

## MILLCREEK RLS RESEARCH DESIGN

March 6, 2023

### Statement of the Project Objective

Millcreek City desires to obtain information about its historic resources through a reconnaissance level survey (RLS). As Millcreek was incorporated as a city fairly recently, this will be the first RLS within the city boundary. The survey will include approximately 479 primary resources in two groups or areas: 1) Mountair Acres neighborhood (373 primary resources); and, 2) 56 individual scattered sites that were selected by the Millcreek Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The deadline for the project is June 30, 2023.

### Explanation and Justification of the Proposed Boundaries of the Survey

#### Scattered Sites

The selected scattered sites boundary follows the boundary of the city of Millcreek. However, no scattered sites selected for the 2023 RLS are east of Interstate 215.

#### Mountair Acres Neighborhood

The neighborhood survey area was historically platted as and is today still commonly referred to as Mountair Acres. The survey boundary was provided by the city in the Request for Proposals and the boundary is justifiable for the following reasons:

- ❖ Is bounded by major streets with Mountair Boulevard and its landscaped buffer to Highland Drive (west), Imperial Street (east), the rear property line of buildings on the north side of 3010 South (north), and the rear property line of buildings on the south side of 3150 South (south);
- ❖ Is bounded on the east not only by Imperial Street but also by a topographic level change due to historical excavation;
- ❖ Includes the entire original subdivision as platted and recorded; and,
- ❖ Encompasses a single use (residential).

## History of the Survey Area

### Millcreek

#### *Pre-Pioneer Settlement, Pre-1847*

Prior to pioneer settlement in the Salt Lake Valley, the land below Parleys and Millcreek Canyons was seasonally occupied and traveled by the people of Goshute, Ute, and Shoshone Tribes, although none claimed the area specifically. Native American tribes were known to travel down Parleys Canyon, referred to by them as “Obekokechee” or Big Canyon, seeking the natural salt of the Salt Lake Valley.

#### *Early Settlement & Milling Period, 1848-1877*

Soon after the arrival and settlement of the early pioneers, Parley P. Pratt began construction of a toll road down the now Parleys Canyon. Parley began exploration for the route in 1848, began construction in 1849 and was entirely completed in 1850. It was referred to as the “Golden Pass Toll Road”. This opened the canyon up as a major route for pioneers and travelers as it was an easier canyon than the previously used Emigration Canyon. Eventually, a rail line was constructed and the canyon was regularly used for the transportation of travelers and goods (mainly lumber and coal) from areas such as Coalville and Park City. The canyon was also the route chosen for the United States Mail overland routes of the Pony Express in 1860 and the Overland stagecoaches soon after that.

Typical of most early settlement patterns, water ways and transportation corridors were the catalyst to the settlement of this area. The Parleys Stream became part of an essential irrigation and milling system. A sandstone aqueduct from this system still stands in what is now Parleys Historic Nature Park in Salt Lake City, adjacent to Millcreek.

The Big Field Survey was laid out in 1848 by pioneer surveyors. Beyond the southern boundary of the original Salt Lake City plats (present-day 900 South) to 2100 South, the land was arranged in rectangular blocks divided into five-acre lots (the “Five-Acre Survey”). Further south, between 2100 South and 4500 South, the land was divided into larger lots of ten acres (the “Ten-Acre Survey”) that were intended for agricultural use. As a result, much of the land in Millcreek was used as farming and orchard land. Daniel Russell, who settled near the mouth of Mill Creek Canyon soon after John Neff built the flour mill in 1848, had great success planting fruit trees and raising a variety of fruit in the area. This encouraged more agricultural development in the area and orchards became very prevalent, especially throughout the existing Canyon Rim neighborhood. 3300 South and 2300 East are present-day boundary markers of the Big Field Survey block pattern.

