development in Santa Barbara, height was considered the most critical.

The City Council considered writing an initiative with multiple elements so the issues of setback, stagger-back, view corridors, open land, landscaping and proportion could have been addressed. As part of this initiative, the council wanted discretionary power to grant exemptions to projects for the public good. This was not a popular idea with many residents who thought a project that was unacceptable for a private developer to build was still unacceptable if built for low-cost housing.

The council, consequently, dropped the idea of a competing initiative, so now we must decide to limit only height or do nothing and continue to see large, bulky projects proliferate and impose themselves on our city landscape. We need better, smaller scale development that is sensitive to the architecture and ambiance of existing neighborhoods.

We need to send a message to City Planning and City Council by voting yes on Measure B. City Council has the power to create, through ordinance, a complex set of building strictures that will help us retain our small-town ambiance and honor and protect our historic structures.

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Posted with permission of the writer, Hattie Beresford, a resident of Santa Barbara since 1968