



STAFF REPORT

This document is the staff's comparison of the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation, Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts, the Landmark Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 30, Revised Municipal Code) and other applicable adopted area guidelines as applied to the proposed application. It is intended to provide guidance during the commission's deliberation of the proposed application. Guidelines are available at www.denvergov.org/preservation

Project: #2025-COA-482 **LPC Meeting:** April 7, 2026
Address: 101 West 14th Avenue Parkway – Greek Theater **Staff:** Brittany Bryant
Historic District: Civic Center
Year structure built: c.1918 (Period of Significance: 1909-1979)
Council District: #10 - Chris Hinds
Applicant: Studio Gang | Studiotrope | OLIN | Mundus Bishop

Past LPC Action:

Meeting Date: October 5, 2021

Civic Center Next 100 Discussion Item

Description: Presentation of projects under development as part of the Civic Center Next 100 project

Meeting Date: July 23, 2024

Civic Center Next 100 Discussion Item

Description: Master Plan Update

Meeting Date: November 26, 2024

#2024-COA-832 101 W 14th Ave Pkwy, Greek Theatre – Civic Center

Description: Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context for Stage Alterations, New Canopy Structure, and General Park Improvements

Motion by N. Foussianes: I move to approve application #2024-COA-832 for the Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context submittal at 101 West 14th Avenue Parkway – the Greek Theater, as per Civic Center design guidelines 3, 3b, c, e, X, design guidelines 2.55, 2.69, character-defining features for the Civic Center historic district, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report.

Second: L. Sykes

Vote: 4 in favor, 2 opposed (G. Johnson and R. Brown), 0 abstained, motion fails, status quo maintained

Meeting Date: January 21, 2025

#2024-COA-832 101 W 14th Avenue Pkwy, Greek Theatre – Civic Center

Description: Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context for Stage Alterations, New Canopy Structure, and General Park Improvements

Motion by C. McInnis: I move to approve application #2024-COA-832 for the Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context submittal at 101 West 14th Avenue Parkway – the Greek Theater, as per Civic Center design guidelines 3, 3b, c, e, X, design guidelines 2.55, 2.69, character-defining features for the Civic Center historic district, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report.

Second: G. Dennis

Vote: 8 in favor, 1 opposed (G. Johnson), 0 abstained, (8-1-0), motion passes

Meeting Date: July 15, 2025

#2025-COA-482 101 W 14th Avenue Parkway – Civic Center

Description: Greek Theater Alterations, Phase II: Design Details

Motion by E. Warzel: I move to approve application #2025-COA-482 for the Phase II: Design Detail submittal at 101 West 14th Avenue Parkway – the Greek Theater, as per Civic Center design guidelines 3, 3b, c, e, f, g, h, l, X, design guidelines 2.55, 2.69, character-defining features for the Civic Center historic district, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report.

Second: B. Samyn

Vote: 4 in favor, 3 opposed (E. Hazen, C. McInnis, N. Foussianes), 1 abstained (R. Brown), (4-3-1); motion fails

Motion by C. McInnis: I move to continue application #2025-COA-482 for the Phase II: Design Detail submittal at 101 West 14th Avenue Parkway – the Greek Theater to August 5, 2025.

Second: R. Brown

Vote: Unanimous in favor, (8-0-0), motion passes

Meeting Date: August 5, 2025

#2025-COA-482 101 West 14th Avenue Parkway – Civic Center

Description: Greek Theater Alterations, Phase II: Design Details

Motion by L. Sykes: I move to approve application #2025-COA-482 for the Phase II: Design Detail submittal at 101 West 14th Avenue Parkway – the Greek Theater, as per Civic Center design guidelines 3, 3b, c, e, f, g, h, l, X, design guidelines 2.55 and 2.69, character-defining features for the Civic Center Historic District, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report.

Second: E. Caswell-Dyer

Friendly amendment by E. Caswell-Dyer: correct guideline referenced a “l” to “i”.

Amendment accepted by Motioner and Seconder

Vote: Unanimous in favor, (6-0-0), motion passes

Project Scope Under Review:

Revision to Planter Wall Demolition Scope

Staff Summary:

The project team—comprising Studio Gang, Studiotrope, OLIN, and Mundus Bishop—along with the City and County of Denver (the property owner), is requesting approval to demolish additional historic fabric for the Greek Theater project. The project involves constructing a new stage and canopy structure in at the Greek Theater in Civic Center Park, as well as general park improvements and alterations.

