

To: Landmark Preservation
From: Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: July 16, 2019
RE: Landmark designation application for 601 East Colfax

Landmark Preservation Commission Suggested Motion:

I move to recommend approval and forward to City Council the landmark designation of 601 East Colfax, application #2019L-008, based on History Criteria 1c, Architecture Criteria 2a and 2b, and Geography Criteria 3a and 3b, citing as findings of fact for this recommendation the application form, public testimony, and the July 16, 2019 staff report.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2019L-008
Address: 601 East Colfax
Zoning: C-MS-8
Council: District #10, Chris Hinds
Blueprint Denver: Neighborhood Context, Urban Center; Future Places, Community Corridor
Owner: Tom Messina
Applicant(s): Five residents of Denver

Case Summary:

On May 3, 2019, a Certificate of Non-Historic Status (CNHS) application was submitted to CPD. Landmark staff reviewed the property and found it had the potential to be an Individual Denver Landmark. CPD staff publicly posted notice of the CNHS application. Five Denver residents submitted a Landmark Designation application, along with the \$875 fee, for 601 East Colfax to CPD on June 14, 2019. Staff performed an investigation and found the application to be complete and to meet Denver landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set the public hearing at the Landmark Preservation Commission meeting on July 23, 2019.

Designation Criteria and Evaluation, Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code:

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code, the application must be complete and must meet the following criteria:

1. Meet one designation criteria in two or more of the following categories:
 - History
 - Architecture
 - Geography
2. Maintain its historic or physical integrity
3. Relate to a context or theme (reviewed by the LPC)

Criteria Evaluation:

Landmark staff found that the application meets History Criteria 1c, Architecture Criteria 2a and 2b, and geography Criteria 3a and 3b.

1. Historical Significance

To have historical significance, the structure or district shall be thirty (30) or more years old or have extraordinary importance to the historical development of Denver, and shall:

c) Have direct and substantial association with a person or group of persons who had influence on society; The building at 601 East Colfax is significant for its direct and substantial association with William F. Clements who had long-term and extensive involvement in Denver's restaurant industry. As the restaurant industry was evolving nationwide in the post-war era, Clements influenced how those changes manifested in Denver. He established 29 restaurants, including the White Spot chain, in the Denver area. Clements helped introduce new trends to Denver, such as family dining, franchising, convenience, take-out, and 24-hour dining. And, with the proliferation of the automobile culture, his restaurants were intentionally sited along busy corridors such as Broadway, Speer, and Colfax and designed in eye-catching fashion to attract the attention of consumers. Clements was heavily involved in the restaurant industry, traveling annually to California to see the newest trends in restaurants, serving on the board of the National Restaurant Association for ten years, and serving as the President of the Colorado-Wyoming Restaurant Association. The restaurant at 601 Colfax is one of the few remaining buildings associated with Clements' White Spot chain, which reached a peak of 25 different locations, and retains the best integrity of the extant buildings. It reflects the post-war trends that Clements aspired to in its location along a busy road corridor, attention-grabbing Googie architecture, convenient family-friendly food, and 24-hour service.



2. Architectural Significance

To have architectural importance, the structure or district shall have design quality and integrity, and shall:

a) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type; The commercial building embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the Googie architectural style. Googie style architecture, designed to be futuristic and playful, frequently included dynamic roof forms, geometric forms, and a combination of building materials. The building at 601 Colfax embodies those character-defining features in its boomerang shaped trusses, overhanging eaves, hexagonal footprint, and combination of materials including large plate glass windows, stone, and brick.

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b) Be a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;

The building is a significant example of the work of recognized architects. Located in California, the architectural firm of Armet and Davis were leaders in developing and promoting the Googie style. They are recognized nationwide as one of the most prominent firms associated with the style. During his travels to California, Clements became familiar with their work and commissioned them to design several White Spot restaurants in Denver. Of those commissions, nearly all have been demolished or altered. This is a significant, intact example of the nation's preeminent Googie architects in Denver.

3. Geographic Significance

To have geographic importance, the structure or district shall have design quality and integrity, and shall:

a) Have a prominent location or be an established, familiar, and orienting visual feature of the contemporary city;

The restaurant at 601 East Colfax has a prominent location and is an established, familiar, and orienting visual feature of the contemporary city. Displaying the hallmark characteristics of both roadside architecture and the Googie style, including location along a high-traffic road and eye-catching design, this building is an orienting visual feature on Colfax. The building is also an established and familiar feature of the Colfax corridor. Due to its proximity to downtown, the capitol, and bars and theaters along Colfax, the restaurant became a community gathering space both for visitors and residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.

b) Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;

The building promotes the understanding of the urban environment through physical characteristics and rarity. The building is a rare and high-quality example of Googie architecture, which is rapidly disappearing in Denver. The majority of the other Googie style White Spot restaurants were heavily altered or demolished. While there are a few other buildings of this distinctive architectural style in the city, 601 East Colfax is an outstanding example of the rare Googie style in Denver.

Integrity:

Chapter 30, DRMC requires that a landmark designated property maintain its historic or physical integrity, defined as "the ability of a structure or district to convey its historic and architectural significance ...recognized as belonging to its particular time and place in Denver's history." The seven qualities that define integrity are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The existing property retains a high degree of integrity, within minimal alterations. The glass and aluminum of the windows were replaced, but maintained the same fenestration pattern. The building retains its original location and automobile-centric setting, feeling, and association. It also maintains its design, materials, and workmanship in its sloping geometric roofline, wide over-hanging eaves, stone veneer siding, and large window pattern.

Relate to a Historic Context/Theme:

The building is strongly related to roadside architecture and the culture of Colfax. Roadside architecture refers to buildings that are defined by their relationship to the road and the car culture of the post-war era. These buildings were designed for high visibility and quick recognition to serve those traveling by automobile. Colfax Avenue was initially a residential street, it was converted to a commercial corridor, and then evolved as it became a segment of U.S. 40 and adapted to the automobile culture of the 1950 and 60s. The building at 601 East Colfax Avenue reflects the transformation of Colfax and is part of the diversity and mixed-use of Denver's historic main street.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:
CLEMENTS ADD B336 L15 TO 19 & JW SMITHS ADD TO DENVER B399 L19 & 20

Public Review Process:

Community Planning & Development has met all posting and notification requirements delineated in Chapter 12 (Article III, Section 12-96) and Chapter 30 of the DRMC.

Notifications:

- Owner notification letters regarding the LPC public hearing
- City Council, Planning Board, and Building Inspection email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
 - The Points Historical Redevelopment Corp
 - Uptown on the Hill
 - Unsinkables, Inc.
 - East Side RNO
 - Center City Denver Residents Organization
 - Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc.
 - Colfax Ave. Business Improvement District
 - Denver Neighborhood Association, Inc.
 - Historic Denver, Inc
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - National Trust for Historic Preservation
 - State of Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments:

As of the date of this staff report, CPD has received no public comments regarding this application.

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation