

July 30, 2026

To: Salt Lake City Historic Landmark Commission

FROM: Judi Short, President, Friends of Gilgal Sculpture Garden

RE: Designation of Gilgal Gardens on the Local Register as a Landmark Site

I am so pleased to be able to recommend Gilgal Sculpture Garden to you as a Landmark Site in Salt Lake City. This journey started in the year 2000, with the first signing of the agreement between Salt Lake City and Friends of Gilgal Sculpture Garden (FOGG).

I will give you a short version of the history of this garden. Thomas Battersby Child owned this parcel; it was the backyard of his home on the 500 block of 800 East in Salt Lake City. Child was very active in the community; he often invited visitors to the garden on Sunday afternoons. He was bishop of the 10th Ward for 19 years. Child was a mason, and he began building this garden when he retired in 1945. After he passed in 1963, the garden was sold to private owners who lived on 500 South, a few lots from what the entrance to the garden at 749 East 500 South is now. In the 1990's, developers wanted to buy the garden and put townhouses between the monuments. The neighborhood was enraged and started raising money to purchase the property. In 1997, Friends of Gilgal Garden was formed to prevent **development** on the site and ensure its preservation for public enjoyment. Salt Lake County, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Foundation, the George S and Delores Dore Eccles Foundation, and many private donors made the purchase possible. Between them, they raised upwards of \$600,000 and gave most of that money to Salt Lake City to purchase the land, and the property became a Salt Lake City Park. The rest of the money was given to FOGG. This first agreement between the city and FOGG called for a conservation easement, and was signed in June of 2000. It said the owner was Salt Lake City and the Curator was FOGG. As Curator, FOGG is responsible for maintaining the folk art, long-term site development, restoration, and preservation of the sculptures and stones. It was also said that the city would pursue a conservation easement with Utah Heritage Foundation.

It has taken us 26 years to get to the conservation easement, which we have discussed many times. Finally, it was determined that an easement needed to be for a building, not a piece of property. That decision by the city has led us to pursue having this fabulous garden have a Landmarks Designation by the city.

I like to simplify this and say that the city cuts the grass and pays the water bill, and FOGG maintains the art and keeps the garden in beautiful condition. We split the irrigation. I wrote a CIP grant to purchase a new irrigation system, since we had old, rusty pipes, white plastic tubing, and rubber hoses that leaked. Something was always broken. And the squirrels make sure they eat their share of the tubing.

Over the years, there has been major restoration of most of the monuments. We have documented that in our brochure, available at the garden in English and Spanish. The garden is open every day except Christmas, New Year's Day, and Thanksgiving. We have tours, and a steady stream of visitors on most days. We have weddings and other events, just like the other city parks. Many people always bring their out-of-town guests to see the garden. Gilgal Garden is the only "Identified Visionary art environment" in Utah.

We are thrilled to be honored by the designation of a Landmarks site in Utah!