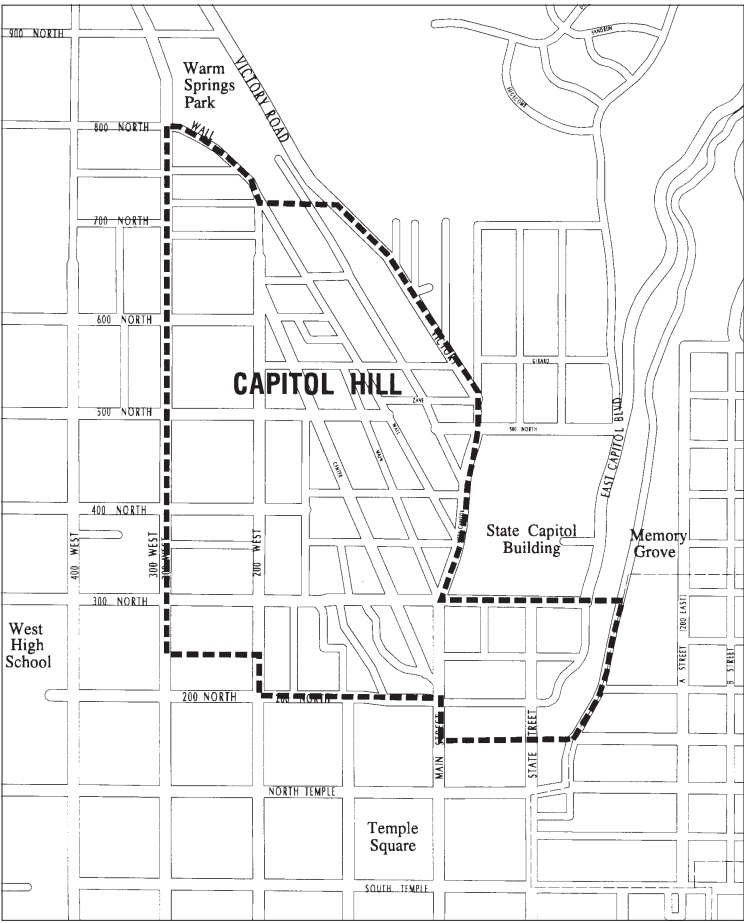


Chapter 14

Capitol Hill





Cover page image: Sarah Hancock Beesley in front of the home of Ebenezer Beesley on 200 North Street. Italianate posts support a railing with turned balusters for a second floor porch in the background. Also note the wooden picket fence.

Historic Architectural Character

The area encompassed by the Capitol Hill Historic District has always been predominantly residential, but while the land use pattern historically has been consistent, it is the high degree of physical diversity that makes the neighborhood distinct. This is the result of a varying topography, which resulted in construction features such as high foundations and retaining walls, in oddly-shaped blocks, a chaotic street pattern and a haphazard orientation of dwellings to the street; and to the architecture itself, which represents a continuum of styles and building types that span from early settlement to the present. Like the Avenues, over the last twenty years Capitol Hill residents have saved their neighborhood from derelict housing, neighborhood apathy and the perception that the area was an undesirable place to live. Both areas have benefited from widespread down zoning that occurred during the 1980s, and from the commitment of residents to undertake the expense and effort of appropriate renovation.

Despite the poor quality of the soil and the difficulty of obtaining water, Capitol Hill has always been a popular place to live. It was close to Main Street businesses and nearby manufacturing establishments, and yet was removed from the noise and commotion of downtown. The earliest residents were immigrants of limited means from Great Britain and Scandinavia, and even after 1900 the neighborhood continued to attract recent arrivals in similar social and economic circumstances. Because the water supply was erratic and sparse until the 1900s, early settlement occurred only on the lower western and southern reaches of the slope. Prior to about 1890, therefore, the neighborhood had a rural appearance. In fact, one of its most notable characteristics was the proliferation of orchards.

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Steep slopes and elevated sites are central to the character of much of Capitol Hill.

