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THE VINOLY PLAN FOR COUNTRY CLUB GARDENS 15
This document has been prepared by the Landmark Preservation Commission (the “Commission”) in connection with adoption by the City and County of Denver of an ordinance designating Country Club Gardens as a district for preservation. The district is named Country Club Gardens Historic District and is referred to in these guidelines as the District.

The District boundaries are, generally, South Downing Street Parkway to the east, East Ellsworth Avenue to the north, South Ogden Street to the west, and the centerline of the existing alley to the south. The southern boundary extends to include the existing one-story garage structure located on the south side of the alley.

The ordinance creating the District (the “Designation Ordinance”) provides for the preservation of existing historic structures and landscaped courtyards and open space within Country Club Gardens, including the five existing multi-family buildings, three one-story garage structures and open space associated with them. The Designation Ordinance, the City’s Landmark Preservation Ordinance and its Design Guidelines for Landmark Structures and Districts (the “General Guidelines”) apply to the existing historic structures within Country Club Gardens.

The Designation Ordinance further provides that a portion of the Country Club Gardens site may be redeveloped. The Designation Ordinance in conjunction with the City’s Landmark Preservation Ordinance and these Country Club Gardens Design Guidelines provide for and describe the manner in which that portion of the site may be redeveloped. Under the Designation Ordinance, portions of two of the five multi-family buildings and the three one-story garage structures within the development area may be redeveloped.
be demolished once the Commission approves a design for replacement structures. All such replacement structures must comply with the General Design Guidelines and these Country Club Gardens Design Guidelines.

These Country Club Gardens Design Guidelines supplement the General Guidelines by providing additional guidance for new construction in Country Club Gardens, including, specifically, how new structures should relate to the original structures in Country Club Gardens. The General Guidelines focus on rehabilitation and alteration of historic structures and, therefore, apply to all existing structures in the District.

The special character of the Country Club Gardens Historic District is due to:

- the high quality of the architectural design; and
- the unique arrangement of its buildings, landscaped courtyards, and open spaces.

*The preparation of these Country Club Gardens Design Guidelines would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of Nancy L. Widmann who, on behalf of the applicants, assembled historical research regarding and photographs of the existing Country Club Gardens in connection with the initial application for designation of the District. Ms. Widmann has graciously granted permission for her research and photographs to be incorporated into these guidelines.*

Also essential to the document are the contributions of the Broe Companies in providing the illustrations and the Vinoly Plan that allowed all parties to visualize how compatible new development could be accommodated.

**Designation of Country Club Gardens Historic District**

In 1999, an application for designation was filed by the two co-applicants, the Colorado Historical Foundation and West Washington Park Neighborhood Association. These guidelines describe the development potential of the site and provide certainty to the owners, neighbors and the Commission about the potential redevelopment and expectations of its design.

In the months and years leading up to the designation, City staff, the applicants and the owner met on numerous occasions to discuss their respective concerns and to explore possibilities for the preservation of the key elements and attributes of Country Club Gardens while also preserving some of the owner’s development rights. A number of alternatives were explored and rejected before Rafael Vinoly, an internationally renowned architect, was invited to analyze Country Club Gardens and to propose a redevelopment concept for the site. The results of his efforts, which came to be known as the Vinoly plan, demonstrate that new development can be accommodated while retaining the historic character of the district as viewed from South Downing Street Parkway. A detailed description of the plan can be found in the appendix. (Note: the Vinoly Plan has not been reviewed relative to these guidelines, so inclusion does not constitute any approval or endorsement.)

**History of Country Club Gardens Historic District**

**Architectural Significance**

Country Club Gardens was constructed in 1940 as multiple dwelling housing. It is an excellent example of the International Style exemplified by the overall horizontality of the composition.

Country Club Gardens was designed by Fisher, Fisher and Hubbell Architects, a leading architecture firm in the Denver metropolitan area at the time, which designed many significant buildings in the Denver area. The firm’s principals were Arthur Addison Fisher (1878-1965), his nephew Alan Berney Fisher (1905-1978), and Edward L. Hubbell.
Among other building types, the firm designed residences, schools, hospitals, and commercial buildings. The firm’s designs are nationally esteemed and can be found in Denver, in Colorado, and in the Rocky Mountain west and beyond. Many of the firm’s buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are designated as local landmarks.