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Milling played a significant role in the early settlement of Millcreek and the greater valley. John Neff, one of the area's first settlers, constructed the first flour mill in 1848 at what is now Evergreen Avenue and 2700 East. Known as the East Millcreek Mill, it became the longest-endured mill of the area. In the same year, Robert Archibald Gardner and his sons, Robert and William, established a saw mill on the banks of Millcreek near present-day Highland Drive. This mill produced the first lumber in the state, on the first formal grant of water for industrial use. Families that followed were the Fishers, Kellers, Osguthorpes, Russells, and Stillmans. Mills were established along the creek from the top of Highland Drive to the top of Millcreek Canyon, producing flour, molasses, sawn lumber, and shingles.

### *Community Building, Black Settlement & Transition Period, 1878-1904*

Sylvester James, Samuel Chambers, Sylvester Perkins were the first Black settlers of Millcreek. Each proved to be successful farmers who would market their produce to community leaders. After purchasing land in 1875, Samuel and Amanda Chambers had a prosperous farm that covered 30 acres in the area.<sup>1</sup> Sylvester James bought farm acreage in 1888, relocating his family to this agricultural lifestyle from downtown Salt Lake City.<sup>2</sup> Black farmers had a presence in the area since the 1870s. The area of Millcreek where many Black settlers purchased land for settlement and farming was referred to as "The Hill".

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, key early-settlement areas began to transition into more prosperous and leisurely uses. Milling moved to areas that were better suited for the production of grain. In 1892, the Neff Mill was purchased, partially torn down and converted into a dance hall. It was later purchased again and completely dismantled by 1905.

### *Growth & Prosperity Period, 1904-1938*

Around the turn of the century, many parts of Millcreek served as second homes and summer getaways. This especially took place along the Mill Creek due the corridor's natural shade and cooler temperatures. Built in 1905, the Susanna Bradford Mansion, also known as Oakwood, is located at 2610 Evergreen Avenue and was the first electrically lighted home in the area.<sup>3</sup> The construction of other mansions followed and this central part of Millcreek transformed from a pioneer milling community to a more wealthy, social, and leisurely one.

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<sup>1</sup> 3205 South was renamed "Chambers Avenue" in 2020.

<sup>2</sup> On February 16, 1892, Sylvester James transferred part of his holding to his son, William. Eighteen months later William sold his land to his uncle Sylvester Perkins.

<sup>3</sup> Known as "the Silver Queen", Susanna B. Emery-Holmes built the home near the creek to enjoy cooler summers, away from her primary residence in Salt Lake City. She was known to host hundreds of guests at the mansion and her parties became somewhat of a local tourist attraction with hundreds of electrical lights and decorations displayed.

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Nathaniel Baldwin was a prominent inventor and manufacturer and is credited for inventing headphones.<sup>4</sup> He built a wood factory on the banks of Millcreek at 3470 S 2300 East, where he manufactured telephone receivers, dynamic speakers and radios. In 1914, he began manufacturing headsets for the US Navy as part of the war effort during World War I. Between 1916-1922, Baldwin built a number of brick buildings at 3474 S 2300 East. His company became one of the largest employers in Utah, employing 500 employees at its peak. His operation marked a time of transformation for the area, from milling and farming to more service-oriented jobs and industrious growth. The factory's brick buildings remain today and have been adapted to house a variety of uses such as office space, artist studios, and light industrial operations.

In 1923, water rights disputes were resolved between Salt Lake City and the Lower Millcreek and East Millcreek water companies. The water companies took control over most of the piped water in the area. In 1927, power lines were constructed throughout the central part of Millcreek.

### *Subdivision Development Period, 1939-1957*

The area began to see the first subdivision plats recorded in the late 1930s-1940s with steady suburban growth following thereafter. Many early, east-Millcreek neighborhoods began to be impacted by the Post World War II boom. Attached garages were built, duplex buildings and infill development occurred, and the conversion of 1940s basements (used as bomb shelters) to additional living space became more common. In the late 1940s, many veterans returning home from World War II bought land and subdivided lots to build homes in the present-day Canyon Rim neighborhood. This area was known as "Veteran Heights" and marked the beginning of this area transitioning from agricultural use to a residential suburban community. The area gained the name "Canyon Rim" as homes were built along or near the rim of Parley's Hollow in the 1950s.

