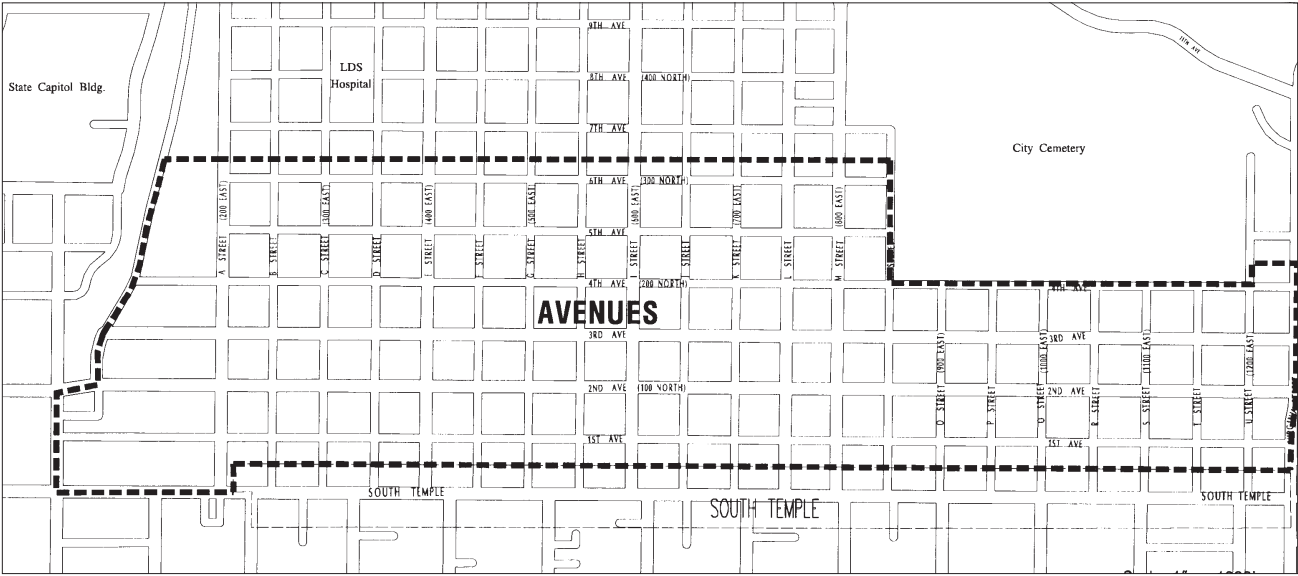


Chapter 13

The Avenues





The Avenues Historic District *Not to scale*

Cover page image: *Elmer Romney’s birthday party. In the background, Queen Anne details add interest to a cottage typical of the Avenues.*

Historic Architectural Character

The Avenues is Salt Lake City’s largest locally-designated historic district, and the one best-known for the preservation efforts undertaken by its property owners. The fine views of the valley, the proximity to downtown and the long-standing diversity of both its architecture and population make the Avenues a desirable place to live.

The appearance of this district is characterized by the predominantly residential use of the buildings, by the variety of architectural styles, and by the unity of the streetscape. Although platted in the 1850s, with development occurring in the 1870s, the neighborhood did not begin to grow until about 1880, when the difficulty of bringing water up the steep slope was alleviated by diverting water from City Creek Canyon along Sixth Avenue.

The subsequent growth of the Avenues corresponded both with the emergence of Salt Lake City as a regional center, and the variety of architectural styles popular in the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century. By 1889, most of the residents were middle- or upper-middle class professionals and trades people. Some hired architects to design their homes, but the majority relied on building firms who used pattern books and constructed small scale developments of three or four houses using repetitious designs. Although several pre-1880 homes exist, most of the buildings in the district date from the fifty year period between 1880 and 1930. They include many variants of the Victorian style, as well as bungalows.

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An early adobe house in the Avenues retains its vernacular simplicity.

PART III Historic Districts



Park strips, access steps and mature landscaping help to unify and enrich the streetscape, and here provide the transition between the street and the elevated position of the houses.



Cast and wrought iron railings with low concrete retaining walls are still a characteristic streetscape feature, defining public and private, while providing decoration and maturity.



An elevated porch defines the semi-private space facing the front yard and the street.

