



P.O. Box 4173 Glendale CA 91202
www.GlendaleHistorical.org

Sept 10, 2023

Glendale City Council
City of Glendale
613 East Broadway
Glendale, CA 91206

Re: Item 9b, Community Development, re: Amendments for Streamlining the Historic District Designation Process

Dear Mayor Brotman and Glendale City Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this agenda item.

Supporting the establishment of historic districts is a critical priority for The Glendale Historical Society (TGHS). We have advocated for a streamlined process to evaluate and onboard historic districts and are pleased that a proposal has been brought forward.

TGHS is supportive of the overall proposal, but have significant concerns about the following two items.

Increasing the petition threshold above 50% + 1

When this proposal was last discussed at City Council, a request was made to consider increasing the petition threshold to 66%. TGHS strongly opposes the increase and recommend it remain at 50% + 1.

First of all, we believe that increasing the threshold will have the effect of discouraging the formation of new historic districts. The current threshold is already a hurdle to neighborhood applicants. Canvassing is tedious work and increasing it by 32% (16 points) will only sow additional discouragement.

It's important to remember that a historic district isn't automatically approved when a petition gains 50% +1 support. It only gives the neighborhood the opportunity to bring it to City Council for a hearing and potential approval. Included in the current and proposed streamlined process are multiple opportunities for those in opposition to express their concerns, both at a Planning Commission/HPC meeting and at the ultimate City Council Meeting. There is also a process for those in opposition to start a counter petition.

The Glendale Historical Society (TGHS) advocates for the preservation of important Glendale landmarks, supports maintaining the historic character of Glendale's neighborhoods, educates the public about and engages the community in celebrating and preserving Glendale's history and architectural heritage, and operates the Doctors House Museum. TGHS is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and donations to TGHS are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Proponents of increasing the threshold may argue that it will increase neighborhood buy in. However, since all but two of Glendale's current historic districts have gotten over 66% on their final petition with little to no opposition, there is already neighborhood buy in.

TGHS doesn't see the value in increasing the threshold percentage. If anything, it will further disqualify neighborhoods who have **majority** support (50% - 65%) and discourage new neighborhoods from starting the process.

Verification of Petition Signatures

During the October 25, 2022 meeting, two Council Members proposed that signatures on the petition be verified. Senior Planner Jay Platt questioned how City Staff would go about this verification process and stated that the City has never received any complaints alleging that Historic District petitions contained fraudulent signatures.

TGHS strongly believes that additional verification, above and beyond what is currently done, is not necessary and is actually contrary to streamlining efforts.

This would take already stretched staff resources to perform additional validation tasks to address a non-existent issue.

If capacity exists amongst staff for this validation, more value would be provided to the City if it was allocated to other planning duties.

For the reasons noted above, TGHS respectfully requests that you leave the petition threshold at 50% + 1 and not implement an additional process to verify signatures.

Both of these proposals have the appearance of a solution trying to find a problem, will have a detrimental impact on future potential districts, and only adds more bureaucracy and friction in a process that we desperately need to streamline.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Schwab-Sims", written over a light gray rectangular background.

John Schwab-Sims
President
The Glendale Historical Society

cc: Suzie Abajian, City Clerk
Bradley Calvert, Director of Community Development
Jay Platt, Senior Urban Designer
Kasey Conley, Associate Planner

