

Sugar House Hotel Letter

December 22, 2025

Sent via email to Dan Dugan, Chris Wharton, Alejandro Puy, Victoria Petro, Eva Lopez Chavez, Sarah Young, Erika Carlsen.

Dear Dan:

Several community councils and leaders wanted to share their views about the proposed hotel in the Sugar House Park. This letter represents those opinions. Two councils are in your district, one is in Eva's and one is in Chris'. Others are very interested in adding their names — but because of travel and other obstacles — won't do so until January. In this letter we reference Judi Short, Lands Use and Zoning Chair in Sugar House. She has reviewed the letter and the attributions.

It's being sent during a very busy holiday season, but we hope you and your Council colleagues will have time to look it over before the project comes before the full City Council in 2026.

We wish you and your council colleagues a very Happy Holiday season.

Here are our concerns:

1. **Water, flood and environmental impacts.** In her presentation before the Planning Commission, Sugar House Land Use and Zoning Chair Judi Short raised significant concerns about water, flooding and environmental impacts that could be exacerbated by the new hotel.

- She referenced the earthen dam under the underground parking lot – which will hold 180 cars. Construction near the dam could place additional burden on this environmental feature and negatively affect groundwater or be compromised during a critical climate event, flood event or during an exceptional rain event.
- The “draw” or underpass below 1300 East that connects the west and east sides of Sugar House would be a collector point for hundreds and thousands of gallons of water, in a heavy rain or extreme climate event. The great flood of 2017 was so fierce, over five feet of water surged from Sugar House Park into Sprague Library two miles away– damaging the library basement and costing \$1.5-\$2 million in repairs. More flooding events in 2023 closed the park. Impacts from climate change are real.
- As Judi Short indicated, there have not been reviews of potential flooding, excess water or environmental impacts by Salt Lake Flood Control or the State Dam Engineer. These are critical informational pieces. We urge the project be halted until they are conducted and properly reviewed. Even the Public Utilities Department made a specific requirement in their report that a Technical Drainage Study be conducted, and additional stormwater treatment management be added because of the environmental sensitivity to Parley's Creek and the Sugar House Park.

- A D6 Community Council leader skilled in city zoning codes and development made an important observation. If the MU3 zone is preserved — which would prevent the hotel and the underground garage — this technically “solves” many of the environmental issues the hotel might trigger because a 180- car underground garage does not “pencil” for buildings constructed in the MU3 zone.

2. We dispute the developer’s claim that a rezone of the property to MU-8 – allowing buildings up to 90 feet -- is the only pathway to “an economically viable project.” This is purely speculative and somewhat self-serving. There are countless developments that could be placed on the property within the existing MU-3 zone – which prioritizes neighborhood-scale commercial. There are dozens of commercial examples across the street or throughout the Sugar House business district. Hotels are not permitted in a MU-3 zone, which the Council just designated for this property in July, when new citywide codes were approved. It may be prudent to go back and re-analyze why MU-3 is the best zone for this property.

3. Wasatch mountain views; Sugar House District Design

Guidelines. Preservation of mountain views is not only codified in the Sugar House District Design Guidelines but is one of the essential features of the new Ballpark Next project just approved by the Salt Lake City Council on December 9, 2025. The Council voted unanimously to ensure the Ballpark development would be “thoughtfully sculpted to ensure the majestic views of the Wasatch Mountains remain preserved.” What is ethically correct for the Ballpark should also be ethically correct for Sugar House.

4. Salt Lake and Sugar House do not have a hotel capacity problem. In late October, the Rocky Mountain Lodging Report announced that Salt Lake’s motel and hotel occupancy rate for 2025 is 70.3% -- a 30% cushion. The developer claims this project would fill a “gap in the hotel market” yet two motels operate within two-tenths of a mile from this location supplying 232 rooms. Adding this 145-room hotel would create 377 rooms within yards of each other. Three more motels are in proximity on Foothill Drive representing another 640 rooms. The bed count alone for these 5 existing properties is over 1,000. We believe no current “gap” exists.

5. Harmful traffic impacts. The roadways that border the proposed hotel – 1300 East and 2100 South – are major arteries travelled daily by tens of thousands of cars. UDOT statistics show more than 50,000 cars exit daily off I-80 onto 1300 East just below the hotel property. And traffic volumes along 2100 South are always about 25,000 daily. They are critical access and egress points to a vast freeway system as well as to Salt Lake City. Both are currently rated “F” for failure.

- Placing a 145-room hotel at one of the busiest corners in the city will exacerbate traffic conditions creating more delays and congestion. Even the Hales Engineering study acknowledged increased morning and evening congestion. To alleviate the backup, engineers proposed an additional turn lane on 1300 East to relieve traffic entering I-80 East. But that too is problematical since there are only 3 southbound lanes on 1300 East from 2100 South. At this very location, there is

already a traffic “choke point” where cars are turning to enter I-80 – going west or east from 1300 East.

- Real-time traffic data that formed the basis of the Hales Engineering study was only collected during one day in January 2025. Is this sufficient? January is the coldest month of the year and less travelled than warmer-weather months. UDOT Director Carlos Braceras, in testimony before the State Legislative Transportation Committee in late October, said UDOT needs 3 years of data to make the best evaluation of a roadway.
- Hotel guests may not be using their own personal vehicles– but they will still be arriving, departing and moving around town or throughout the state in cars. A business traveler rushing to meetings, a family or friend trying to connect with locals, a person in town for a special concert or sporting event, or a vacationer hoping to hit the ski slopes, check out Temple Square or gaze at the Great Salt Lake is unlikely to hop on a bicycle or take the bus to reach these destinations. We do not believe the engineering study has taken this adequately into account and is primarily focused on hotel guests being dropped off when they arrive or picked up when they leave.
- The developers are pitching the new hotel as a restaurant destination because of the rooftop eatery – so additional guests in vehicles would be arriving and leaving the hotel during mealtimes. This is addressed in the study, but not adequately.

6. Preserving the “crown jewel” of Salt Lake City’s parks. The most critical question before the city should be the preservation and future vitality of Sugar House Park. It has been an oasis of relaxation, recreation, and retreat from the impacts of a burgeoning urban center with explosive growth.

During the public hearing on October 22, arguments were made that this corner lot at 2100 South and 1300 East was just an extension of the Sugar House Central business district. Sugar House Community Council representatives in attendance said that had never been an acknowledged in their planned documents. In other words, 1300 East had always been the business boundary.

Advancement of the business district eastward will bring additional pressure to the park. Rezoning will likely invite more upzones along the park’s northern border where low-rise commercial enterprises and residential homes currently exist, opening the way for higher buildings and more density. Salt Lake City has built more new housing in the past few years – tens of thousands of apartments – than at any time since World War II. Open spaces like Sugar House Park represent an essential antidote to the pressures of modern urbanity, offering balance and the serenity of nature. A reminder: On the park’s east end, Highland High’s new remodel will center the school at the edge of 2100 South.

7. Environmental Erosion. Sugar House Park is a haven for migrating birds and an important causeway for Parley’s Creek. It is an important habitat for geese, ducks, seagulls and other species. While Salt Lake is experiencing hotter and hotter summers, the Park is a vital sanctuary and buffer against the corrosive “heat island” effect. If built,

a hotel will only contribute to the park's environmental erosion – adding heat, auto exhaust, solar glare, artificial lights, and noise.

Respectfully,

Yalecrest Neighborhood Council Board

East Bench Community Council Board

East Central Community Council

Esther Hunter, chair, and board members Debbie Fedor and Gwen Crist.

Greater Avenues Community Council

Jim Jenkins, Land Use Committee