PART III Historic Districts

Most Capitol Hill residents during this time were craftsmen, and their homes reflected their trade. John Platts, for example, was a stonemason who arrived in the valley from England in 1854. The original block of his home at 364 Quince Street is a one-story fieldstone structure, with a hall-parlor plan. Although simple in massing and materials, Platts' use of sandstone quoins, red rock sills and lintels indicates his pride in his home and that he viewed it as permanent shelter. Similarly, another immigrant, William Asper, arrived in Salt Lake in 1861 and built a house down the street from Platts' at 325 Quince Street. Asper was a carpenter who eventually founded a lumber and planing mill. His house, constructed of brick in 1870, has a profusion of wooden moldings and trim.

By the 1880s water had become available through a series of cast iron mains that extended from City Creek to distributing reservoirs at high points along the foothills. The reservoir that serviced most of Capitol Hill was situated northeast of where the Capitol is now. The accessibility of water made more intense development possible and this, combined with changing architectural styles, altered the appearance of Capitol Hill. The subdivision of lots shifted from the earlier haphazard arrangement to that of a standard rectangular lot, so that the orientation of the houses changed from one of facing the hillside, regardless of the relationship to the streets, to that of being parallel to the street and later, of being oriented to the points of the compass even if the street ran at a diagonal.

Capitol Hill was becoming an increasingly fashionable place to live. Although it remained an enclave of members of the Church of Jesus Christ longer than other Salt Lake neighborhoods, it began to change as the city's population accommodated the influx of non-Mormons during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The families of men in mining, Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad workers, and the trades associated with the new industries of the telegraph and the telephone found Capitol Hill as appealing as their neighbors. In an effort to create a stylish image, street names on the west slope were changed from "Bird", "Cross" and "Locust" to those of names of fruits, and this "sub-neighborhood" became known as "the Marmalade District."

The designs of residential architecture shifted from the simplicity and balance of classical styles, exhibited on many of the most modest pioneer dwellings in the district, to the exuberance of the late Victorian era. These newer residents used many Victorian styles, but Queen Anne variants and the ubiquitous Victorian Eclectic prevail in the older sections of Capitol Hill. Some owners remodeled homes that were built during the earlier years of settlement, updating them with elaborate porches or bay windows.



Parkways are a characteristic, sylvan amenity of 200 West, contributing significantly to the mature landscape character of the western section of Capitol Hill.

Another neighborhood within the district, known as “Arsenal Hill,” developed later than the Marmalade district and the lower slopes. It consists of the upper portion of the south slope, and it did not take on its current layout and appearance until the 1890s. This area takes its name from the fact that the city arsenal was located here. When forty tons of blasting powder accidentally exploded there in 1876, the city ceased to operate the facility, and eventually the large amount of land formerly used for the arsenal became available for building. By this time Salt Lake was undergoing a period of rapid urbanization and prosperity. This, combined with the fine views and close location of downtown, made Arsenal Hill appealing to residents who could afford high style, architect-designed houses.

The completion of the State Capitol building added to the neighborhood’s desirability. Its extensive grounds and the imposing structure at the top of the hill spurred new residential construction to the south and the west. Today, Arsenal Hill contains the only large historic apartment buildings in the district. Apartments such as the Kensington at 180 North Main (1906) and the Kestler at 264 and 268 North State (1913 - 1915) are similar to others built during the “apartment boom” that occurred between 1900 and 1930.



Architectural character varies considerably, whether set back from or immediately enclosing the street.



A row of Dutch Colonial structures angled with the street provides a distinct character to the streetscape of this block in the Capitol Hill district.



Duplex houses contribute to the character of Capitol Hill in a variety of forms and scales

After World War II, and the ensuing exodus to the suburbs, the housing stock and overall atmosphere of Capitol Hill began to decline. The neighborhood was too eclectic and too old to compete with the postwar attitude that valued new goods and conformity. By the 1960s the area had a reputation of housing unstable residents with questionable backgrounds. Architecturally, Capitol Hill fell to its nadir with the construction of Zion's Summit, which was built in the early 1970s. These high-rise condominiums dwarfed the surrounding structures and have marred the historic ambiance of the Marmalade district. Other modern buildings, particularly apartments, have detracted from the architectural integrity of the area as well. Happily, about this time preservationists and "urban pioneers" began to invest in Capitol Hill by renovating historic homes. The small scale of the neighborhood, its close location to Downtown, and its unique architectural resources — the very qualities that drove residents away earlier — now proved to be its biggest appeal. Today it is a vibrant neighborhood, with many examples of successful sensitive renovation projects.

