

Ch. 14 CAPITOL HILL

A HISTORY OF APARTMENT AND MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

The following background on the historical development of apartment and other multifamily buildings in Capitol Hill draws directly from the reconnaissance level survey of the district in 2006.

(Broschinsky)

Victorian Urbanization Period, 1890-1911

By the time of the 1900 census, approximately a third of the households were occupied by renters. Multiple family housing began to appear in the district in the early 1890s. According to one report, in April of 1888, there was a “scarcity of rentable houses and a great demand for them,” particularly four-room cottages for small families. Row houses, small apartment buildings (mostly four-unit blocks) and double houses (i.e., duplexes) were built throughout the district during this period. Examples include, 106 W Clinton Avenue (built 1903), 424 N Quince Street (built circa 1907), 230-232 W 300 North (built circa 1900) and 415-417 Wall Street (built 1909).

The 2006 survey identified 349 resources from this period. This accounts for 46 percent of contributing resources. While the majority of these resources are single-family dwellings, this period also represents a sharp increase in multifamily housing stock, commercial and institutional buildings.

Residential Infill, Apartment Blocks and Apartment-Conversion Era, 1912-1929

The 1920 census enumeration indicates that the proportion of rental units in the Capitol Hill neighborhoods had increased, nearly outnumbering owner occupied households. However, the neighborhood was relatively stable.

An important trend which began in the 1920s was the conversion of single-family dwellings to multi-family housing. Census records, city directories, and building permits illustrate that this mainly occurred in the form of basement apartments in older houses. The need for housing stock close to the city during this period is indicated by the relatively high number of multi-housing units constructed during this period. Several double house bungalows were also constructed during this period. The best examples are located at 265-267 West 400 North, 324-326 West 600 North, 263-265 West Bishop Place and 708-710 North 300 West, all built of brick in the 1920s.

Several apartment complexes were also built during this period. The Lorna Apartments, a six-unit walkup located at 776 North 300 West and built in 1913, is one of the best preserved. The Hollandia Apartments, an eight-unit complex located at 376 North 300 West, was built in 1925. The twin Kesler Apartment blocks at 264 and 258 N State Street, built during the construction of the capitol, commanded a view of both the capitol grounds to the north and the cityscape to the south. The Kensington Apartments, a multi-story apartment block with an interior court, was built in 1916 at the corner of 200 North and Main, a short walk from the downtown commercial district. The first zoning ordinances were implemented in Salt Lake City in 1927, and at the time, the Capitol Hill area was tending toward higher densities and more rental units.

According to the 1920 census, the railroad was still the most important employer in the area. For example, all six household heads living in the Lorna Apartments worked for the railroads. However, there was a sense of decline because the railroads attracted fewer immigrants as the economy slowed. A number of automobile related jobs were found in the 1920 census. There were four repairmen, two salesman, and a dozen truck drivers, mostly for the laundry and candy company.

The historical development of the Capitol Hill Neighborhoods provided a mix of housing stock. Long-time residents, professionals and business owners lived in the larger homes, while numerous office and service workers, lived in the older homes, cottages, basement apartments and apartment blocks.

There are 155 resources from this period. The resources can be divided into four main categories: 83 bungalows, 21 traditional and 8 transitional period-revival cottages, 30 duplexes and apartment blocks, and 21 miscellaneous types.

Nineteen of the multifamily residences from this period are double houses, scattered throughout the district with highly individualized architecture. During this period, the Double House Type with a pitched roof was slightly more popular than the flat-roof Type C. There are no Type B examples from this period. Most stylistically represent the Victorian or Bungalow era, but there are also two examples of the Period Revival double house. Four-unit blocks, walk-ups, and other apartment types are also represented. (See PART I Section 4)

Adapting American Domestic Architecture Period, 1930-1961

The Capitol Hill Neighborhoods did not experience a precipitous economic decline during the depression years. The ever-present railroad and related manufacturing to the west, employment opportunities in the downtown area, and property ownership rates (both owner-occupied and local landlords) account for much of the stability. The types of employment noted on the 1930 census are very similar to the previous decade with a slight rise in the service industry sector.

The ratio of rental units versus owner-occupied dwellings was also very similar. However, there is a movement toward converting whole residences to rental housing, as opposed to the basement apartments of the previous period.

In general, the houses of the early part of the period are smaller than in previous period. Houses built in the 1930s and 1940s are generally found as infill. During the 1930s, the period-revival style continued to be popular for individual residences, duplexes and small apartment blocks. There is a lot of variation in the individual styles.

Salt Lake's suburban boom of the 1950s had little effect on the Capitol Hill neighborhoods. Most of the vacant lots had been built upon. On the slopes of the Marmalade district, ranch-style houses and mid-size apartment blocks were squeezed on a few vacant lots, and on lots where older homes were torn down.