Responsibility for the construction of Country Club Gardens rested in the hands of master builder Nicholas G. Petry (1883-1950). Petry came to Denver in 1921 after building the Frontier Hotel in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He built both private and public buildings in Denver, including Sherman Tower, the University of Denver apartments, and several buildings at Fitzsimmons General Hospital and Buckley Field. He served as president of the Denver General Contractors Association and as a national director of the Associated General Contractors.

A significant amount of land area is devoted to open space within Country Club Gardens. Landscape architect M. Walter Pesman designed the landscaping with meticulous detail with both residents and passersby on the street in mind. The unique layout of the buildings provides for different views from different vantage points.

**Historical Significance**

Country Club Gardens was built in the post-depression, pre-World War II time period to fill the rental needs of Denver’s middle class. Every detail received attention in the design of this project, including the provision of open space. The project planners carried Denver’s park and parkway system from the streets and surrounding area onto the project site and used the courtyard areas as a method to tie the project together. The planners and architects created a special community, making no single building more desirable or spectacular than another. Each is nearly identical in design and has some connection to the courtyard areas. Each unit had unique features for the time, including each building being only one apartment deep, providing each apartment with cross ventilation, extra sunshine, minimal shared walls and privacy. Each set of six units shares front and rear entrances further enhancing the livable scale of this large project.

**Geographical Significance**

Country Club Gardens is located along South Downing Street Parkway, which is part of the locally and nationally recognized Denver parks and parkways system. Country Club Gardens is also unique in the Denver area and is a recognized feature within the neighborhood.

An aerial view of the existing buildings and courtyards.
Understanding Country Club Gardens as a Unique Place

Country Club Gardens has unique design features, including the symmetrical arrangement of buildings about two primary axes and the design of its buildings featuring multiple vertical planes, which lend visual depth to the façades and define outdoor spaces or courtyards. Country Club Gardens consists of 187 apartment units in 5 buildings. Along the south side of the site are three one-story garage buildings.

From the public perspective, the symmetrical arrangement of the buildings around the large courtyard bordering South Downing Street Parkway forms a unique and memorable image of the complex. The pedestrian scale that the buildings and landscaped courtyards and open spaces provide on all three perimeter streets is a significant feature.

Context—Defining Characteristics for Design Review

Context has two components, urban form and architectural form. Urban form is the relationship of the structures to the street, each other, and to the surrounding environs. Architectural form is defined as the stylistic characteristics of the structures, including form, mass and scale. One of the unique aspects of Country Club Gardens is the integration of its site composition and architecture. Country Club Gardens is internally very consistent, and it is distinct from its neighbors.

Site Composition

Country Club Gardens stands out as a special place because of the relationship of its structures to each other and to the street. From the public's point of view, South Downing Street Parkway is the “front door” to the complex.

Site Composition Characteristics

The site composition is one of the most important qualities about Country Club Gardens. Unique site planning integrates three- and four-story residential buildings and landscaped courtyards and open spaces (solids and voids). The three major components of the site composition are the axes, symmetry, and courtyards.

Axes

The east-west axis is perpendicular to South Downing Street Parkway and extends through the site to South Ogden Street. It is central to the unique quality of Country Club Gardens, both internally and from the vantage point of South Downing Street Parkway.
Views along this axis are continuous between the east and west sides of the site. The second axis, the north-south axis, is also a strong organizing element for the overall design of Country Club Gardens. The intersection of the two axes is a clearly perceived center-point from which buildings, courtyards, and walkways emanate.

**Symmetry**
The buildings are symmetrically arranged about the east-west axis and north-south axis to form a series of courtyards or negative spaces. From the aerial view, it is clear that the complex is symmetrical about the north-south axis. The internal courtyards and open spaces are symmetrical about the east-west axis, which is denoted by a continuous series of courtyards between Downing and Ogden.

