DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

The Witter-Cofield neighborhood, once in the Town of Highlands, is a streetcar suburb with an eclectic mixture of homes built predominately from 1880 through the early 1940s. To a greater extent than other residential areas of its time, Witter-Cofield housed a mixture of Denver’s wealthy, upper middle and working class citizens. It’s not uncommon to see a large ornate Queen Anne-style residence adjacent to a cluster of simple Victorian pyramidal cottages and early 20th century row homes. Queen Anne is the predominant style of architecture; however, scattered examples of Denver Square and Bungalow homes are found, often with Classical or Craftsman detailing. Dutch Colonial style and other early 20th century revival styles are also found in the district.

ORDINANCE

#29, series 1993

No special provisions

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

Prior to & including 1943

Source: Ord. #254, series 2007

Contributing structures are not identified in the ordinance

LISTING CRITERIA

☑ History  ☑ Architecture  □ Geography

History: Representative of the growing housing needs of the city in the late 19th and early 20th century, and the expansion of the Town of Highlands and then the City of Denver (annexed in 1896).

Architecture: Representative of a variety of late 19th and early 20th century architectural styles. Portrays the diversity of styles, dates and sizes of structures characteristic of Northwest Denver.
Witter-Cofield Historic District

Character-defining Features

1. Streetscape with larger residences fronting onto deep open yards. Note the Queen Anne style home with decorative detailing on left and a Denver Square residence with little ornamentation on right.

2. The long side of this lot faces onto 24th Avenue, accommodating a linear structure with individual row house units facing onto the avenue. This simple rowhouse is located next door to a large Queen Anne style residence.

**DISTRICT LAYOUT & COMPOSITION**

**Streets & Streetscape**

Streets are laid out in the traditional north-south, east-west grid. Wide asphalt streets have low-profile concrete curbs, with curb cuts uncommon. The district’s square-shaped blocks allow properties to front onto both north-south and east-west streets. Alleyways run north-south and east-west on most blocks, creating interior carriage lots. Some lots are at grade with the sidewalk and tree lawn, while others slope up from the sidewalk edge to accommodate the Denver Hill.

**Sidewalks**

Historic sandstone and modern concrete sidewalks are wide and separated from the street with a broad landscaped lawn.

Some blocks have mature trees in the street lawn, while others do not.

**Land Uses**

Primarily residential with two commercial nodes along the historic 23rd Avenue street car line, one religious institution at 2246 Irving Street, and the early 20th century portion of the Boulevard School at 2352 Federal Boulevard.

**Lot Sizes & Shapes**

Historically, lots vary in size, with small single family homes on smaller lots and larger homes on lots as large as 12,000 square feet. Lots in the interior of blocks are generally small and narrow, while corner lots are typically larger and more square-shaped.

**DESIGN REVIEW**

All properties within a historic district are subject to design review. When planning a preservation or construction project, it is important to consider the character-defining features of the district.

When reviewing proposed changes to a property, the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission uses the Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts in combination with the character defining features of the historic district to evaluate the project’s compatibility with the property and historic district.

The character-defining features document for each district generally captures the most prevailing architectural and site features found within the district. In some instances, a structure and site within a district may be the exception to the character-defining features.
Lots accommodating duplexes and row houses are typically wide, with the long side of the lots facing the street. Mid-block carriage lots are roughly square, typically 85 by 90 feet in size.

**Building Placement**

Buildings front onto both north-south and east-west streets (due to the square design of the district’s blocks). While houses at corners can face either direction, houses on Federal Boulevard face east onto the street. House locations on lots vary from block face to block face.

**Setbacks**

Variations in front setbacks, with general consistency on block faces or half block faces between alleys. Corner row houses occasionally break the front setback pattern of the street. Typical front setbacks on block faces vary from under 20’ to more than 35’ from back of sidewalk to front porch. Front setbacks often appear very large due to deep street lawns separating the street curb and sidewalk. On interior lots, a few “honeymoon” or alley houses have a more significant front yard setback, intended to accommodate a new house in front. Side yards tend to be narrow on interior lots, and larger on corner lots. Rear yards tend to be spacious and feature mature trees.
Witter-Cofield Historic District  Character-defining Features

5. Red brick rowhouse with corbelled roof detailing and raised columns at roof parapet. Note steps leading from the sidewalk into the front lawn to accommodate the Denver Hill.

6. A small 20th century Bungalow with Craftsman detailing, including tapered brick porch columns and railings, and half-timbering details in front gable end. Note the paired windows on the front of the home.

PRIMARY BUILDINGS

Mass & Form

Building Height: Buildings are one to two-and-a-half stories in height. Duplexes and row houses are typically one-story, while most other homes are one to two stories in height. Commercial buildings are generally one story, although a two-story commercial building is situated at 23rd Ave. and Federal Blvd.

Building Shapes: Single family houses dominate the landscape, and are generally rectangular with the narrowest portion of the house facing the street. The larger Queen Anne style residences have more complex and irregular shapes, occasionally exhibiting rounded forms, towers, and projecting bays. Duplexes and row houses are rectangular with flat roofs and raised parapets; their entries face onto the lot’s street-facing side. Flat roofed forms are uncommon for two story residential buildings.

Materials

Brick construction, typically red brick, with wood-frame gables above. A small number of wood-frame structures clad in wood siding are found in the district. Brick or stone foundations, and wood ornamentation are common. Concrete block and stucco are used occasionally and in small quantities.

