

May 23, 2022

Greetings to the Venice City Council.

I'm writing on behalf of Venice Theatre. VT is the 2nd-oldest arts organization in Sarasota County. We are one of the city's oldest continuous businesses—founded in 1950—and we have been located downtown since 1972. With a budget of approximately \$4 million, Venice Theatre benefits more than 100,000 patrons and participants each season. We employ 31 people (28 full-time), and more than 100 contract artists and teachers throughout the year.

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The theatre is aware that the City has discussed changing the building height regulations that govern the downtown area. VT encourages the City not to change the current regulations, which have worked effectively for the downtown area for the past 50 years.

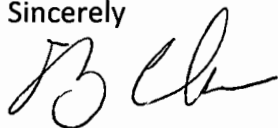
The theatre has benefitted from the ability to meet modern needs. VT added a fly loft for vertical scenery in 1988, giving it one of the basic features required by all standard theatres. In fact, if it were not allowed to have a working fly loft for most musical productions, Venice Theatre would not have been able to stay in its current location. Presenting shows to the caliber of the recent *Mamma Mia*, *South Pacific*, *Ragtime*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Mary Poppins*, or *Beauty and the Beast* would have been impossible. A hard-and-fast 35-foot rule would have prevented even the thought of such productions, which drew more than 75,000 people to downtown Venice. Many of those patrons ate at downtown restaurants and shopped the avenues. Dozens of bus groups stayed at local hotels.

Fortunately, Venice had the commonsense solution: a 35-foot cap on building height, but with council's option to grant variances. The city trusted the Council to exercise its judgement.

Please continue the current regulations. Do not change what has produced and maintained the character and ambience of downtown Venice. Please trust yourselves and your successors to recognize real need for the good of the community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely



Murray Chase
Producing Executive Director
Venice Theatre



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