**Landscapeed Courtyards and Open Space**
One of the project's largest courtyards addresses South Downing Street Parkway, creating a transitional space from the public realm of the parkway to the more private realm within Country Club Gardens. The courtyards provide a range of public, semi-private and private spaces. This variety of exterior spaces also provides interesting and shifting views from within and from without the complex.

The many positive attributes of the existing landscaped courtyards and open space, in terms of scale, form and edge condition, result largely from the relationship between open spaces and the surrounding buildings. The arrangement of the existing buildings forms a series of courtyards, which are negative spaces in terms of the site plan composition. The horizontal shifts in plan of the surrounding buildings create the distinctive scale and form of the courtyards and create a variety of spaces within and strong defining edges for the courtyards. Sculpted from the façades of the surrounding buildings, these edges help define the unique character of the courtyards.

**Setbacks**
Mature trees occupy generous setbacks along South Downing Street Parkway and South Ogden Street. Each perimeter street has its own setback character. Buildings and open space are placed symmetrically about the axis that intersects each of the three streets.

**Walkways and Pedestrian Circulation**
Within each courtyard are walkways that connect doorways within the courtyard and courtyards with each other. The walkway system is symmetrical about the north-south axis.

Landscape Design Characteristics

**Planting Design**
Formal arrangements of trees, shrubs and lawn accentuate the building’s architectural form. Plantings are specifically located to enhance the individual character of each of the courtyards. For example trees within the east and west courtyards enhance the linearity of the building, emphasizing the axial building arrangement. The ornamentals in the western courtyard provide a human scale and a shady walk. The shade and evergreen trees in the eastern courtyard frame the open lawn area.

Generally the planting arrangements are a mixture of formal lawn panels combined either with ornamental trees or with deciduous and evergreen trees. Shrubs are generally arranged as edge plantings either between a walk and a building, or along a solid wall, such as the garage walls.

Tree lawns occur at the three edges of the complex, adjacent to each of the three primary streets. Planting locations extend the complex's interior landscape patterns to the street edge, such as the Elm trees on Downing Street that align with the Blue Spruce trees in the eastern courtyard. Plantings enhance the visual connections between courtyards and between the complex and the street.

**Entrance Bays and Entrances Doors**
Plantings at individual building entries are medium to large sized shrubs with color and fragrant blossoms. Edge plantings occur between walks and buildings.

*As shown below, some of the courtyard areas are quite private.*
Materials
The lush garden setting is achieved through the gracious mixture of blue grass lawn panels, evergreen, deciduous and ornamental plantings that offer color, fragrance and variety for year-round interest. Tree lawns are bluegrass lawns with deciduous shade trees.

Architectural Form and Building Design

Building Form, Mass, and Scale Characteristics
The existing buildings within Country Club Gardens are all generally the same architecturally and are designed so the complex as a whole is more appealing than each of its components individually. International Style buildings emphasize the horizontal uniformly throughout the complex. The buildings are all three stories tall and the actual height follows the topography, which slopes down toward the north. The buildings are relatively narrow, one apartment wide, to allow views into the gardens from two directions. The flat roofs of the buildings have a narrow band across the top of the exterior walls to further emphasize the horizontal, which visually lowers the building heights.

The buildings on each side of the east/west axis are all the same height, but the site elevation drops down to the north behind the office building. This change allows for four stories on the north elevations of the buildings north of the axis. The apartments at the northwest corner of Ogden and Ellsworth have garden level apartments that are partially below grade.

The plan of each building is organized as an assemblage of two-unit modules. The form of the building is developed from stacking these modules about common stairwells. Each pair of units has an expression on the exterior of the building by either a jog in the building or an exterior balcony overlooking the courtyards. These attributes are further emphasized by the patterns of voids and shadows created by the balconies integrated into the façades.

Building Materials
Visual continuity of the complex is achieved through the consistent use of textures, colors, and patterns. Red brick is used for the main body of the buildings with narrow raised brick bands for accents. Light yellow glazed tiles horizontal banding provides a scaling device for the main body of the building sections at all window levels. Banding is two tiles wide separated by a narrow course of red brick. The color palette of the existing buildings is comprised primarily of the intrinsic colors of the materials. Steel casement windows with multiple panes are used for the entire complex. Stair railings found throughout
the site are simple round pipe rails. Superior quality of design, materials, and workmanship characterize the buildings.

