

## **The Historic Landmark Commission**

*Nelson Knight and Scott Christensen*

The unique and historical character of our Capitol Hill neighborhoods is what drew many of us to move here. We relish the charm of our older houses and enjoy comparing their histories and renovation stories.

The value of our historic buildings has not always been so clear. Long-time residents will remember struggles over proposals that would have dramatically changed the character of our neighborhood. The protection of Capitol Hill's unique built-environment has been a grass-roots effort, from fighting for designation of the historic district (finally achieved in 1984) to the house-by-house restorations undertaken by so many of us.

These preservation efforts have paid off in many ways. We have protected the unique architecture, street patterns, and landscaping that improve the livability and quality-of-life in our area. Our neighborhood is often touted as a success story that other areas seek to emulate, and our streets are lively and interesting places to walk.

Great economic benefits have come from our preservation efforts. Property owners within the historic district have felt comfortable investing a good amount of time and money on their properties because they know that these investments will not be undermined by inappropriate construction next door. Several national studies have shown that where local historic districts such as the Capitol Hill Historic District are established, property values typically rise or, at minimum, are stabilized.

Low-interest loans from the Utah Heritage Foundation were the catalyst for many of the Hill's early preservation efforts, especially along Apricot Ave. and Quince St. in the Marmalade neighborhood. The UHF still loans money for appropriate renovations to historic buildings, as does the city. These incentives are supplemented by the State historic rehab tax credit program that can return up to 20% of our restoration dollars in a direct tax write-off. Since 1993, 33 projects in the Capitol Hill district have received over \$270,000.00 in tax credits for nearly \$1.4 million invested in historic buildings.

The Salt Lake City Planning Division, in response to a request by council member Eric Jergensen, is currently examining the city's system of encouraging historic preservation in the city and review of projects by the Historic Landmark Commission. As part of this process, the planning staff and members of the HLC are looking at ways to refine the current system to ensure the protection of the Capitol Hill Historic District and the city's five other historic districts, while making the program more user-friendly and allowing for changes that will contribute to the health of these neighborhoods. For news of possible changes and opportunities to comment as the study proceeds, or for more information on the preservation program, see [www.slcgov.com/ced/hlc](http://www.slcgov.com/ced/hlc) or [landmarks@slcgov.com](mailto:landmarks@slcgov.com) or call 535-6189.

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