From its inception, the Avenues differed from the rest of the city. First surveyed in the 1850s as Plat D, the Avenues was platted in 56 blocks of 2.5 acres, with each block subdivided into four lots. This deviated from the rest of Salt Lake, which was laid out in ten-acre blocks, with eight lots per block. The smaller lots and narrower streets and sidewalks, coupled with the large scale of many of the houses, made the Avenues appear much denser than other neighborhoods that developed during the same period.

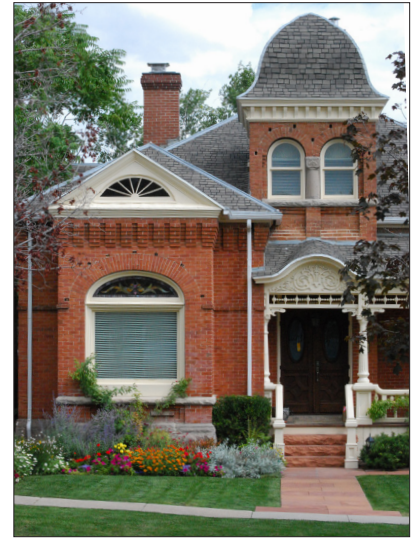
Originally the east-west streets were known as Fruit, Garden, Bluff and Wall (First through Fourth avenues, respectively), and north-south streets were named after various species of trees. By 1885 the east-west streets had become First through Fourth and the north-south streets had been given the alphabetical titles of A through V (V later became Virginia). When the word “street” was changed to “avenue,” the area became known as the Avenues.

Prior to 1880, development in the Avenues was confined to two areas. The earliest Avenues residents constructed homes in the 1850s in the portion encompassed by A and N streets and First and Fourth avenues (Fourth Avenue following the wall of the city). In 1860, slaughter yards were moved to the mouth of Dry Canyon in order to take advantage of the water sources of Dry and Red Butte canyons. Men who wanted to live close to work built houses for their families in the eastern portion of the Avenues and present-day Federal Heights — a neighborhood known as “Butcherville.”

The availability of water paralleled other civic improvements, most notably the municipal rail transportation. One of the earliest routes in the Avenues was in place by 1875 with mules providing the power. In 1889, an electric rail system was available and within several years trolley lines ran along Third, Sixth and Ninth Avenues. These streets are wider and flatter than others in the neighborhood as a result. Once the necessary infrastructure was constructed, Salt Lake's expanding economy and growing population assured the development of the Avenues.

"Victorian Eclectic," a loose but apt description, was the most popular style used in the first wave of building after about 1885. In the context of the Avenues, as in other neighborhoods throughout the city, the term indicates the "casual and general approach to house design" and not a slavish adherence to a particular style. It also indicates the flexibility this term provides.

While not as numerous, examples of more high-style architecture also can be seen throughout the district, and include such styles as Queen Anne, Shingle, Dutch, Colonial and Classical Revival, and Italianate. Residential design immediately after the turn of the century consisted primarily of two types, rather than styles, of structures: the bungalow and the box.



A variety of house types and styles characterize the Avenues and reflect the evolving development of the neighborhood and preferences in residential forms



The Dorius building is one of many early apartment structures in the Avenues.



A coincidence of setbacks and common eaves height help to create an affinity between individual house scales and styles.



Early commercial buildings can be found throughout the Avenues, some now converted to residential use.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the numbers of renters in the Avenues increased. Rental properties were typically managed by widows who needed the income after their husbands died, and by builders and development companies, who constructed both apartment buildings and subdivision homes. Often individuals would acquire two or three lots and build houses, then sell them to large real estate corporations. While small-scale rental properties were constructed throughout the entire district, large apartment complexes exist primarily in the southwest quadrant of the Avenues, closest to Temple Square and downtown. Apartment buildings of the historic period were built in a number of styles, such as Classical Revival, Prairie (Caithness), Tudor Revival and Art Moderne.

Churches, schools and small businesses were also located in the Avenues. Religious denominations built churches in the Avenues and the general vicinity. Members of the Catholic and Presbyterian faiths could worship at the Cathedral of the Madeleine or First Presbyterian Church, respectively, on South Temple, and Episcopalians had the option of St. Mark's Cathedral, or after 1928, St. Paul's. The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church was finished in 1911, but was converted into offices in the 1970s.