Civic Center Park is the heart of civic life in Denver, flanked by the Colorado State Capitol to the east and the City and County Building to the west. It has long served as a gathering place for some of the state’s most significant civic and cultural events, including remembrance vigils, political speeches, climate protests, and annual traditions such as Denver Pride, A Taste of Colorado, parades, the holiday light display at the City and County Building, and the Denver Christkindl Market.

Civic Center Park originated from a series of improvements proposed by Mayor Robert Speer as part of the City Beautiful movement in Denver. In 1916, Speer hired Edward H. Bennett—a protégé of Daniel Burnham—to design the park. Bennett incorporated ideas from earlier plans by Charles Mulford Robinson and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and added key features such as the Greek Theater, the Voorhies Memorial, the seal pond, and the realignment of Colfax Avenue and 14th Avenue Parkway to frame the park. The park officially opened in 1919. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, designated a Denver Landmark Historic District in 1976, and named a National Historic Landmark in 2012.

In 2022, the Civic Center Next 100 plan was released to implement and build upon the 2005 Master Plan. Denver Parks and Recreation, in partnership with the Civic Center Conservancy, developed the plan to support traditional uses and revitalize the park. Public feedback centered on four key areas:

1. Bannock Street
2. The Greek Theater
3. The Central Promenade
4. The Central Gathering Space

The Next 100 Project will begin with alterations to the Greek Theater. In 2021, the Landmark Preservation Commission reviewed a conceptual proposal for a new canopy structure, an expanded stage, and accessible pathways through the Greek Theater. That proposal included building a canopy around and over the theater, covering and expanding the stage floor, and adding ramps from the South Plaza into the Greek Theater and around the stage.

In October 2023, the City hired Studio Gang to lead the project and address several concerns raised in earlier design workshops, including reducing the canopy's impact on the historic theater. In July 2024, the project returned to the Commission as a discussion item—both to reacquaint the Commissioners with the Civic Center Next 100 Plan and to gather early feedback on Studio Gang's proposed reorientation of the space.

In November 2024 and January 2025, the Commission reviewed Phase I: Mass, Form, and Context for the stage alterations, new canopy structure, and broader park improvements. During the Phase I reviews, the Commission noted that:

- The overall site plan's detailing would be a critical element of Phase II review.
- The proposal created stronger connections between the park and the Cultural Complex to the south.
- The approved Phase I approach demonstrated greater sensitivity to the historic integrity of the park and better addressed issues of sun exposure and accessibility compared to the 2021 concept.
- Traffic circulation and park access remain major challenges.

In July and August 2025, the Commission reviewed the Phase II: Design Details for the stage alterations, new canopy structure, broader park improvements and Gang of 19 Educational Garden and Memorial. During the Phase II reviews, the Commission favorably received most material but noted that:

- Gang of 19 Memorial materials should be of a quality equal to or greater than those used throughout Civic Center Park and within the surrounding garden spaces.
- Elevator House screen material and color should be integral to the design and reflect a level of quality consistent with the canopy structure.

Since Commission approval, permitting and construction on the project have commenced. On February 24, 2026, Denver Parks and Recreation contacted Landmark Preservation staff to notify them that removal of historic materials would begin and that the contractor, GH Phipps, would mark the extent of demolition on site to accommodate the ADA path and its associated footer. Parks also inquired whether Landmark staff would like to visit the site to observe existing conditions.

On March 6, 2026, Landmark staff was asked to conduct an immediate site visit with representatives from Denver Parks and Recreation, Mundus Bishop, and GH Phipps to view an unanticipated construction issue. During the visit, GH Phipps identified a grading issue affecting a portion of the planter wall that had previously been proposed for preservation underneath the new bowl and ADA pathway. This condition creates a conflict with both the ADA ramp footer location and the required grading for the ramp. Specifically, the remaining three stepped sections of the wall are located where the ramp footer must be placed, and the necessary ADA-compliant slope requires cutting through

these remaining steps. The project team is seeking to demolish the remaining three stepped sections of the planter wall on each side of the Greek Theater to allow for the ADA-compliant slope pathway and the ramp footer. The removed granite cladding will be retained on site and buried adjacent to the remaining footing as a means of protecting the material for possible future restoration needs. A portion of the existing concrete backing wall will remain in place. All other portions of the concrete wall will be demolished.



Figure 1: Portion of Planter Wall in Question: The upper half of the granite has been removed, as previously approved for demolition by the LPC. The lower half of the wall remains intact.



Figure 2: Detail View of Wall in Question: Spray paint markings indicate the location of the proposed footer.