Development Trends

Known for its ongoing preservation efforts, the Capitol Hill District is experiencing continued investment in the area, including renovation, additions to existing structures and infill construction. A wide range of renovation and new construction projects is therefore anticipated.

Characteristics of the Capitol Hill Historic District

The following is a summary of key features of the district.

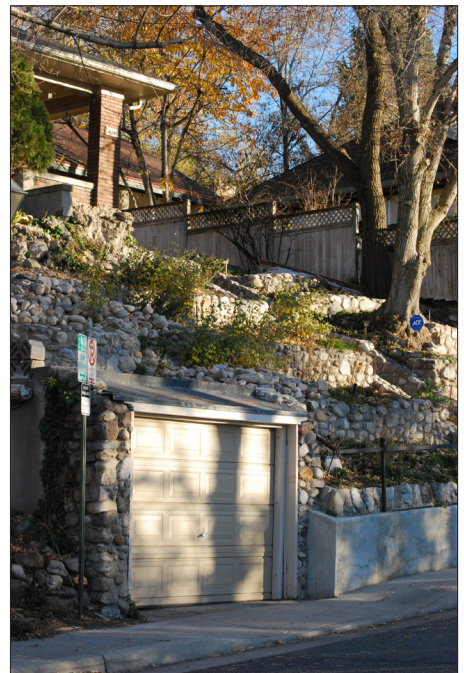
- Capitol Hill has the most uneven street pattern in the city. The streets are narrow and steep. Lot sizes are odd shapes.
- The orientation of the buildings to the streets is somewhat varied, as some structures face directly and other diagonally.
- Some smaller streets have been closed by the city; as a result there are homes in the middle of a block.
- Builders compensated for the steep topography by constructing retaining walls and high foundations, rather than having the architecture of a structure itself address the lot.
- Most of the buildings are residential, with 300 West containing most of the commercial structures in the district.
- Capitol Hill contains some of the oldest extant homes in the state. These can be found on the lower slopes (below Wall Street) and in the Marmalade neighborhood.
- Street landscaping consists of informal plantings; the district's irregular street pattern and demographics has never lent itself to a formal layout, such as the trees along South Temple. Early on, fruit trees predominated; today "volunteer trees" make up the bulk of the trees.

Goals for the District

The design goals for Capitol Hill are to preserve the unique historic character of the district and to ensure that improvements respect the contrasting character of the two subdistricts, which differ in several respects:

- topography
- street pattern
- orientation of houses to the street, and
- size/ ornamentation of housing stock.

Preservation of the key details of high style buildings should be a priority as well. New building should respect the historic scale of construction, which consists of structures no higher than four or five stories, and in many contexts much lower in height.



Retaining walls provide visual interest to the street, and serve as distinct character-defining features. This characteristic should be preserved.

Streetscape Features

Walkways

Typically, a “progression” of walking experiences is encountered along the streets of Capitol Hill. This begins with a walkway that leads from the sidewalk and is occasionally punctuated by a series of steps. Dictated by the topography, the walkway is often sloping, sometimes quite steeply. In most cases, this walk leads to a front entry, which is clearly defined. In sections of the district without a grid street pattern, no system of walks is prevalent. However, this system is found in other parts of Capitol Hill, especially in the Arsenal Hill subdistrict. Where these walks were seen historically, they should be maintained.

Street Pattern

The two subdistricts developed distinctly different street patterns, which provide the district with a high degree of visual diversity. This diversity characterizes the neighborhood, provides clues about the developmental history of the district, and therefore, should be preserved.