No historic public schools are extant. The Choir School of the Cathedral of the Madeleine, previously Rowland Hall-St. Marks private school, is located in the block between First and Second Avenues and A and B Streets. Historic buildings on this campus include four homes, a chapel and a classroom wing.

Neighborhood stores also sprang up throughout the Avenues. In general these were one or two story structures with flat roofs and parapet walls. [See also the Commercial Design Guidelines.]

In the mid-twentieth century, the popularity of the Avenues declined as other subdivisions were constructed. Federal Heights also offered proximity to downtown and the University of Utah but offered more consistently high-end housing. Subdivisions were developed throughout the city; mass -transit and the automobile made living close to the workplace less of a consideration. By the 1960s absentee landowners owned much of the property and the resulting deterioration was obvious. High-density residential zoning resulted in the demolition of many historic properties and the construction of apartment buildings that were inconsistent with the character of the surrounding buildings.

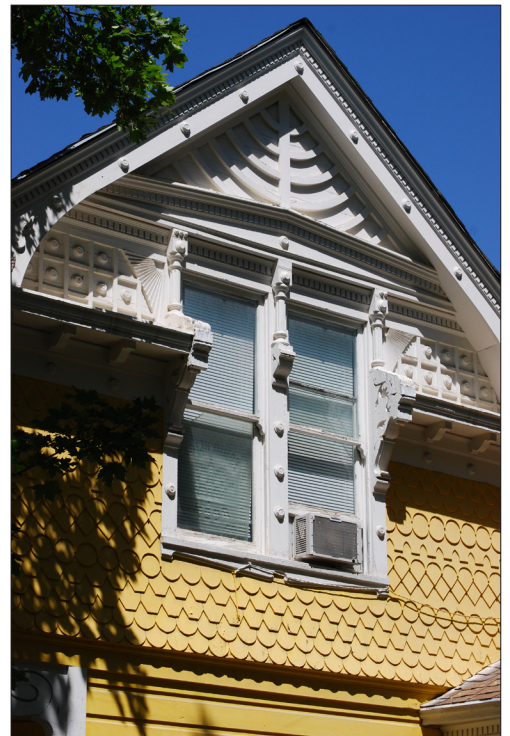
Gradually the Avenues were rediscovered, however, by those interested in historic homes and by those tired of long commuting distances. Low-interest loans provided by the City assisted renovation activity, and the neighborhood was declared a local historic district in 1978. The next year residents successfully petitioned the city to downzone most of the Avenues to a land use designation that is more compatible with its historic character.



Houses in the vicinity of Canyon Road bring a rich eclectic range of types and styles.



Ottinger Hall was constructed in 1900 for the Volunteer Fireman's Association.



The concentration of the carved woodwork, latticework and ornamental shingle patterns reflect the carpentry skills of the late 19th century.

PART III Historic Districts

Canyon Road & Memory Grove

The environs of Canyon Road and Memory Grove are divided between the Avenues and the Capitol Hill historic districts. Their dramatic siting at the mouth of City Creek Canyon makes this area unique and geographically isolated. City Creek, the stream that originally ran down the center of the canyon was one of the determining factors in the decision to settle in the Great Salt Lake Valley. William Clayton, one of the first pioneers to arrive in the valley, described the mouth of the City Creek in his journal:

“At the east part [of their camp] there is a considerable creek of clean, cold water descending from the mountains, and just above this place it branches into two forks, one running northwest, the other southwest, and the two nicely surround this place and so well arranged that should a city be built here the water can be turned into every street at pleasure.”

The source of water led to the construction of several mills along the canyon — the first as early as 1847 or 1848. The earliest homes were built in the area in the 1880s, many by prominent leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Architecturally the homes are no different than those seen in the Avenues or Capitol Hill, and vernacular, Eastlake, Italianate and other late Victorian styles, Dutch Colonial Revival and bungalows are among the styles represented. The Veteran Volunteer Firemen’s Association building, also known as Ottinger Hall, is an unusual institutional use in the city but is visually compatible with the density of the buildings along Canyon Road.

Development Trends

Known for its ongoing preservation efforts, the Avenues District is experiencing continued investment in the area, including renovation, additions to existing structures and infill construction.



Memory Grove’s contemplative ambience is a significant feature of this park.