After World War II, the full development of what is now known as Olympus Cove began. This area was primarily used by ranchers grazing animals and fruit growers with orchards that then gave way to new residential subdivisions. In the 1950s, the new Eastwood Elementary School and Eastwood Hills subdivision were constructed on an area that had been an early landfill.

More suburban and auto-oriented growth continued around present-day Highland Drive. This area was referred to as "Highland Drive Miracle Mile" – a term used nationally to promote business development along commercial corridors. Salt Lake City also had a Miracle Mile along 2100 South between 700 East and 1300 East. Leo Capson, partner in Capson-Bowman and developers of Mountair Acres, even claimed a trade name for their use of Miracle Mile along 2100 South as "exclusive owner of the trade name...in the business of real estate listing,

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<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, due to a series of poor investment decisions and competition, Nathaniel Baldwin's career ended in bankruptcy and eventual conviction of mail fraud in 1930. He spent two years in McNeil Island Federal Prison. His home at 2374 E Evergreen Ave. was designated on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

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advertising, development, sales and promotion.”<sup>5</sup> The use of Miracle Mile for Highland Drive appears to have been marketing by Knight Realty between 1958-1960.<sup>6</sup> A garage was built on the northwest corner of Highland Drive and 3300 South that remains today.<sup>7</sup> The Villa Theater first opened on December 23, 1949, showing Prince of Foxes. In 2001, USA Today listed the Villa Theater as one of 10 significant historic theaters in the U.S. still in operation.<sup>8</sup>

### *Suburban & Late-Twentieth Century Development, 1958-1975*

Throughout the late twentieth century, the pattern of individualistic infill continued. The Marquis Condominium development was built in the 1970s and was the first large-scale development in the area. The Sherman School, built in 1910, was demolished around 1980 and became the Sherman Field and Ballpark. The portion of the school grounds adjacent to 2300 East was sold and developed as a supermarket chain and is still in commercial use today.

The area that spans from State Street westward to the Jordan River is primarily occupied by industrial and commercial uses with few discernible historic features. The areas east of Interstate 15 are generally older than those areas west of the freeway. Further research is needed on the history and development patterns throughout these sections.

### **Mountair Acres Subdivision**

Platted in 1939, the first recorded subdivision plat of what is now Millcreek was for the Mountair Acres Subdivision. The developer was Capson-Bowman Inc., owned by Leo L. Capson and Ned J. Bowman. It appears the two were partners from 1931-1950 and this may have been the only subdivision the two worked on together. Capson later used the phrase “Capsonized” to define the type of service their company provided in real estate.

Prior to development of Mountair Acres, the area was historically used as a clay pit that directly served the brick yard to the west. Clay was extracted from this location and transported on trolleys to the brickyard.<sup>9</sup> The area immediately to the north, east, and south of Mountair Acres were already developed prior to the subdivision. It was intended for the land to be developed once the clay pit had exhausted its resources. The clay however continued to present problems

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<sup>5</sup> “Affidavit.” *Western Mineral Survey and Utah Statesman*, February 27, 1953. Bettilyon’s used it at least once in reference to a real estate promotion for a property on 2100 South in 1954.

<sup>6</sup> Advertisements in *The Salt Lake Tribune* of December 14, 1958, and October 30, 1960.

<sup>7</sup> Tres Hombres opened its doors in Millcreek in 1984 and has been a staple in the Millcreek community since that time. When the owners of Tres Hombres purchased the building, they preserved as much of the original wood as possible. As a result, over 80% of the finished wood in the current building is original. (*Millcreek News Volume 5: Issue 3*)

<sup>8</sup> In May of 2004, Dr. Hamid Adib purchased the theater and restored the building. Dr. Adib wanted to create a museum-like atmosphere for people to enjoy the craftsmanship of the building amid stunning Persian and Oriental Rugs.) (*Millcreek News Volume 5: Issue 3*)

<sup>9</sup> Marilyn Case, Phone Interview by Kristen Clifford, March 1, 2023.

