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## Petitions Are Coming In Slowly

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# Cedar-Vine Breakthrough Gains Strength

By Allen Jones

Thirty-nine petitions for the Cedar-Vine street cut-through project have been returned to consulting engineers Bowman and Williams. Twenty-four owners of 64 land parcels have returned the petitions signed, favoring the \$600,000 project, and 15 owners of 16 parcels have returned the petitions indicating opposition.

The percentage in favor of the project is higher than expected, but the pace at which petitions are being returned is slow. The petitions were sent two weeks ago to owners of the 325 land parcels in the proposed district.

Goal of the petition is a sign-up by owners of 60 per cent of the assessment district area. A 60 per cent sign-up would eliminate the need for a district election and allow the city council to proceed with a public hearing on the project.

The 60 per cent would also mean the council could order the project by a simple majority vote instead of a 4/5 majority. A 4/5 majority would require six of the seven city councilmen to vote for the project.

Some property owners have questioned the petition procedure. Frank Murphy Sr., an attorney, said he felt that because acquisition costs are the biggest expense in the project, the city

should get purchase options on the property needed for the two-block cut-through.

Tom Polk Williams Jr., of Bowman and Williams, said options would be obtained before the city actually gets into the project, but that "we're just trying to get an indication of settlement" for or against the project with the petitions.

Until precise engineering work is done, Williams said, "we don't have an exact knowledge of what property we'll need" for the project. But options will be sought in advance on properties certain to be needed for the new street, Williams said.

Fred McPherson Jr., publisher of The Sentinel, said today he would be willing to give the city a 60-day option on The Sentinel property, which lies directly in the path of the proposed street.

McPherson also announced he planned to award a contract this week for clearing the adjoining Methodist church property, where the new Sentinel plant is to be built.

Both Williams and City Attorney Rod Atchison affirmed that signing the petition did not bar a property owner from protesting the project at the public hearing later.

The street project would go through these steps: the petition is brought to the council. The

council directs plans to be prepared and cost estimates made on a more precise basis, orders bids to be obtained, and seeks options on the property to be acquired. Then notice is sent to the affected property owners, and a public hearing is set.

Atchison said petition signers could still protest the project, either at the public hearing or through a counter-petition.

Murphy also expressed doubts about the petition's wording. The petition contains some "pretty broad clauses," he said. One paragraph he questioned agrees to waive "division 4 of the streets and highways code."

Atchison said this is a standard waiver, and that division 4 had not been applied "in years" anywhere in the state. The waiver cuts out a lengthy statutory process for getting on with the project.

The council could overrule a majority protest of the project by property owners, but a 4/5 majority of the council would be needed to overrule.

The two-block project would link Vine street, which now ends at Church street, with Cedar street, which now ends at Lincoln street. In preliminary estimates, only \$27,500 of the cost is allotted for actual construction, with property acquisition costs estimated at \$480,000 and razing costs at \$100,000.

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