Roofs

Most roofs of single-family homes are hipped, hip and gable combinations, pyramidal, gabled or cross-gabled. Front-facing roof gables are common. Flat roofs with raised parapets are typical for one-story duplex and row houses, and for commercial buildings. A few one-and-a-half and two story single-family homes have mansard or flat roofs.

Dormers are typically small, to accommodate light in an attic or a small bedroom, with front-facing hipped shapes for Pyramidal cottages and Denver Square residences. Small side-facing gabled dormers are occasionally found on Period Revival and Queen Anne style homes. Shed dormers are unusual.

Entries & Doors

Offset, front entries with wood doors and transoms above are typical on larger 19th century homes. Central entries are more typical on 20th century residences. Doors vary based on architectural style, although full wood paneled door, or ½ and ¾ light doors, sometimes with multiple panels below, are common on 19th century homes. Simpler doors, with a single light, are common on 20th century residences.

7. One-story red brick commercial building with decorative raised roof parapet located on the 23rd Avenue streetcar line.
Witter-Cofield Historic District

Character-defining Features

8. Typical one-and-a-half story Victorian brick cottages with front-facing roof gables and partial width front porches. These shed-roofed wooden porches feature wooden fretwork and spindle columns. Note the fishscale patterning and bay window in gable ends.

9. Large two-story Queen Anne home located next door to Victorian cottage. Note the offset entries with partial width porches and arched window openings on these homes.

PRIMARY BUILDINGS (CONTINUED)

Windows

Tall one-over-one double hung windows are frequently found on 19th century homes, with rectangular but more square-shaped windows typical on 20th century houses. Window pairs and groupings are not uncommon. Arched windows and transoms, as well as leaded glass, can be found on Queen Anne style homes. Windows in masonry construction feature stone or brick sills and decorative stone lintels and arches, with decorative wood headers and sills common in upper roof gables.

Porches

Width:

Full façade and partial width projecting porches are common on single-family houses. A few houses have entries from rectangular side porches. Duplexes and row houses typically have small square-shaped porches marking each unit’s entry.

Height:

One to two stories in height depending upon architectural style and number of stories. One story porches are most common.

Projecting:

Projecting porches are common.

Shapes:

Raised square and rectangular shaped, with shed, hipped, conical and gabled roofs. Most pyramidal cottages and row houses feature linear shaped porches with shed or hipped roofs. Queen Anne style homes typically have partial width square porches with front gables. A few early homes have wrap around porches; a few have unusual five-sided shapes.

Porches (continued)

Materials:

Queen Anne style homes feature wooden porches. Later styles typically have brick and/or wooden porches.

Porch Ornamentation:

Queen Anne style homes often have delicate wooden fretwork and spindle columns, although some feature more classical wooden columns on brick bases. The Denver Square and Bungalow homes often have Craftsman or Classical Revival style porches with brick columns, some with wood columns on brick bases. Bungalow porches are often front-gabled with open truss or half-timbered roof decoration. Pyramidal cottage and row house porches often are supported by simple round or square columns.

Building Ornamentation

Ornamentation in this district is simplified and typically limited to the porch, the front roof gable or roof parapet, and/or around the windows. Typically, it includes fish scale shingles, wooden siding and decorative bargeboards on 19th century homes. Some Queen Anne style homes have more elaborate decoration, including conical towers, spindle work friezes and roof gable ornamentation, leaded glass windows, and projecting window bays. Brick patterning and corbelled details are common, particularly on 20th century homes.
10. A few high style Queen Anne residences are found in the district, such as the Frederic Neef House (individual Denver Landmark). Note the more complex roof shape and ornamentation, and elaborate window decoration and arched porch opening. The house has a low masonry retaining wall.

11. Typical two-story Queen Anne residence with open front yard and front sandstone walkway leading from sidewalk to front porch and door.
ACCESSORY STRUCTURES AND SITE FEATURES

Outbuildings

Detached: Yes.
Access: Access is almost always from the alleyways that run north-south and east-west. Most outbuildings are located on the rear of the property or on carriage lots.
Height: Outbuildings are typically one-story. Carriage houses up to two story in height are associated with some older construction.
Size: Historic carriage houses and garages are typically one or two bay.
Shape: Outbuildings are rectangular and boxy shaped with forward facing gables and/or flat roofs with parapets.
Materials: Style: Brick and masonry construction are most common.
Most historic outbuildings are modest; however, a few larger structures match the materials, design and style of the primary house and add to the district’s character.

Walkways

Walkways are typically located in the center or offset on the lot, leading from the sidewalk in a straight path to the front porch. Where the front yard is terraced or raised due to the Denver Hill, concrete or stone stairways are often cut into the grade to partially accommodate the slope. Walkways are typically narrow 3 to 4 feet wide, and can be stone or concrete. A few prominent Victorian homes have entries at the corner.

Walls & Fences

Front Yards: Historically front yards are open with no fencing. A small number of non-historic wooden picket and iron fences enclose front yards.
Side & Rear Yards: Wooden fences enclose rear and side yards.
Retaining Walls: Low historic masonry retaining walls, typically under 3 feet in height, are occasionally found in front and side yards (for corner lots) to partially, but not entirely, contain the Denver Hill. Several grand homes have a low masonry retaining wall, typically a foot or less, on flat lots to define the property boundary.