**Architectural Details**

**Entrance Bays and Entry Doors** The entrances and interior stairs are in vertical entrance bays that occur on the ends or in the middle of the buildings. They are on both sides of the buildings with some entrances opening onto the courtyards. Each entrance bay serves six apartments. The stair bays contain a single entry door with a flat-roof canopy. Canvas awnings, which are not part of the original character, have been added to some of the canopies. Entrances are defined by surrounding the sides and top of the entry with light yellow tiles. The single entry doors have clear, full-height glass panels. The entry bay also has two vertical stair windows with multiple panes on the floors over the doors. The entrance bays on the corners are defined by narrow horizontal bands of raised red brick. The entrance bays in the middle of the buildings are stepped out and are flanked by stacked balconies.

**Balconies** The balconies are in tiers of three topped by a slightly sloping roof with the facia painted to match the window and door trim. The balconies have low brick walls. Open corners of the balconies have one vertical rectangular post.

**Windows** The steel casement windows throughout the complex are rectangular and have multiple panes. Larger windows alternate with smaller ones across the elevations at all three floors.

**Garages**

The garages are located along south edge of property. Four garages were originally aligned in two rows of two structures each row. The doors face each other across the driveway. One garage structure to the southwest has been demolished for the parking structure for Country Club Towers. The access is a driveway running east/west between the garages through the block from Downing Parkway to Ogden Street. There is a short interior driveway between the north garages at the south end of north/south axis. The massing, scale, and location of the garages are visually integrated and subordinate to the main buildings.

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*Entryways at Country Club Gardens are accented with contrasting tile surrounds.*

*The multiple planes and patterns of voids and shadows in the façades of existing buildings lend visual interest to the courtyard edges.*
Three garage buildings are located along the south edge of the district.

The remaining three garage are long narrow buildings with flat roofs and parapets with concrete caps at end and rear walls. Side and back walls are red brick matching the apartment buildings. They are divided into one-car bays with an overhead door (not original) in each bay. The garages turn the corner to form an ell with additional garages on each side at right angles to the longer garage structures. The transition at the corners of the ell is accomplished by a setback and rounded corner at the end walls. (Rounded corners are not seen anywhere else in the complex.) The back walls of the north garages function as tall garden walls and form right angle enclosures for the two adjacent gardens. The walls have brick pilasters and concrete caps along the top. Garage doors have horizontal segments that relate to the tile banding on the apartment buildings. Wide concrete pilasters separate the doors.

**Office Building**

The office building is located on the north-south axis near the center of the complex immediately north of the crossing of the axes. It contains electrical service on the lower level and an office on first level. There are stairs on each side of the building leading down to the lower garden levels behind the apartments along Ellsworth.

The change in site elevation creates a two level office building on the north side and one level on the south façade facing into the center of complex. The building relates to the apartments in materials and architectural detailing. The exterior is faced with red brick with horizontal bands of light yellow tile that match the apartment buildings. It has a rectangular plan with a flat roof with a wide band around the edge.

A projecting entry is created by a masonry wall with a large opening in the center set out from the south front of the building. This opening is now glazed, but may not have been originally. This entry has a flat roof. Around the edge of the roof is nonoriginal canvas that drops below the original width of the roof edge. Access to the front door is from either side of the projecting front wall entry. The façade is symmetrical with a center entry door flanked by brick pilasters and corner metal windows with multiple panes. The single windows on the east and west sides are rectangular metal casements with multiple panes similar to those in the apartments.

On the north rear elevation there is an access door into the lower level of the building with stairs leading down below grade. Low masonry walls with concrete caps protect each side of the stair opening. The lower level on the north has horizontal bands of raised brick. The top level has a three-row panel of horizontal tile banding in the center flanked by two windows. There are two small vertical metal windows with multiple panes on each side of the tile panel the north rear.