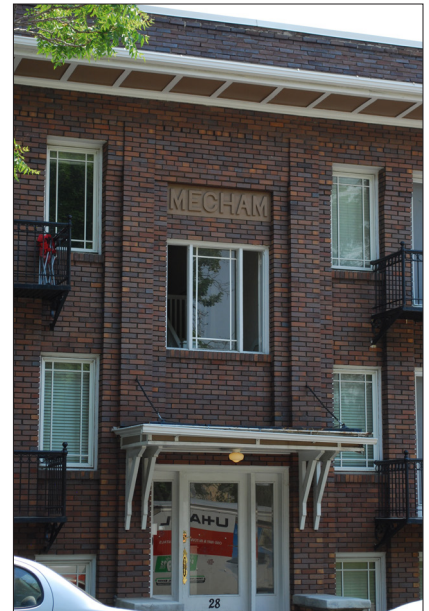
Historic Districts - Apartment and Multi-family Development

The flatter land and current zoning practices also encouraged multifamily development. For example, on the southwest corner of 300 North and 200 West, a two-story adobe house built by the first pioneer homesteader in 1848 was torn down in 1951 and four duplexes built in its place. These stacked duplexes have separate exterior entrances for each unit, a departure from the early twentieth-century type that had an interior stair to the upper unit. Several four to eight-unit apartment blocks were built scattered through the Capitol Hill area. Some have Minimal Traditional details, such as 227 N Center Street (1951). A later example at 510 N Main Street (1957) is in the Post-war Modern style.

Approximately twenty percent of resources (154) are from this period. The contributing resources vary greatly from period cottages to modernistic residences and apartment blocks.

There is a noticeable increase in the number of multi-family units built during this period, particularly in the flatter West Capitol Hill Neighborhood. Several groups of stacked duplexes with exterior entrances (circa early 1950s) were built in the 200 and 300 West area. Some were built as infill, but with an increase in demolition during this period, many were built on lots previously occupied by older homes.

In the 1950s, the average number of units in an apartment block rose from four to eight. During this period, the broader ranch-style walk-up apartment blocks appeared on several corner lots within the district. On a few of the narrower lots, boxcar-type apartments were built with the narrow end to the street and exterior entrances. These apartment blocks range in style from Minimal Traditional to Modernist. In 1961, the first high-rise, the Panorama Apartments, was built on Arsenal Hill.



Mecham Apartments, 300 North



Lorna Apartments, 300 West



N Wall Street

Decline & High-Density Development Period, 1962-1984

In the two decades between 1962 and 1984, fewer than ten single-family residences were constructed in the Capitol Hill neighborhoods. Most of the construction was concentrated in larger apartment complexes. Eleven condominium complexes were built in the area.

Several large apartment complexes were built in the inner blocks between 200 and 300 West. The largest of these were the Americana with 100 units built in 1970, and the Pioneer Apartments with 250 units built in 1982.



600 North



N Center Street

While the Marmalade Neighborhood was removed from the commercial and light industrial encroachment occurring on the west side of the district, high-density zoning at the south end of the district resulted in the construction of high-rise apartments and condominiums that altered the character of the historic district. The first was the seven-story Panorama Apartments built in 1961 at the southwest corner of the Arsenal Hill Neighborhood. The largest complex was the two thirteen-story towers of Zion's Summit, built in 1973. The Zion's Summit complex dwarfed the surrounding residential buildings and blocked most of the view shed from the Capitol Hill neighborhoods to the downtown business district and beyond. Neighborhood protests against these structures did not prove effective.

Over-scale apartment projects, rising gas prices, and increased interest in historic preservation in the 1970s, prompted city officials and others to take a look at the unique architectural resources of the Capitol Hill Neighborhoods.

This period of high-density development is represented by 71 resources. The majority of these resources (51) are multifamily buildings, including many large complexes of 50 to 100 units. These larger complexes did much to alter the historic character of the district. On Arsenal Hill, several high-rise structures visually isolated the historic Marmalade district from the rest of the city. In West Capitol Hill, several inner-block historic residential courts were destroyed for lower, broader complexes.

These large complexes were more automobile oriented and have made the neighborhood less friendly for pedestrians. Smaller apartments were shoe-horned into the district. A group of stacked duplexes were built at the northeast corner of the district.

Design Review & Renewal Period, 1985-2006

Public policies and market forces have contributed to the general renewal in the Capitol Hill Historic District. Much of the neighborhoods were down-zoned in the mid-1980s and again in 1995 during a city-wide review of zoning practices. In addition, long commute times on crowded freeways have helped entice higher-income families back to the city center.

There have been a few apartment/condominium projects in the area, but for the most part the over-scale and high-rise intrusions have been avoided. One early example is the Capitol Heights Condominiums at the corner of Zane and Wall Streets, built in 1983. A more recent example is the Almond Street Townhouses at 269-289 N Almond Street.

Types

There are several four-unit blocks, as described by Carter and Goss, in the district. During the 1950s, a new duplex type was introduced: a stacked duplex with exterior entrances. There are numerous examples in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The building permit cards indicate that several homes that appear as single-family dwelling were actually built with basement apartments. The Capitol Hill area includes several examples of two to three-story apartment blocks that feature interior entrances similar to early twentieth-century walk-ups, but much broader, probably a nod to the popularity of the ranch house during this period.

Ninety-six percent of contributing resources (or 723) are residential. Seventy-seven percent of those (580) were single-family dwellings. Nineteen percent (140) were multiple family dwellings, primarily duplexes.

Broschinsky, Korral *Capitol Hill Historic District* RL Survey 2006

See also: [A Preservation Handbook for Historic Residential Buildings & Districts in Salt Lake City, Ch.14 Capitol Hill](#)



N Main Street



N Main Street



Kensington Apartments



N Quince Street