Excerpted from Denver's Civic Center Design Guidelines, March 17, 2009

Guidelines	Meets Guidelines?	Comments
<p>X. Greek Theater and Colonnade of Civic Benefactors</p> <p>b. Contributing Features:</p> <p>Contributing features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Greek Theater structure and amphitheater, Colonnade of Civic Benefactors and its forecourts, and east and west walls • Lion Statues, Lion Fountains and Allan True murals • Balustrade Wall, colonnades, lights and steps to Lower Terrace <p>c. Standards:</p> <p>1. Rehabilitation shall be the primary approach to modifications to the Greek Theater and Colonnade of Civic Benefactors.</p> <p>2. Preserve and rehabilitate the Greek Theater using accepted preservation practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore original materials before replacement (Section V.f. Materials page 38). • Preserve the Greek Theater structure including the semi-circular form and original materials. • Allow modifications that provide universally accessible routes, ensuring that modifications are fully integrated with the historic design of the Greek Theater. <p>d. Guidelines:</p> <p>1. Encourage the continued use of the Greek Theater as Civic Center's primary performance venue.</p> <p>Allow for modifications to enhance its use as a performance venue, ensuring that modifications are compatible with its historic design.</p> <p>2. If modifications to the Greek Theater are needed to assist with its continued use as Civic Center's premier performance venue, follow these guidelines:</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>While the planter wall is not called out specifically as a contributing feature, it is part of the Greek Theater structure, and the granite cladding on the wall is original to the period of construction.</p> <p>The Civic Center guidelines encourage modifications that provide universally accessible routes while remaining fully integrated with the historic design of the Greek Theater.</p> <p>A portion of the planter wall must be demolished to accommodate a fully integrated accessible path.</p> <p>Although the new bowl and ADA pathway largely sit atop the historic fabric with minimal attachment, a footer is required to ensure the ADA pathway is structurally secure. That footer must be located where the remaining three stepped sections of the planter wall are located.</p> <p>The historic granite will be retained on site, buried, and could be reinstalled as cladding if the wall is ever reconstructed. Much of the planter wall will remain intact beneath the new bowl.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subordinate any modifications to the mass and scale of the Greek Theater. Respect the architectural scale of Civic Center and the Greek Theater (Section V.c. Architectural Scale, page 28). • Retain the iconic presence of the Greek Theater. Do not obscure any façade or architectural detailing with new modifications. • Ensure that any modifications are equal to, or match the design excellence of the Greek Theater, are compatible with its neoclassical aesthetic yet clearly of its own time. • Ensure that modifications do not attach to or impact the Greek Theater or its contributing features. Ensure all ancillary features are removable with no impact to the historic fabric. 		
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Excerpted from Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts, March 3, 2026