**Surrounding Neighborhood**

To the south of Country Club Gardens are two taller buildings, The Norman, a six-story building containing privately owned condominiums, and Country Club Towers, a 22-story apartment building. To the east, across South Downing Street Parkway is
the Denver Country Club. To the west and north are structures typical of the neighborhood including houses, duplexes, and small apartment buildings of a variety of ages. More distant are high rise buildings along the Speer Corridor. The detached walk and tree lawn is a consistent characteristic of the neighborhood.

Scope of Design Review

As for all Denver landmarks, any exterior alteration of structures in the District requiring a building, zoning or other permit must be reviewed and approved by the Commission before the permit may be issued. For the criteria used to review alterations to existing buildings within the District, reference should be made to the General Guidelines, as well as these guidelines. New construction will be evaluated through comparison of the proposed new construction with the defining characteristics of the district.
Design review goals are the guiding principals used in developing the specific guidelines. They present the characteristics that need to be preserved to ensure that Country Club Gardens retains the unique qualities that have led it to become an important landmark in Denver.

Preserve the Integrity of Country Club Gardens. Any new development shall be designed in a manner that preserves the buildings that will remain and promotes an integrated design solution for the entire Country Club Gardens.

Maintain the Symmetrical Layout of Country Club Gardens. Any new development shall be designed in a manner that reinforces the symmetrical layout of buildings and landscaped courtyards and open space.

Preserve site composition and architectural character of Country Club Gardens. New structures shall reinforce the character of the existing buildings and landscaped courtyards and open space as the organizing elements of the site. Country Club Gardens shall be developed in a manner that reinforces the pattern of open spaces between the buildings so that the image of the site from the vantage point of the three perimeter streets is reinforced.

Demonstrate a high quality of architectural design and integrity of materials. Design of new buildings shall reflect great care and attention to detail in design of features and use of materials. New buildings should be a reflection of their own time, not a replication of the past.
DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

THESE

Country Club Gardens Design Guidelines first address urban form issues, such as landscape and site design, and second address architectural form issues such as building mass, form, scale, materials and details.

A. Urban Form and Site Composition

The distinctive features of the urban form of Country Club Gardens are the symmetrical layout of its site plan about east-west and north-south axes and the unique arrangement of its buildings about these axes to form a series of interconnected courtyards which promote both privacy and community interaction.

A1. The Axes and Symmetry

a The site planning for any new construction shall respect and reinforce the axial arrangement of buildings and open spaces. The axes are readily apparent in the site plan and in the building façades.

b Original axial views and associated open space along the east-west axis shall be preserved at the ground plane. A new structure blocking such a view will not be allowed.

c New construction shall respect and reinforce the center open space that is created by the site composition.

d The site plan for new construction and any new buildings shall be designed to preserve and reinforce the symmetrical layout of buildings and courtyards about the two axes.

A2. Landscaped Courtyards and Open Space

a New development shall respect and reinforce the overall character of the site composition plan, though new buildings may cover more land area than the existing buildings.

b New development shall incorporate new courtyards that reinforce the pattern of existing landscaped courtyards and open space of County Club Gardens.

c New buildings shall be designed to respect the original relationships between buildings and courtyards and to complement the form, mass and scale of the courtyards.

A4. Setbacks

a If a new building is constructed along a street frontage, it shall maintain the same setback as the existing buildings.

b Mature trees within the setback area shall be retained.

A4. Walkways and Pedestrian Orientation

a Walkways should be built within County Club Gardens to reinforce the pedestrian-friendly environment.

b New walkways shall respect and reinforce the historic patterns of the existing walkways.
B. Site and Landscape Design

a New plantings shall respect and reinforce the historic patterns of the existing plantings.

b Original site features, including mature trees, should be retained.

C. Architectural Form and Building Design

The guidelines that follow address architectural form of new construction, including both new structures and additions to existing structures.

C1. Preservation and New Construction

a New buildings may be constructed within the Development Area shown in the figure on pages 10 and 12. All existing buildings and landscaped courtyards and open space outside the development area shall be retained.

b Any new buildings shall minimize change to the sun-shade conditions of existing landscaped courtyards and open space. As part of any plans for new construction, the applicant shall provide a sun-shade analysis of such conditions and the impact of the new buildings.