The Avenues District is especially characterized by its mature vegetation, which adds a sense of visual richness to the area.

Characteristics of the Avenues Historic District

- Concrete is the common paving material for sidewalks in the Avenues.
- A few remnants of sandstone sidewalks and stone paving blocks remain, and these should be retained.
- Streets are in a regular grid pattern; blocks are 2.5 acres each.
- Lots and setbacks are uniform.
- Overall development is dense.
- Current commercial uses are scattered throughout the district, and tend to enhance the livability of the district.
- Garages are usually located behind houses; if they exist they are detached. Most are accessed from single-car wide driveways from the street, although a few blocks have alleys with access to rear-yard parking.
- Architectural styles are varied, although setbacks are usually constant.
- Landscaping is mature.



A modest yet handsome vernacular building in the Avenues, Classical detailing frames the door.

Characteristics of Canyon Road & Memory Grove

- The siting of the homes in Canyon Road makes the neighborhood unique. On the east side of the canyon they follow the slope and a dense pattern is created. Also, Canyon Road splits into two streets, forming a central park space.
- The neighborhood has narrow streets; Spencer Court is particularly narrow.
- Many homes do not have garages. With the exception of Spencer Court, garages are not a part of the streetscape.
- Memorials of several varieties - buildings, a chapel, water features, flagpoles - are placed against the east side of the park. This forms a “presentation” that can be viewed from the road on the west side.
- Memory Grove has a formal landscape pattern; the hillsides do not.

Goals for the District

The design goal for the Avenues District is to preserve its historic scale and unique character, while accommodating compatible new construction. The distinctive design characteristics of individual building types and styles should be preserved here. New construction should be compatible with its historic context while also reflecting current design.

Streetscape Features

Park Strips & Street Trees

Park strips, the bands of grass that lie between the curb and the sidewalk, are found throughout the Avenues District. Often mature trees grow in the park strip. This coupling of planting strips and mature trees lining the streets provides a shaded environment for pedestrian activity. These elements also establish a rhythm along each block and contribute to the sense of its visual continuity. The Avenues District is especially characterized by its mature vegetation, which adds a sense of visual richness to the area.

Walkways

Typically, a “progression” of walking experiences is encountered along the street. This begins with a walkway that leads from the sidewalk to each building entry; this in turn is occasionally punctuated by a series of steps. Dictated by the topography, the walk often slopes, sometimes quite steeply. Because the Avenues was platted on a grid, and many architectural and landscape features appear consistent, this system of walks contributes strongly to the character of the district.

This progression of entry elements is important, and of these, the walkway itself is an extremely significant element. This progression should be preserved.

13.1 The historic materials and position of a sidewalk, usually detached from the curb, and separated by a planting strip should be maintained.

- Historic paving material, such as sandstone sidewalks, where it exists, should be preserved.

13.2 A walk to the primary building entry from the public sidewalk should be provided.

- The walkway should be distinct from any driveway.
- Concrete is the dominant material; however, other materials, including modular pavers, may be appropriate.

13.3 The use of curb cuts in the Avenues District should be minimized.

- In an effort to preserve the character of the sidewalk and the adjoining streetscape, avoid installing new curb cuts, whenever feasible.
- Historically, the use of curb cuts was quite limited.
- New curb cuts will interrupt the continuity of the sidewalks, and will potentially destroy historic paving material where it exists.

Landscape Design Features

Fences & Retaining Walls

In many sections of the Avenues, yards are bounded by retaining walls, commonly of natural stone or plain cement facing. Because many yards have natural slopes, retaining walls have always been features of the district. Walls or terraced yards are often used to create level building sites. Historically, these walls were often topped with cast iron fences. The repetition of masonry retaining walls and fences throughout the district lends a sense of continuity and character to the streetscape that should be continued. See Chapter 1 of PART II of these design guidelines on Site Features for specific guidelines on Fences and Retaining Walls.

Site Design Features

Due to its small, gridiron plan platted on steep slopes, the development patterns of the neighborhood have distinguished the Avenues as an area with smaller blocks and concentrated residential growth.

Front Setback of Primary Structures

Historically, uniform setbacks in the Avenues established a sense of visual continuity, sometimes expressed as an “architectural wall.” Although a variety in setbacks is seen throughout the district, in fact the setback depths lie within a narrow range, and within an individual block, most buildings appear to align. This generally uniform setback alignment should be maintained.