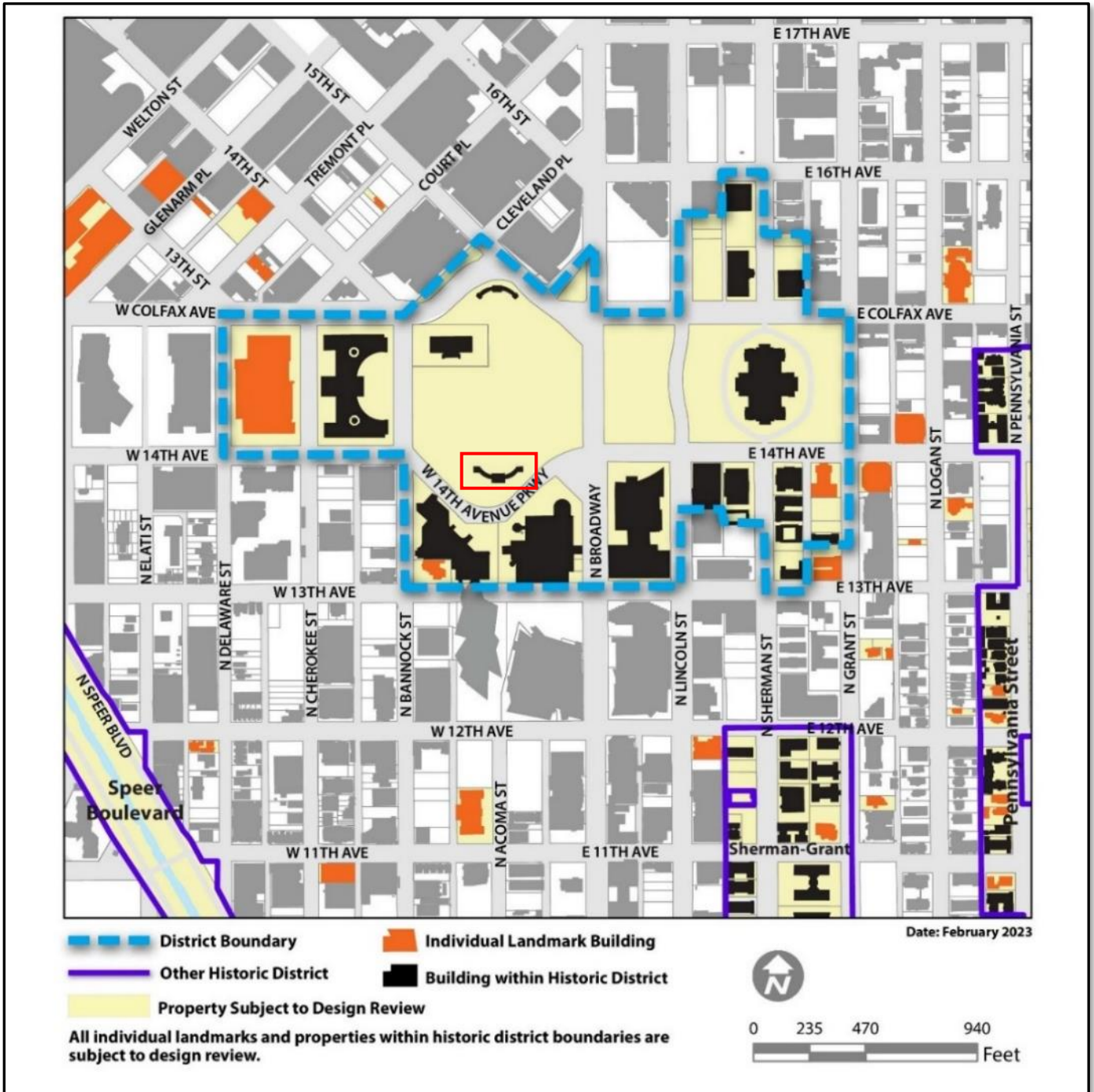
Guidelines	Meets Guidelines?	Comments
<p>2.11.1 Preserve the character-defining elements of a civic or institutional building. These can include:</p> <p>a. Site features such as landscaped front, side and rear setbacks and parking in rear or off-site</p> <p>b. High quality materials such as brick and stone, clearly articulated stone base, and tile, slate or metal roofs</p> <p>c. Four-sided architecture.</p>	Yes	<p>The Greek Theater will largely be preserved.</p> <p>Steps into the Greek Theater and a small portion of the planter wall will be demolished to provide accessible routes and accessible new bowl seating.</p> <p>A below grade stair currently covered with a metal grate will be demolished. These are original materials, but demolition is limited and well below 40%, which is considered total demolition by the Landmark Preservation Commission. Historic materials will largely be retained or covered with a reversible treatment.</p> <p>The Greek Theater will remain four-sided architecture and the proposed new canopy, while simple, will have four-sided architecture as well.</p> <p>The project design will allow users to experience the Greek Theater from all sides and will bring more activation to the south side of the structure.</p>
<p>2.13.1 Do not demolish contributing buildings to a historic district or historic buildings with individual landmark designation.</p>	Yes	<p>The Greek Theater will remain intact; however, a contributing element associated with the site will be demolished. Specifically, a portion of the planter wall is proposed to be totally removed to accommodate an ADA-accessible feature. The</p>

		<p>Commission has previously approved partial demolition of this planter wall. Due to unforeseen circumstances, a greater extent of demolition is now required to achieve the necessary accessibility improvements.</p> <p>Where historic fabric is removed, the granite will remain buried on site. If the new stage and bowl are ever demolished, this portion of the planter wall could be reconstructed, and the historic granite could be reinstalled as cladding on the reconstructed wall.</p>
<p>2.16.2 When adding accessibility features to historic civic/institutional buildings, or other buildings that are located on a landscaped site, ensure compatibility with the historic site.</p> <p>a. Integrate ramps with the building's architecture and landscape setting.</p> <p>b. Consider providing access by gently re-sloping a large lawn and eliminating the need for railings, ensuring that the historic character of the building and site are not negatively impacted.</p> <p>c. Place ramps behind historic features such as low walls or railings, ensuring that they remain easy to find.</p> <p>e. Avoid installing pre-manufactured steel ramps or wheelchair lifts on the primary façade(s) of a historic building.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The proposed pedestrian loop will connect the central Promenade with the Greek Theater and Cultural Complex. This loop is based on historic pathways from the 1918 Bennett Plan.</p> <p>The proposed accessibility will be integrated into the site and landscape.</p> <p>No pre-manufactured ramps or lifts are proposed.</p>