C2. Building Form, Mass and Scale

a New buildings shall be constructed only within the Development Area. New buildings shall not exceed 300 feet in height, measured from historic grade and including all mechanical, elevator, and stair penthouses.

b All new buildings shall incorporate horizontal shifts in plan and other features to create new courtyards that respect and reinforce existing landscaped courtyards and open space.

c New buildings shall provide transition from the existing buildings and landscaped courtyards and open space to the new buildings.

1. Stepbacks shall be required at two locations: along the west side of the development area and at the southeastern most edge of the development area.

1. Required stepbacks shall be a minimum of 25 feet in depth and shall be provided at the following heights: 60 feet or below; between the lower stepback and 120 feet, and between the second stepback and 240 feet.

2. Stepbacks of up to 25 feet in depth should be used to provide transition from the existing courtyards.

C3. Building Materials

a Brick, in unit sizes and colors similar to those used in the existing buildings should be the primary material used on exterior façades of all new buildings.

b Different materials may be used as accents on the façades of all new buildings in a manner similar to the way tile and glass are used in the existing buildings.

c Creative uses of brick, tile and glass are encouraged as part of the design of new buildings.

d Some use of other building materials that are sympathetic to or complementary with these materials is also encouraged in the design of new buildings.

C4. Architectural Details

a Windows

The arrangement, size and proportion of windows in the new buildings should complement the size and proportion of windows in existing buildings at Country Club Gardens.

b Balconies

1. Balconies should be incorporated into the design of all new buildings. The balconies should be designed as integrated components of the façades of the new buildings.

1. Balconies should serve to maintain a connection between dwelling units and the courtyards and other landscaped open areas. Balconies should establish patterns of voids and shadows on the new buildings’ façades similar to the patterns appearing on the façades of the existing buildings.

c Porches and Entries

Courtyards should be activated with entrances into buildings and units to reinforce the existing pattern of entrances.

d Façade Details

The design of the façades for any new building should incorporate horizontal banding and other details similar to those found in the existing buildings of the District.
C5. Color
a The palette of colors and the arrangement of those colors on the façades should be similar to the palette and arrangement on the existing buildings in the District.

b The color of painted elements, such as window frames and doors in the façades of new buildings should match the colors of corresponding elements in the existing buildings in the District.

c Colors of exterior finish materials, window frames and other elements of any new buildings may include an expanded palette of colors, so long as such colors are sympathetic to or complement the palette of colors found in the existing portions of Country Club Gardens.

D. Parking, Access and Secondary Structures

D1. Parking Structures
a Underground parking structures are limited to the Below Grade Development Area shown in the Sanborn map illustration on pages 10 and 12.

b Any above grade parking must comply with all guidelines related to buildings.

c No surface parking shall be located outside the development area.

d No surface parking shall be located in a new center courtyard on the western portion of the site adjacent to Ogden Street.

D2. Above Grade Parking Structures and Other Secondary Buildings
a Siting of garages and secondary buildings shall retain visual axial connections at all levels including the ground and garden level.

b The massing of parking and secondary structures shall be integrated with the massing of the new structures.

c Building footprints shall be consistent with the overall site design with respect to symmetry, axial relationships.

d Parking structures shall be screened all sides, including the top and shall be faced with materials similar to those of other buildings or surfaces.

e Fenestration shall be consistent with the overall building design to lessen the façade variation between garage uses and other uses on the site.

f Openings shall be screened to reduce night lighting impact to both the site and adjacent areas.

g Ramps shall not be visible.

D3. Vehicular Access, Support, and Movement
a Site access shall follow historical patterns.

b Exposed surface parking shall be minimal and where not avoidable, be screened to minimize its impact to the project and surrounding area and be limited to the Development Area.

c Service access, truck docks, service delivery areas, etc. shall be secondary accesses and be minimized by screening and site configuration.

d Passenger drop off areas, i.e. porte cocheres, shall be integrated into overall building design.

Other new secondary structures should remain subordinate to the primary structures in Country Club Gardens, but should incorporate similar architectural details where possible and appropriate.