



Historic Landmark Commission Briefing

PLANNING DIVISION
COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOODS

To: Salt Lake City Historic Landmark Commission
From: Michaela Oktay, Planning Manager
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Date: July 7, 2016 Meeting
Re: PLNPCM2016-00330–HLC Process & Recommendations Study Briefing

PURPOSE: This memo is intended to brief the Historic Landmark Commission on a petition initiated by Mayor Biskupski to study of the Historic Landmark Commission and make recommendations for potential changes to the Salt Lake City zoning ordinances as it pertains to:

1. The roles and responsibilities of the Historic Landmark Commission in the creation of LHDs and amending landmark sites,
2. Standards for Rehabilitation, New Construction and other projects reviewed by the HLC,
3. Study and assess how other communities within and outside of Utah structure their local regulations, standards of review and decision making processes,
4. Assembling a range of options to the City to consider in identifying best practices to provide better clarity, consistency, transparency and accountability to the process, and;
5. Proposing text amendment recommendations concerning roles and responsibilities and ordinances.

ACTION NEEDED: Commission Members are not asked to take action but to comment and participate in the briefing and to ask questions and to provide any comment or information to help inform the study as it progresses this year. Staff may also ask members to consider being part of a small work group as part of this study.

Future recommendations for code changes will be reviewed by the Historic Landmark Commission and Planning Commission and any proposed changes to the code would go through the general text amendment process prior to final consideration and decision by the City Council.

WHY HAS THIS PETITION BEEN INITIATED: The Mayor would like planning to take a comprehensive review of how zoning implementation is executed with regard to the H Historic Preservation Overlay. As both Preservation and Economic Development are main policy goals of the Mayor and the City Council, there have been criticisms about standards and process when recent large development projects have been approved. In addition, during the last Legislative Session the State Legislature enacted legislation with regard to the process of adopting Local Historic Districts within Salt Lake City. During those discussions, the City indicated to some legislators that we would review our process. The intent of the study is to review the role of the Commission, process, and standards and to make recommendations to both the Mayor and City Council to amend the zoning ordinance in response to the results of a comprehensive study. The overall intent is to make improvements that align with multiple city goals and policies and to improve the predictability of the process, improve customer service and promote economic development.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE? To date, Planning has continued to clarify with the Mayor the scope of the study and is working with the Civic Engagement Team in order to get input from the community.

Planning sent a survey to all applicants that have been through the historic approval process in the last two years.

The intent of the survey is to gather feedback specific to the process and review standards to ascertain gaps in customer service, process and or standards. These will aid in drafting suggested changes to the code or internal processes.

Survey Response Highlights:

- Approximately 14% of past applicants visited the survey
- 55 responses were received and 50% of respondents applied for 2-5 COAs
 - } 82 % applied for a Minor Alteration
 - } 27% applied for a Major Alteration
 - } 19% applied for New Construction
- 14% of respondents were under enforcement
- 87% of respondents were starting before construction
 - } 78% of respondents had applications assigned to Staff for review
 - } 66% of respondents had HLC review

Opinions about Resources

50% thought website very/somewhat helpful
34% thought website confusing

65% Email to staff very/somewhat helpful
12% Thought email to staff confusing

57% thought phoning Staff was very/somewhat helpful
17% thought phoning Staff was confusing

42% thought the Planning Counter was very helpful
34 % thought the Planning Counter was somewhat helpful
13% thought the Planning Counter was confusing

Summary of Concerns

Out of the 52 respondents, 50% spoke to items that caused them concern:

- There are no signs in City indicating neighborhoods are in a Historic District
- Easier to ask forgiveness later than to go through the process-streamline things
- HLC has too much authority. Community Councils get too much authority.
- Staff should have a list of replacement windows that you can choose from over the counter.
- Window approvals seem inconsistent. Address this issue with logical standards.
- Staff should draft guide sheets for approved fences, windows, window well guidance etc. for use and easy over the counter review.
- More education and streamlining would help the public not be scared of the process. Many homeowners want to make improvements but scared of the process.
- Design Guidelines were very detailed and provided excellent guidance BUT getting Planning Staff even over the phone helps make the connection and they help with compatible solutions so I can reach my goals. Most frustration seems to be when people do work without permission/permits.
- We need more community education/outreach including signs where districts are located.
- More education on tax credits available and easily map to show if a property is “contributing” or not.
- Tax credits can be massive but without education and maps, people don’t know about it.
- Need to review the solar panel code, 36” setbacks for fireman access isn’t correct anymore. Review and

change.

- Should be a governing body above the Historic Landmark Commission for difficult/large projects.
- Make simple project applications simpler. (Drafting a scaled plot plan for a fence is too much).
- New construction shouldn't be reviewed unless we have better standards and design guidelines.
- If you have a second hearing, the HLC changes their agenda and view of a project depending on attendance of certain members.
- Building code reviewers in Permits Office disconnected with Planning Staff and its policies/standards
- Standards and processes don't seem to be consistent.
- Emphasis should be on making the neighborhood nice not historic or forcing expensive improvements.
- Process took too long, even for enforcement.
- Applications are not specific enough about what to include for review, causes delays and confusion.
- Re-Roofing needs faster turnaround.
- Economic feasibility is not a consideration in the standards.
- Seems subjective. Make it more predictable.
- We need more trained people to be able to talk to at the City.
- We deliberately bought in an LHD for protection and charm. Others do work without permits & never caught while we follow the rules. When others cheat we the neighbors are stuck with it.
- Don't punish people because most trying to do renovation correctly. Compromise with those going through the process, as many are doing things out there without permits and no reprimand. (vinyl windows, non-conforming additions, porch enclosures)
- Building materials should be what is most safe and durable, not always what is historically correct. There are modern advances to consider when safety related.
- The City Staff tried to work within the guidelines but the HLC seems to identify new issues at each public hearing, it seems like they are changing their opinion.
- Application process itself is not smooth.
- After researching a project thoroughly, I had no issues with the standards and guidelines!

Staff will use this survey and responses to compile suggested changes to the program or the zoning ordinance.

Future Open City Hall forums will be opened and additional surveys will be available for the general public.

Additionally, several planners are currently studying multiple aspects as identified by the petition, for cities throughout the United States, within and outside of Utah. Those include Salt Lake City, Albany, Albuquerque, Alexandria, Austin, Boise, Charleston, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Dubuque, Lake Forrest, Logan, Ogden, Provo, San Francisco, Boston, Seattle, and others.

NEXT STEPS/TIMELINE

The goal is to check in with the Mayor, the Historic Landmark Commission and the Planning Commission monthly for the rest of the year to continue the discussion of the petition, the results of ongoing research and proposed changes to the process including changes to the zoning ordinance.