

To: Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC)
From: Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: July 28, 2020
RE: Individual Landmark Designation for 900 East 1st Avenue, Carmen Court

Landmark Preservation Commission Suggested Motion:

I move to recommend approval and forward to City Council the landmark designation of 900 East 1st Avenue, application #2020L-002, based on the Landmark Ordinance criteria, C, D, F, and G, citing as findings of fact for this recommendation the application form, written comment, public testimony, and the this staff report.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2020L-002
Address: 900 East 1st Avenue
Zoning: G-MU-5, UO-3
Council: Council District 7, Jolon Clark
Owner(s): Multiple owners
Applicant(s): Multiple applicants

Case Summary:

On March 11, 2020, a Certificate of Demolition Eligibility (CDE) application for the property at 900 East 1st Avenue, also referred to as Carmen Court, was submitted to CPD. Landmark staff reviewed the property and found it had the potential to be an Individual Denver Landmark. Staff posted public notice of the CDE application. During the public notice period, three residents of Denver filed a Notice of Intent, which extended the posting period and initiated third-party facilitated stakeholder meetings. At the end of the 60-day posting period, no consensus had been reached through the stakeholder meetings and three Denver residents submitted an owner-opposed designation application. Staff reviewed the application and found that the application was complete and that the structure is eligible for designation. As such, staff set the public hearing before the Landmark Preservation Commission.

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 the structure must meet the following:

1. The structure maintains its integrity
2. The structure is more than 30 years old, or is of exceptional importance
3. The structure meets at least three of ten criteria
4. The LPC considers the structure's historic context

Criteria Evaluation:

Landmark staff found that the structure application meets the following criteria.



It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or type (Section 30-3(3)c);

The property embodies the characteristics of the Pueblo Revival style combined with Spanish Revival architectural elements. Since its founding in 1858, Denver has had a tradition of blending architectural styles to create an architectural vocabulary unique to this city. Carmen Court's design reflects this practice. Character defining features of the Pueblo Revival style that are seen in the building are multi-stories with stepped-back roof line, flat roof, parapets, earth-tone stucco, and straight-headed windows. As noted by both Virginia Savage McAlester and History Colorado, there is a link between Spanish Revival and the Pueblo Revival styles, with buildings often containing characteristics of each. This is seen in Carmen Court, with the decorative tiles, shed roofs, and arched entrances that often found in the Spanish Revival style. The use of steel windows at Carmen Court, while atypical of the Pueblo Revival and Spanish Revival styles, was an effort by the architect to incorporate contemporary window design into the building.



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It is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder (Section 30-3(3)d);

The building is a significant example of the work of recognized architect Burt L. Rhoads. Rhoads, prior to engaging in a private practice as an architect, worked as the Chief Engineer of the Gates Rubber Company, designing parts of the now demolished factory. According to city directories from 1917 - 1925, Rhoads worked as both an engineer and architect. His body of work spanned industrial, single-family residential, and apartment building design and construction, both in the United States and in England. Based on assessor records, he purchased Carmen Court in 1925. And, based on permit, photographic, and newspaper records, he designed the property and worked with Johnson Investment on the construction of it. This property illustrates Rhoads' expertise in designing and using an architectural form to fit the topography of a site as well as his experience with the Pueblo and Spanish Revival styles. As his latest known design in Denver and his only known multi-unit housing effort in Denver, Carmen Court represents a significant example of his work.



It represents an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood, community, or contemporary city, due to its prominent location or physical characteristics (Section 30-3(3)f);

Constructed in 1925, Carmen Court has become an established and familiar feature of the Speer Neighborhood. Through its distinctive architectural style, L-shaped layout, and location, at the intersection of East 1st Avenue and Emerson Street across the street from the Hungarian Freedom Park, it serves as a familiar feature of the neighborhood, and is considered a gateway to the neighborhood by the community. Carmen Court is highly visible to neighbors and, through the configuration of the space with its L-shaped layout, placement on the site, and greenspace, it connects to Hungarian Freedom Park and furthers the area's park-like atmosphere.

It promotes understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity (Section 30-3(3)g);

Carmen Court promotes an understanding and appreciation of Denver's urban environment through its style, location, and form. The Pueblo Revival architectural style, as it incorporates Spanish Revival elements into its design, is distinctive and unusual in Denver. Based on available research, Carmen Court appears to be the only Pueblo Revival-style multi-unit building in the city. Additionally, as Cherry Creek had a propensity for flooding, especially prior to the construction of the large retaining walls, the location up and away from creek illustrates the importance of building placement and why it was such a distance from the creek.