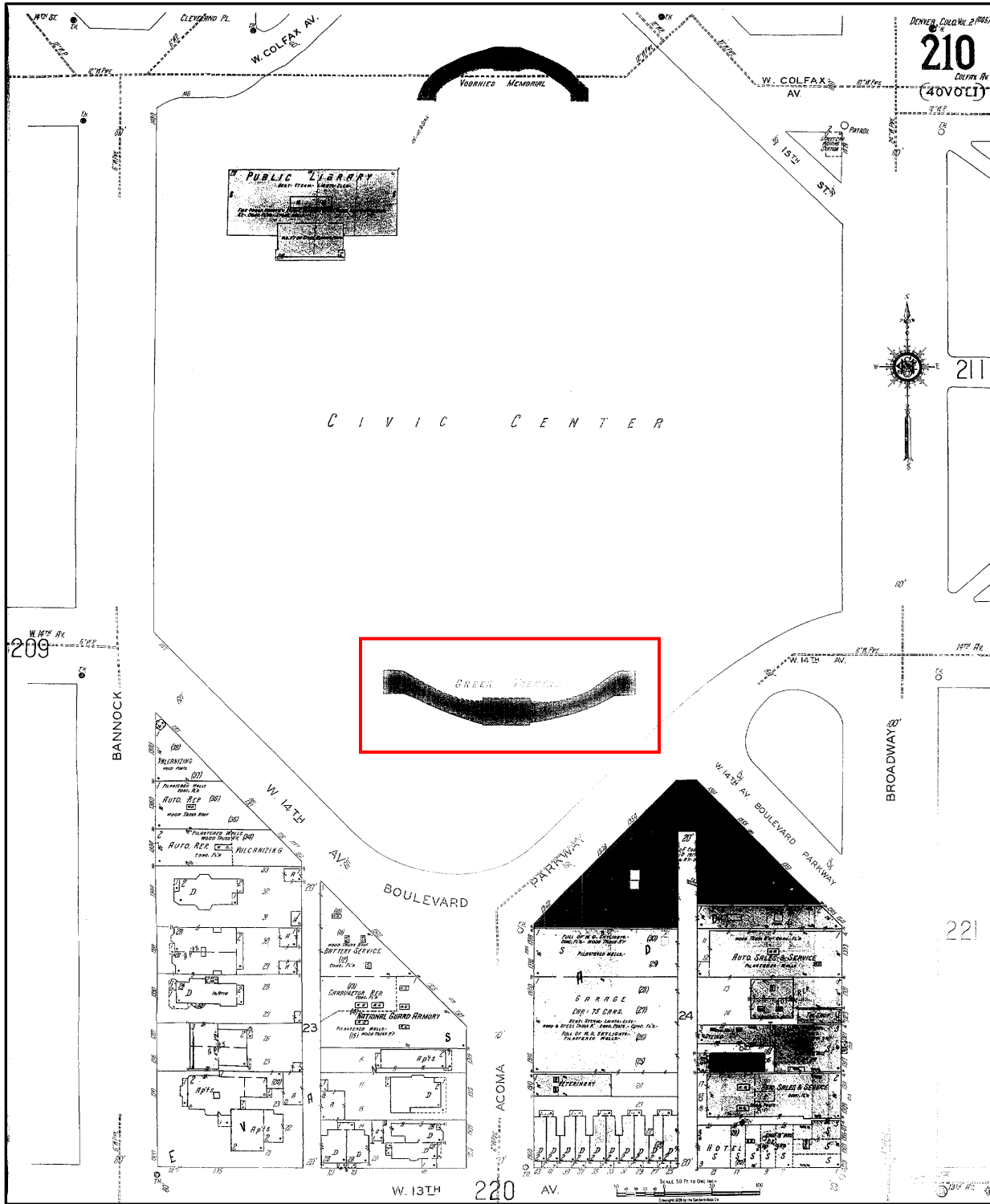
Basis: Demolition of historic contributing fabric within the Greek Theater project remains limited, and historic materials will be retained on site near their original locations. These historic elements have been thoroughly documented and could be reconstructed in the future using the original materials. The limited demolition is necessary to accommodate an ADA-accessible feature—a modification that enhances the Greek Theater and Civic Center Park and ensures its continued use as a performance venue and the heart of civic life in Denver.

Suggested Motion: I move to APPROVE application #2025-COA-482 for the revision to the planter wall demolition scope at 101 W 14th Avenue Parkway – the Greek Theater, as per Civic Center design guidelines X, design guidelines 2.11.1, 2.13.1, 2.16.2, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report.

Civic Center Historic District with the Greek Theater outlined in red



1929 Sanborn Map with the Greek Theater outlined in red.



END