

# Memorandum

**To:** Robin Ziegler, Salt Lake City Planning

**From:** Matt Goebel, Clarion Associates

**Date:** July 31, 2009

**RE:** **Historic Preservation Plan and Sustainable Code Revision Projects**

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Salt Lake currently is engaged in two groundbreaking efforts – the Historic Preservation Plan and the Sustainable Code Revision project – that together will help protect the city’s rich heritage while also ensuring that the city remains economically vibrant and a national model of high-quality, sustainable development. The preservation plan and the sustainability code updates are complimentary efforts. At your request, this memorandum summarizes these two efforts and provides examples of how similar issues are being addressed in the two projects.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN**

The new Historic Preservation Plan has been in development for over two years. While the city has protected hundreds of historic resources and enjoyed some impressive preservation success stories over the past 30 years, this plan is actually the first comprehensive attempt to address historic preservation issues throughout Salt Lake City. Generally speaking, the plan’s goals are to protect the city’s historic resources while preparing for redevelopment and infill as the city grows; to acknowledge the many preservation successes achieved in the past; to strengthen current preservation efforts; and to inform an array of city policy decisions and guide preservation activity into the future.

A major emphasis of the preservation plan is that Salt Lake must practice preservation with an eye on the future. While areas qualifying for historic designation should be protected through appropriate regulations (such as design guidelines for additions to historic homes), the plan does not call for historic areas to be left untouched altogether. Indeed, historic preservation is intended to be a cornerstone of the city’s efforts to promote sustainable development. An entire section of the plan illustrates how preservation can support not just environmental sustainability, but also economic, social, and cultural sustainability. First-year implementation priorities in this regard include:

- Appointing a staff green building liaison;
- Enabling broader use of solar collectors and alternative energy equipment on historic properties ;
- Preserving eligible historic parks as landmark sites;
- Ensuring zoning allows residential reuses of nonresidential historic structures;
- Supporting appropriate residential additions in historic districts to meet a wide range of housing needs; and

- Drafting rules to allow accessory dwelling units in historic districts, following neighborhood approval and subject to clear standards that protect neighborhood character.

## **SUSTAINABLE CODE REVISIONS**

The Sustainable Code Revision Project is an ongoing effort designed to revise the city's zoning, subdivision, and other land development codes to promote more sustainable development patterns. A February 2009 diagnosis prepared for the project identifies existing regulatory barriers, incentives, and development standards found in the city's development codes that are directly related to ten sustainability categories identified by the city:

- Climate Change and Air Quality
- Water Quality and Conservation
- Alternative Energy Production and Energy Conservation
- Mobility and Transportation
- Urban Forestry
- Housing Accessibility and Diversity
- Community Health and Safety
- Food Production and Nutrition
- Recycling and Waste Reduction
- Open Space, Parks, and Trails

For each topic, the diagnosis first summarizes the issue and notes how land development regulations can help accomplish the city's goals in that arena. For example, in the area of water quality and conservation, the diagnosis notes that climate change, worsening drought, population growth, and the demands of new developments have called sharp attention to the need to sustain water resources and make more efficient use of local water supplies. A recommended Salt Lake Code revision intended to address this issue is: "Expand existing water-conserving landscaping regulations (including limits on irrigation) and restrict the use of turf grass, especially in commercial and residential development."

## **OVERLAP BETWEEN THE TWO PROJECTS**

As stated, the preservation plan and the sustainability code updates are complimentary efforts. To the extent that they address the same issues, city officials and staff, working with Clarion, have strived to ensure consistency between the two projects. There are only a handful of issues on which the two projects directly address similar issues and in such areas the documents contain consistent recommendations. Two examples are listed below.

Regarding climate change and air quality, the Sustainable Code Revision project identifies regulatory options for addressing this issue. Generally, the diagnosis proposes that the city's zoning and land use regulations be updated to encourage development patterns that allow for and promote less reliance on automobiles for mobility and result in a reduction in vehicle miles traveled and a corresponding reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Examples of development that would meet this standard include mixed-use and transit-oriented developments.

- Along these same lines and specifically related to historic preservation, the diagnosis recommends revising existing accessory use provisions to allow accessory dwelling units in selected residential areas and new developments. Strengthening compatibility standards for accessory units (e.g., limit to larger lots, special control in historic districts, etc.) also is recommended.

- The draft historic preservation plan specifically addresses this issue in the same manner as the sustainable code diagnosis. Policy 5.7d of the preservation plan states: “Work to develop appropriate policies on allowing accessory dwelling units in historic homes.” The implementation action for this item calls for the city to “assess best practices for accessory dwelling units in historic areas and make appropriate regulatory modifications to allow accessory dwelling units in historic districts. Consider density bonuses to encourage provision of accessory dwelling units.”

Regarding alternative energy and energy conservation, the Sustainable Code Revision project recommends identification and removal of obstacles in current zoning and historic preservation regulations that unnecessarily impede alternative or energy conservation devices such as solar panels.

- The sustainable code diagnosis recommends revising existing historic preservation design guidelines/policies to carefully accommodate solar panels in more locations on a building/site in historic districts.
- The historic preservation plan addresses in Policy 5.2b, which states: “Modify design guidelines to address solar collectors and other types of alternative energy equipment within local historic districts and on local Landmark Sites pending design review.” The implementation action for this item calls for the city to “Evaluate design guidelines to determine whether modifications are necessary to allow solar collectors and other types of alternative energy equipment, as recommended by the sustainable code effort to enable broader use of renewable energy technology on historic properties. While the current version of the design guidelines (at the time of this planning effort) appear sufficient to allow the placement of solar collectors in historic districts, the guidelines should be reevaluated on an ongoing basis to address changing technologies.”