



## STAFF BRIEF

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](http://www.denvergov.org/preservation)

<b>Address:</b>	4801 N Julian St.	<b>LPC Meeting:</b>	May 5, 2026
<b>Name of Property:</b>	Wat Buddhawararam	<b>Staff:</b>	Kara Hahn
<b>Council District:</b>	#1 - Amanda Sandoval		
<b>Applicant/Owner:</b>	Wat Buddhawararam of Denver Inc.		

### Project Scope Under Review:

National Register of Historic Places Nomination

In accordance with Colorado's Certified Local Government (CLG) guidelines, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places must be presented to the local historic preservation commission for review and comment.

**Please Note:** After transmitting this nomination to us for review, History Colorado spoke with the National Park Service about the National level of significance. It was determined that the nomination should be changed to State level of significance. The changes to the nomination will be made after the Colorado State Review Board meeting.

### Staff Summary:

**Recommendation:** The National Register nomination be FORWARDED to the Keeper of the National Register at the State level of significance, with the recommended edits noted below.

**Basis:** Wat Buddhawararam or the Denver Thai Temple is eligible for the National Register at the State level under Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage – Thai in association with Religion and under Social History – Immigrant History. Wat (temples) serve as the traditional center of social life for Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhists - as both a place to practice their religion and a place to socialize and maintain their connections to other Thai people. This dual religious and social purpose is seen in the three hundred other Thai, Lao, and Cambodian wat in the United States. This social function extends across generations in diaspora wat, with the wat serving as the space for youth and adults alike to socialize with their cultural peers. For the youth of these diaspora wat, participation in cultural programming, such as traditional music and dance, is an important vehicle for maintaining their connections to their compatriots through the practice of their traditional cultures.

The Denver Thai Temple hosted the First Meeting of the Thai Sangha in the United States in 1976, making it the sixth oldest temple in the US. It is also the oldest remaining consecrated Thai temple in the United States (in 1978). The period of significance is from the beginning of the temple in 1976 to 1989, when the Thai Language and Culture School was established. Local monks live onsite and attend rituals for a lay community of primarily Thai immigrants and their children, but also a handful of Sri Lankan Buddhists and Americans of non-Buddhist backgrounds. The founders and early congregants came to Colorado through an early wave of Thai immigration. Most of these immigrants were skilled workers, upper class individuals, and those sponsored to immigrate through familial or commercial ties to others. The second wave of Thai immigration consists of the Thai spouses of American servicemen who were stationed in Thailand during the Vietnam War. More significantly, the temple helped later waves of immigration from Southeast Laos and Cambodia in the 1970s to 1980s and Myanmar in the early 2000s to 2010s settle in Colorado.

The Wat Buddhawararam community is one of the oldest Thai immigrant communities in the US. At the time of Wat Buddhawararam's consecration in 1978, there were only five other named Thai temples existed in the country and no others in Colorado. Due to its early founding and consecration, and the lack of other temples in Colorado, it is significant at the State level for its direct connection with the religious and social American-Thai communities in the state.

**Staff Comments:** Staff finds that the Denver Thai Temple is eligible for the National Register at the State level, and recommends forwarding to the Keeper. However, we also recommend a few edits to the nomination. We recommend that the Summary Paragraph on page 4 includes a brief overview of the history and significance of the property (similar to the above Basis or the Importance of the Wat to Community on page 28). We would also recommend a careful edit of the document for typos, word choice, and clarity.

Suggested Motion: I move to RECOMMEND that the National Register nomination for the Wat Buddhawararam at 4801 N Julian St. be forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places at the State level of significance, with the recommended changes to the Summary Paragraph and a careful edit, per presented testimony, submitted documentation, and information provided in the staff report.

END