13.4 The front setback of a new structure should be kept in line with the range of setbacks seen historically on the block.

- In general, larger, taller masses should be set back farther from the front than smaller structures.

Side Yard Setback of Primary Structure

In the Avenues, side yards are generally very narrow and in some cases almost nonexistent. This pattern of moderate density was first established during the early development of the neighborhood, when the blocks were subdivided into long, narrow lots. This pattern creates an urban feel. As a result, the narrow end of the house often faced the street, and the side yards were tight.



Building setbacks in the Avenues neighborhood create a shared sense of order and rhythm in a diversity of the architectural forms, scales and styles.

13.5 Side yard setbacks of a new structure or an addition should be similar to those seen traditionally in the block.

- Follow the traditional building pattern in order to continue the historic character of the street.
- Consider the visual impact that new construction and additions will have on neighbors along side yards.
- Consider varying the setback and height of the structure along the side yard to minimize impacts of abrupt changes in scale.

Accessory Structures

Garages in the Avenues District are simple wood or metal structures generally detached and located behind the house. Most are accessed from single-car width driveways from the street, while a few are accessed through a rear alley. New garages in the district should follow these development patterns in terms of location, size, and character.

13.6 Secondary structures should be located and designed in a manner similar to those seen historically in the district.

- Most secondary structures were built along the rear of the lot, accessed by the alley, if one existed. This should be continued.
- Garages, as well as driveways, should not dominate the streetscape; therefore, they should be detached from the main house and located to the rear of the house, if possible.
- Historically, garages and carriage houses in the Avenues were simple wood structures covered with a gabled or hipped roof.
- A new secondary structure should follow historic precedent, in terms of materials and form.

Architectural Features

Building Form

The Avenues District includes a range of architectural styles, resulting in a variety of building forms. The large number of Victorian-era structures in the district has established a pattern of buildings with irregular forms and a profusion of wall planes and details.

Depending on the style, some buildings are simple rectangles, with details applied; others are more complex, asymmetrical forms composed of several subordinate masses. Other structures, such as the bungalow and box types, consist of simpler shapes. Free-form, domed or angular forms are not part of the building tradition in the district.

13.7 A new buildings should be designed to be similar in scale to what was seen traditionally on the block.

- Historically, most houses in the Avenues appeared to have a height of one, one-and-one-half or two stories.
- Front facades should appear similar in height to those seen historically in the block.
- Taller portions should be set back farther on the lot.
- Story heights should appear similar to those seen historically. Architectural details should convey a sense of the traditional scale of the block.

Building Materials

Historically, masonry and wood building materials characterized the district. Painted clapboard is typical of frame buildings, although stained shingles appear in wall planes of gables and dormers. Brick is most frequently unpainted.

13.8 The primary materials of a building should be similar to those used historically.

- Appropriate building materials include brick (unpainted), stucco, stone and wood.
- Building in brick, in sizes and colors similar to those used historically, is preferred. Jumbo, or oversized, brick is inappropriate.
- Using stone, similar to that used historically, also is preferred.
- Using field stone, or veneers applied with the bedding plane in a vertical position, is inappropriate.
- Stucco should appear similar to that used historically.
- Using panelized products in a manner that reveals large panel modules is inappropriate.
- In general, panelized and synthetic materials are inappropriate for primary structures. They may be considered on secondary buildings.



A rich palette of building materials, patterns and textures characterize individual buildings and the neighborhood as a whole.

These design guidelines apply in addition to those in relevant preceding chapters, including Rehabilitation Guidelines, Guidelines for New Construction and General Issues Design Guidelines.

Additional Information

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Appropriateness of Use

In some cases, a residential structure in the Avenues may be converted to commercial use. When this occurs, the residential character should be retained, to ensure that the traditional character of the neighborhood is maintained. Site planning and landscaping should also be designed to respect the residential character of the neighborhood.

13.9 When adapting a residence to a new use, the original design character of the building should be preserved.

- When converted to a new use, a house should retain its residential image.

13.10 If the change from residential to another use requires more parking, locate spaces to the rear of the property and provide landscaping as a buffer.



Meditation Chapel, Memory Grove.



The forms, massing and decorative composition of roofscapes in the Avenues help to establish its essential character.