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in the new subdivision. Though initial streets were graveled, the clay would rise and cause difficult driving conditions. In 1944, 1947, and 1948, residents asked the city and the county to assist with paving the streets in order to facilitate safe driving and create guaranteed access for emergency vehicles. By 1950, residents were asking to be annexed into Salt Lake City in order to obtain more consistent services.

### *The Brickyard*

Edward Hemsley purchased a tract of land in Millcreek which he called “The Brickyard.” Edward and his brother, Job, started the brick manufacturing business together. The bricks were used in construction of early homes, businesses, and church meetinghouses throughout the area. Their business was so vital that Brigham Young rescinded Edward’s mission call so that he might stay home and continue to make bricks.<sup>10</sup> John P. Cahoon was the founder of another brick manufacturing business (The Salt Lake Pressed Brick Co.), located on 400 West and 5300 South in Murray. Due to increased demand, his operation needed to be relocated; therefore, he purchased land from Edward Potter Hemsley on January 6, 1891. This allowed the company to be closer to clay deposits (such as the Mountair Acres land) and the railroad line. The chimney, called the SMITH KILN CHIMNEY, was built in 1902. The Brickyard later became the largest brick manufacturing company in the west. Operations ended in November, 1972 and the company moved its operations to West Jordan.

### Census Data

In the 1930, 1940, and 1950 censuses, Millcreek was part of Precincts 1 and 3. The combined population of Precincts 1 and 3 in 1930 was 12,753.<sup>11</sup> In the 1940 census, the population of those precincts rose to 16,828. That number more than doubled by 1950 to 33,432. Precinct 3, which included the Mountair Acres neighborhood, had a larger population, but Precinct 1 grew at a faster rate than Precinct 3 between 1930 and 1950.

	1930	1940	10-yr increase	1950	10-yr increase	20-yr increase
Precinct 1	4,300	6,275	46%	12,957	106%	201%
Precinct 3	8,453	10,553	25%	20,475	94%	142%

<sup>10</sup> The color of the bricks was obtained from the various levels of clay. For deep red bricks, they would plow two rows of deeply laid yellow clay and one row of black top soil. White brick came from the clay near the top of the pit.

<sup>11</sup> Providing accurate population statistics for Millcreek as the boundaries exist today is highly challenging. The population counts for these censuses are not accurate for Millcreek alone because the precincts Millcreek was in covered much larger areas outside of what are now the city boundaries of Millcreek. The boundaries of the precincts were also known to change between each census.

The 1960 census lists the Millcreek population under Tracts 102, 103, 104, 105. Together, these four tracts are closer to the present-day city boundaries. The combined population of the four tracts that year was 28,886. In the 1970 and 1980 censuses, East Millcreek was its own census designated place (CDP) but the rest of Millcreek may have been counted under “remaining areas” of Salt Lake County. The East Millcreek CDP had a population of 26,579 in 1970 and 24,150 in 1980.

## List and Summary of Expected Building Types

### Scattered Sites

It is difficult to predict which architectural styles and forms will be represented by the scattered sites. This is due to the sites being scattered throughout the city, therefore not sharing a common subdivision form or design, and the sites being built during a wide range of time periods between 1860 and 1975.

### Mountair Acres

The Mountair Acres subdivision plat was filed in September 1939. Construction began in 1940 and was nearly complete by 1948. These dates would commonly correspond to styles that include Early Ranch, Box Ranch, Post-World War II Cottage, and Minimal Traditional. Given their location, the expectation is that their construction would be one story and of brick construction, or wood-framed with aluminum siding. Some may have a mix of construction types and sheathing, including wood trim. Some may include other stylistic application such as Colonial Revival, Art Moderne, or Early Modern elements.

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