



Advocacy Policy for Preservation Issues

Adopted July 2009

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the art of communicating a strongly held belief that you would like realized.

Since its founding in 1966 to be the leading advocate for historic preservation in Utah, the role of Utah Heritage Foundation (DBA Preservation Utah) has become increasingly that of an outspoken advocate for preservation on a local and statewide basis.

As a private organization, Preservation Utah is free to express the opinions and concerns representative of its Board of Trustees, members, and staff. Several committees assist Preservation Utah staff in deciding which preservation issues will have the highest importance and greatest impact with limited resources, crafting statements on important preservation issues, and working with the public at the local, state, and federal levels to help influence the fate of endangered structures and properties. Preservation issues have ranged from opposing demolitions of historic sites to encouraging the careful planning of future urban development.

Preservation Utah conducts advocacy in a unique way. Our approach emphasizes working with constituents early as welcome participants on important preservation issues and projects; recognizing that projects have a long life span (up to 10 years in some cases); and, placing importance on identifying and working with partners. Though not afraid of a good fight where one is clearly necessary in enforcing preservation law and our responsibilities as an organization, the true leverage of Preservation Utah lies in being welcome and timely enough to help projects succeed, rather than in fighting lost causes.

Preservation groups such as Preservation Utah form cooperative partnerships with neighborhood groups, elected officials, individuals concerned with zoning and housing, developers, realtors, Chambers of Commerce, community design centers, and planning and redevelopment staff to discuss preservation issues and alternatives. Concern for a community's quality of life provides the common bond for all groups, though there is not always agreement as to how that quality of life might incorporate a community's history and its historic buildings, and how it can be achieved.

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On a national level, historic preservation organizations have allied with groups of national stature such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Preservation Action. Working together, the national, statewide, and local organizations have shepherded a number of preservation bills through Congress, such as those providing tax incentives for rehabilitation and retaining federal funding for professional preservation staff in state government (SHPO).

Preservation Utah has further defined advocacy by three categories: Lobbying (direct), Grassroots Lobbying, and Public Education. The definitions of each are as follows:

Lobbying: Actions seeking to influence specific legislation. Any action by Congress, state legislature, local council, or similar governing body, or by the public in a referendum, initiative, constitutional amendment, or similar procedure is considered "legislation." An "action" refers to the introduction, amendment, enactment, defeat, or repeal of acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items. Influencing legislation is deemed to be "(a) any attempt...to affect the opinions of the general public or any segment thereof, and (b) any attempt...to communicate with any member or employee of a legislative body, or with any government official or employee who may participate in the formulation of the legislation." Examples: Preservation Utah provides testimony at a city council meeting, encouraging the passage of legislation for policy or funding that would benefit historic preservation. Though this activity constitutes lobbying and is recorded as such, it frequently only happens in two or five minute intervals. If Preservation Utah staff spends an additional two hours at a meeting waiting to speak, this additional time is recorded as education. Or, Preservation Utah spends two hours writing a letter that is directly sent to council members encouraging a historic preservation activity. This is recorded as lobbying.

Grassroots Lobbying: Any attempt to influence any legislation through an effort to affect the opinions of the general public or any segment thereof on specific legislative matters. Example: Preservation Utah sends out a legislative alert to its ENEWSletter list (a free, general public list) which references specific legislation, reflects a view of the legislation, and encourages the general public to take action regarding the legislation. (However, only sending it to our paid member list constitutes lobbying.)

Public Education: Any other work by Preservation Utah that includes the non-partisan education, analysis, study, or research of an issue; is made available to the public, governmental bodies, officials, and employees; and does not attempt to influence legislation or advocate the adoption or rejection of legislation.

Example: Preservation Utah provides education about the pros and cons of historic districts versus conservation districts to a neighborhood group that is seeking advice about the best options to protect their area from demolition by developers. Preservation Utah stays involved with the group for several months as the discussion evolves, becomes more detailed, and the group requires more information about their options.

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