14.1 The traditional rectilinear grid pattern of streets found on the western edge of the district should be maintained.

14.2 The angular, irregular street pattern found in the Marmalade portion of the district should be maintained

14.3 A new driveway, as well as any street improvements, should be arranged so that they continue the respective street pattern.



The “Woodruff-Riter-Stewart Home” at 93 East Second North Street is an example of the variety of architectural styles that can be found in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Landscape Design Features

Fences & Retaining Walls

The steep topography of the entire Capitol Hill district dictates the need for an extensive system of large retaining walls. These retaining walls, which have been used frequently to adjust for changes in slope, vary in texture, length and layout and are often paired with fences and plant materials. As a result, they provide visual interest to the street, and serve as distinct character-defining features. These characteristics should be preserved.

14.7 Original or early retaining walls and fences should be retained wherever possible.

- Historic materials, detailing and finishes should be retained.
- Consider terracing where the gradient is steep to minimize the height of a retaining wall.
- Refer to guidelines and advice on fences in the Site Features chapter.

Site Design Features

Front Setback of Primary Structure

The southern edge of the district (Arsenal Hill):

This area of the Capitol Hill district was settled on a grid pattern similar to that of the Avenues district, with more uniform setbacks and lot patterns.

Marmalade District:

In this area of the district, the orientation of a building to the street varies, depending on the angle of the street itself. This irregular organization developed because many buildings were constructed to the points of the compass rather than at right angles to the street. The result is a wider variety in setback and orientation of buildings to the street.

Because distinct differences in street pattern exist, the setback and orientation of the primary structure to the street should continue to be based on the established character of the subdistrict.

Orientation

Despite the variety of setbacks and the mixture of lot shapes in the district, buildings in Capitol Hill traditionally had their primary entrance oriented to the street. This relationship should be continued.

14.4 The traditional setback and alignment of buildings to the street, as established by traditional street patterns, should be maintained.

- In Arsenal Hill, street patterns and lot lines call for more uniform setback and siting of primary structures.
- Historically, the Marmalade district developed irregular setbacks and lot shapes.
- Many homes were built toward compass points, with the street running at diagonals.

- This positioning, mixed with variations in slope, caused rows of staggered houses, each with limited views of the streetscape.
- Staggered setbacks are appropriate in this part of the district because of the historical development.
- Traditionally, smaller structures were located closer to the street, while larger ones tended to be set back further.

14.5 The side yard setbacks of a new structure, or an addition, should be similar to those seen traditionally in the subdistrict or block.

- The traditional building pattern should be followed in order to continue the historic character of the street.
- Consider the visual impact of new construction and additions on neighboring houses and yards.
- Consider varying the setback and height of the structure along the side yard to reduce scale and impact.

14.6 The front of a primary structure should be oriented to the street.

- The entry should be defined with a porch or portico.

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

Architectural Features

Building Form

The Capitol Hill district contains a wide range of architectural styles, resulting in a variety of building forms. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Marmalade area is the profusion of dwellings of simple design and detailing and of modest scale. Although Arsenal Hill has examples of vernacular designs, it also has numerous Queen Anne and two-story box-style buildings.

14.8 A new building should be designed to be similar in scale to those seen historically in the neighborhood.

- In the Marmalade area, homes tended to be more modest, with heights ranging from one to two stories.
- Throughout Arsenal Hill larger, grander homes reached two-and-a-half to three stories.
- Front facades should appear similar in height to those seen historically on the block.

14.9 A new building should be designed with a primary form that is similar to those seen historically.

- In most cases, the primary form for the house was a single rectangular volume.
- In some styles, smaller, subordinate masses were then attached to this primary form.
- New buildings should continue this tradition.



Staggered setbacks in the Marmalade district are due to a diagonal street pattern.



This classically-inspired duplex is an example of high style multifamily housing in Salt Lake City. A centrally located porch defines the entrance. This structure was extensively renovated in 1995.

Building Materials

Historically, masonry and wood building materials characterized the district. Brick and rusticated stone were also evident, as was painted clapboard.

14.10 Building materials that are similar to those used historically should be used.

- Appropriate primary building materials include stone, brick, stucco and painted wood.