It is also a distinctive as a multi-unit building form with individual entrances. Constructed in the mid-1920s, it provided density and affordability with the multiple units, but allowed for a feeling of single-unit housing with separate entrances and private patio space. This form was popularized in southern California in the early twentieth century as Bungalow Courts and is similar to the garden court form. While referred to as Bungalow courts, the buildings could be designed in multiple architectural styles, as is seen in Carmen Court. As noted by Denver architectural historian Tom Simmons, the courts "promoted a specific style of living, providing the amenities of a single-style residence--privacy, gardens, porches--with the conveniences of an apartment- affordability, community, security." This is a distinctive example of Bungalow Court in Denver.



Integrity:

Chapter 30 requires that a landmark designated property maintain its integrity. Integrity is defined as “the ability of a structure or district to convey its historic, geographic, architectural, or cultural significance...recognized as belonging to its particular time and place in Denver’s history. The seven (7) qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity are” location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The property retains a high degree of integrity, within minimal changes. The property is still in the same location, maintaining excellent integrity of location. There have been changes to the property since original construction; however, some of the changes, such as sunken garages or patios as well as the addition of the garage, were within the period of significance. And, while some of the windows have been replaced, along with the addition of awnings, and minor patching of the stucco, the fenestration pattern remains, the awnings are reversible, and stucco is a material that requires repair over time. The changes do not adversely impact the overall integrity of the property. The structure retains its form and fenestration pattern as well as its materiality, maintaining good integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. The continued use as a residential property provides for strong integrity of feeling and association. Although there have been some changes to the surrounding area, the neighborhood is still residential in nature and retains integrity of setting.

Relate to a Historic Context/Theme and Period of Significance:

The construction of the property is tied to the growth of the area, the increased popularity of Pueblo Revival and Spanish Revival architectural styles due to the Panama-California Exposition, and the trend towards the development of Bungalow Courts.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

A PARCEL OF LAND SITUATED ON AND BEING LOTS 1 THRU 5 AND PARTS OF LOTS 6 AND 7 OF RILEYS SUBDIVISION OF LOT 2, SHAKELTON PLACE, CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER, STATE OF COLORADO, MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

BEGINNING AT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF LOT 1; THENCE SOUTH ALONG THE EAST LINE OF LOTS 1 THRU7, 174.15 FEET; THENCE ON AN ANGLE TO THE RIGHT OF 90°-11'-47" A DISTANCE OF 46.54 FEET; THENCE ON AN ANGLE TO THE RIGHT OF 90°-90'-02" A DISTANCE OF 38.22 FEET; THENCE ON AN ANGLE TO THE LEFT OF 90°-06'-27" A DISTANCE OF 60.25 FEET; THENCE ON AN ANGLE TO THE RIGHT OF 89°-48'-05" A DISTANCE OF 3.76 FEET; THENCE ON AN ANGLE TO THE LEFT OF 90°-03'-07" A DISTANCE OF 18.48 FEET TO A POINT ON THE EAST RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF EMERSON STREET; THENCE ON AN ANGLE TO THE RIGHT OF 89°-59'-40" AND ALONG SAID EAST RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE A DISTANCE OF 131.58 FEET TO A POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE SOUTH RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE OF EAST FIRST AVENUE; THENCE ON AN ANGLE TO THE RIGHT OF 89°-55'-30" AND ALONG SAID SOUTH RIGHT-OF-WAY LINE A DISTANCE OF 125.03 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING; CONTAINING 0.428 ACRES MORE OR LESS, AND SUBJECT TO AN EASEMENT FOR INGRESS AND EGRESS OVER THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED PROPERTY: THE EAST 46.54 FEET OF THE SOUTH 10.00 FEET OF LOT 6 OF RILEYS SUBDIVISION OF LOT 2, SHACKELTON PLACE, CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER, STATE OF COLORADO.

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 and Community Planning and Development email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications
 - West Washington Park Neighborhood Association
 - Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc.
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (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 five public comments regarding the Landmark Designation application.

- Public Comments submitted to CPD
 - One individual in support
 - Four individuals in opposition

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation
- Public comments received by 5:00pm, on Friday, July 24, 2020
- Summary of stakeholder meetings
- Evaluation of Proposed Landmark Designation of Carmen Court Condominiums, submitted by condominium owners and Hines Development
- Carmen Court Home Owners Association Response to the Hostile Denver Preservation Commission Individual Structure Landmark Designation Application, submitted by condominium owners