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Community activist takes on incumbent in Salt Lake City District 6

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Transportation, traffic congestion, public safety and historic preservation are on the minds of voters along Salt Lake City's east bench.

Community activist Tracey Harty is challenging incumbent City Councilman Charlie Luke in District 6, which runs south from the University of Utah to Sugar House Park.

Harty has campaigned tirelessly for local historic districts in an effort to preserve the quality of the leafy neighborhoods in the Yalecrest area. That fight has been long and hard, pitting preservationists against property-rights activists.

After many years, Luke and the City Council reached a compromise that allowed each block to be designated a local historic district with a simple majority of voting property owners.

It has worked to some degree, yielding a patchwork of small historic districts.

Harty contends that such a checkerboard of historic and non-historic blocks falls short of what is needed — a larger contiguous district.



| Courtesy image

Charlie Luke

The pair also disagree on what to do with Sunnyside Avenue.

Harty favored Mayor Ralph Becker's "complete streets" plan for the east-west thoroughfare that would have reduced auto traffic to one lane in each direction, in what the administration described as a "test." It also would have created larger bike lanes and a traffic-calming median.

But Luke led an insurrection of residents who didn't favor the so-called road diet they had witnessed on 1300 East. He persuaded three other council members to sign a letter to the mayor saying they would not fund the so-called "test" that many saw as a permanent transformation.

Both candidates do favor the proposed one-quarter-cent sales-tax increase that could help with solutions to transportation challenges in District 6. Bus service is lacking and the flow of auto traffic to and from the University of Utah is staggering.

Harty would like to see a rapid-transit bus system along Foothill Boulevard as well as new bus routes throughout the district.

Luke, too, sees expanded bus service as a necessity, adding that UTA has "not been great" for residents in his area.

How they will persuade UTA to go along with a request for added bus routes remains unclear.

East-side residents also are clamoring for a larger police presence in their neighborhoods. Recently, the City Council, acting independently of the mayor's office, budgeted for eight additional bicycle patrol officers. Luke led a charge asking the Becker administration to seek a federal Department of Justice grant that would pay 75 percent of salaries for up to 15 new officers. The funding does not pay for equipment.

Salt Lake City announced Oct. 8 that the grant had been awarded. It expires in three years.

Harty said police have to be more visible and more in tune with the community.

"Crime is rampant," she said. "It's going on all over the city and people don't feel safe."

Both candidates said that the forced resignation of former police Chief Chris Burbank was handled poorly by the mayor in the aftermath of confirmed sexual harassment allegations against a deputy chief in January 2014. Harty and Luke said that Becker inexplicably waited a year to act.

Neither candidate favored the proposed \$150 million open-space bond that would have transformed Glendale Golf Course into a regional park. The council voted against putting the measure before voters.

Mail-in ballots must be postmarked no later than Nov. 2. Election Day is Nov. 3.

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Charlie Luke

Age 42

Born in Salt Lake City

Political consultant and executive director of a disabilities-provider association.

Former member of the Salt Lake City Planning Commission

Tracey Harty

Age 49

Born in Salt Lake City

Small business owner

Member of the Yalecrest Neighborhood Council.

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