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## Two Yalecrest petitions for historic districts pulled back on eve of vote

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Two prime movers in the effort to get a local-historic-district designation for the Yalecrest area on Salt Lake City's east bench have withdrawn petitions for lack of public support.

The move, no doubt, relieves the City Council of some pressure moving into Tuesday's vote on the fate of the neighborhood. For years, residents have argued back and forth on whether the area from Sunnyside Avenue to 1300 South between 1300 East and 1900 East should have protection from demolitions of early 20th-century houses. Opponents have contended that a historic designation would impede their rights as property owners.

After a moratorium on local-historic districts was placed on Salt Lake City by the state Legislature, the council conceived an ordinance that allowed residents to petition for smaller districts within Yalecrest. At least 15 percent of the property owners within a designated area were required for a petition to move forward. If it passed muster with the Historic District Commission and the Planning Commission, the application would have to be approved by a majority of residents.

The council would have the final say and could override a popular vote with a supermajority of five votes on the seven-member body.

Last year, five petitions were filed at City Hall. All five were approved by the Historic District and Planning commissions. But two fell short of popular support: The Upper Yale Addition on 1100 South between 1700 East and 1800 East; and the Upper Yale



Trent Nelson | Tribune file photo  
Homes along the 1700 block of Harvard Avenue in Salt Lake City. The Salt Lake City Council will vote on designation of three local historic districts in the Yalecrest area, including Harvard Avenue from 1500 East to 1700 East.

2nd Addition on Herbert Avenue (1055 South) between 1700 East and 1800 East.

Petitioners Sonja Chesley and Tracey Harty withdrew them Friday when it appeared the council would not override the slim majorities against the designation.

“I feel the city is not ready to make this critical decision,” Harty said Monday. “I didn’t want [a negative council vote] to impact the future going down the line.”

Further, Harty said that zoning by popular vote may not be legal.

But Councilman Charlie Luke, whose District 6 encompasses Yalecrest, said that after the Legislature squashed Salt Lake City’s historic-designation authority, the council sought a solution that would be palatable — majority rule.

“In order for the Legislature to pull the moratorium, the city had to have a [popular] vote,” he said.

He noted that the issue, by its very nature, is contentious. “There is no way you’re going to make everybody happy.”

Luke also criticized the applicants for withdrawing their petitions.

“The appearance that someone is playing games isn’t good for anybody.”

Councilwoman Erin Mendenhall, on the other hand, said a popular vote on a historic district puts the entire concept at risk. “This is not about the property owners,” she said, “but the structures themselves.”

Mendenhall agreed with Chesley and Harty that a patchwork of small historic districts would lead to demolitions on those blocks without designations. In the end, it doesn’t make for a historic district, she said. “The [present] ordinance does not serve the area well.”

Chesley and Harty can again petition for historic-district designation for their neighborhoods, but they must wait at least one year to start over.

The council will vote on three remaining proposals, all of which enjoy popular support: Normandie Circle at 1335 E. 1150 South; Princeton Avenue from 1700 East to 1800 East; and Harvard Avenue from 1500 East to 1700 East.

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