

March 7, 2016

Senator J. Stuart Adams
320 State Capitol
P.O. Box 145115
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114

Re: Opposition to Bill to Amend Utah Local Historic Districts Act (HB 223 2nd Sub.)

Dear Senator Adams:

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a privately-funded nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949. With headquarters in Washington, D.C., 13 field offices, 27 historic sites, and over 800,000 members and supporters and partner organizations in 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Trust works to save America's historic places and advocates for historic preservation as a fundamental value in programs and policies at all levels of government. On behalf of our Utah members, we write to express our deep concern about a recent bill which would undermine historic preservation in over 50 communities in Utah—communities that have chosen to protect their historic assets at the local level under current state law.

Historic preservation is a movement designed to protect places that are valued by communities and that preserve our sense of place as individuals and as a nation. While for the most part historic preservation is a voluntary activity, it is also supported by laws and designations that protect historic resources so that current and future generations can appreciate and enjoy them. Local preservation efforts have saved grand places like Grand Central Terminal in New York City and historic districts in Chicago, New Orleans, Charleston, and Santa Fe. The same could be said for historic buildings in Utah, too, such as the Cache County Courthouse in Logan, downtown St. George, Maeser School in Provo, and most recently in Salt Lake City, the First Security Bank Building at 100 South and Main Street.

For decades, historic districts all over the country and throughout Utah have used their older buildings and streetscapes as assets for community revitalization, providing a greater diversity of income and cultural background in neighborhoods, increasing property values, and increasing job opportunities. Research has shown repeatedly that rehabilitation of older buildings and neighborhoods produces higher-paying jobs than new construction and economic benefits remain in the local economy. As the Preservation Green Lab report, "Older, Smaller, Better" from 2015 concluded, older, smaller buildings are critical to the incubation of small businesses that are the primary job creators in the U.S. economy. Historic preservation supports the survival of these businesses.

Historic districts also increase heritage tourism, an important factor in Utah's tourism economy. As noted economist Donovan Rypkema has said, "The economic benefits of heritage tourism are unparalleled." According to the World Bank report, *The Economics of Uniqueness*, "[heritage-related projects] contribute to urban livability, attracting talent, and providing an enabling environment for job creation."

House Bill 223 2nd Sub includes "owner consent" provisions that would drastically undermine Utah's longstanding historic preservation program and those 50+

communities that have chosen to protect historic places, thus weakening local control. Requiring 2/3 of property owners to petition in favor of a designation for a district would create unprecedented barriers to local communities creating new historic districts in the future.

The National Trust takes seriously the concerns of individual property owners within proposed historic districts. However, the introduction of what amounts to a 2/3 owner consent requirement would seriously compromise Utah's preservation program. It would do so by not only preventing local governments from designating and protecting significant structures and districts, but also by opening the door to requests to de-designate already designated properties, many of which have national as well as local significance.

For all of these reasons, we urge you to oppose House Bill 223 2nd Sub.

The National Trust stands ready to assist you and your colleagues to ensure the protection of historic resources and local communities in Utah. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague Renee Kuhlman at [202-588-6234](tel:202-588-6234) (rkuhlman@savingplaces.org).

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Cassidy, Jr., Vice President
Government Relations & Policy

cc: Governor Herbert; Brad Westwood, Utah State Historic Preservation Office; Kirk Huffaker, Utah Heritage Foundation; Erik Hein, National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers; Paige Pollard, National Alliance of Preservation Commissions; Megan J. Brown, National Park Service; Robert "Rob" White, Scott Wyatt, National Trust Advisors (UT)