

# Vote no on I and J and yes on H in East Palo Alto

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**T**HE new Four Seasons Hotel on University Avenue at Highway 101 is going to bring more than visitors to East Palo Alto when it opens in 2004. It will bring in about \$2 million a year, thanks to a hotel tax passed by city voters in 1998. Now the city council wants voters to earmark some of the money for certain purposes — forever.

Measure I on the Nov. 5 ballot would set aside 10 percent of the hotel tax money, about \$200,000 a year, for services for families and children. Measure J would

set aside the same amount for affordable housing.

Housing and children's services are important priorities, and there is nothing to prevent the council from spending hotel tax money for them. But these measures amount to ballot-box budgeting and tie the hands of future councils. Vote No on Measures I and J.

Also on the ballot is Measure H, which would ratify the city utility tax. The tax was passed by the city council in 1989 but not approved by voters, leaving it

open to a court challenge.

Like taxes in more than 150 California cities, East Palo Alto's tax on electricity, gas, phones and water pays for essential city services. It generates about \$1 million a year. Measure H calls for the tax to end in 2006, by which time other sources of revenue will be available replace it. The measure also extends the tax to cell phone usage.

Measure H will protect the city from lawsuits and end the current utility tax in four years. It's a sensible measure. Vote yes.

## Editorial

**The opinion  
of the  
Mercury News**