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RE: Hillside Avenue Restoration – Site Observation

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter summarizes the findings of our recent site visit to the existing single-family residence located at 54 E Hillside Avenue, Salt Lake City, Utah. The purpose of our visit was to evaluate the general condition of the existing structure and the repair needs for the proposed restoration/rebuild of the structure, with additional dwelling units to be constructed attached at the rear. We understand this letter may be provided to the Salt Lake City Historic Landmark Commission as part of the entitlement review, given the property's location within the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Existing Structure

The original portion of the residence is a single-story, wood-framed dwelling typical of the early residential construction found throughout the surrounding Capitol Hill/Arsenal Hill neighborhood. The original exterior walls are wood-framed with stucco cladding, and the roof assembly is wood-framed ceiling joists and rafters, finished with what appears to be a membrane or asphalt roofing material. The building is supported on a continuous rubble (river-rock/cobblestone) masonry foundation, faced on the exterior with a stucco or plaster finish, with wood floor framing bearing directly on top of the rubble foundation wall.

A wood-sided addition at the rear of the structure is a later, non-original addition to the building and is not part of the historic fabric proposed for retention; we understand the Historic Landmark Commission has already approved its removal, and it is excluded from the structural discussion below.

Observed Conditions

The building is currently vacant and has been exposed to long-term deferred maintenance. Conditions observed include:

- Roof framing that is partially collapsed, with visible sagging and loss of structural integrity in the affected area
- Cracking and deterioration within the mortar joints and stucco/plaster facing of the rubble foundation wall, along with heavy efflorescence (white mineral staining) on the foundation stone, indicative of long-term moisture migration through the foundation
- An uneven, out-of-level floor throughout the original structure, consistent with differential settlement of the rubble foundation and/or water damage to the wood floor framing and its supports below
- Multiple untreated wood support posts in the crawlspace found bearing directly on soil, without concrete footings or piers beneath them — an inadequate, decay-prone bearing condition

- Dark staining and surface degradation of wood floor framing members at and near their bearing points on the foundation wall, consistent with prolonged moisture exposure
- A full-depth crack and spalled section of stucco at one exterior wall corner, exposing the wire lath and wood framing behind. Notably, no weather-resistive/moisture barrier was observed between the stucco cladding and the wood framing at this location — a non-structural building envelope condition, but one that would not meet current code requirements and is a relevant durability consideration for the structure
- Boarded and deteriorated window and door openings
- Significant vegetation overgrowth against the building envelope, contributing to moisture retention at the wall base

Structural Recommendations

Given the extent of deterioration documented above — particularly the collapsed roof framing, the condition of the foundation and floor framing, and the widespread evidence of moisture exposure at bearing locations — it is our opinion that the footings, foundation, floor framing, and roof framing should all be replaced in their entirety, bringing the structure into full compliance with current code requirements. Our specific recommendations are as follows:

1. Complete removal and replacement of the existing foundation and footings, sized and detailed per current code
2. Complete removal and replacement of the existing floor framing system, bearing on the new foundation
3. Complete removal and replacement of the roof framing; we recommend engineered wood trusses for the new roof structure, configured to replicate the existing roofline and form as directed by the Historic Landmark Commission
4. Given the difficulty of replacing the foundation and floor framing while protecting the existing exterior walls in place, we recommend rebuilding the structure in its entirety rather than attempting to retain the existing walls, using era-appropriate stucco finish and window styles to replicate the original appearance
5. As an alternative for the Commission's consideration, the existing windows and/or existing walls could potentially be evaluated for salvage and reuse if desired for material authenticity. We note, however, that (a) the existing windows are likely significantly less energy-efficient and may be more prone to water infiltration than new construction, and (b) reusing the existing walls would not resolve the apparent lack of a weather-resistive moisture barrier noted above, which could limit the long-term durability of the wall assembly. Both of these are non-structural, building envelope/performance considerations rather than structural deficiencies, but they could ultimately affect the long-term structural integrity. If the existing walls are retained, they should first be inspected and any water-damaged framing or sheathing repaired prior to reuse
6. Provisions for structural connection and load path continuity between the rebuilt structure and the new attached rear units, including coordinated foundation and framing tie-ins at the shared wall line

This reconstruction can and should be detailed to replicate the historic form, massing, and materials of the original building, consistent with the Historic Landmark Commission's expectations for the district.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or if additional evaluation or documentation is desired.

Sincerely,


 Jared R. Palfreyman, P.E.
 LEI Consulting Engineers & Surveyors, Inc.

