



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Community Planning and Development

Planning Services

Plan Implementation

Landmark Preservation

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**TO: Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Jeanne Robb, Chair and Judy Montero, Co-Chair**

FROM: Savannah Jameson, Community Planning & Development

DATE: January 17, 2012

**RE: Proposed Designation of a Landmark for Preservation:
1475 Elizabeth Street – Bonfils Memorial Theater/Lowenstein
Theater**

I. LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

A parcel of land located in the Northwest One-quarter of Section 1, Township 4 South, Range 68 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado, more particularly described as follows: UNIT 1, LOWENSTEIN CONDOMINIUMS, according to the map thereof, recorded October 11, 2006 under Reception No. 2006162720, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

II. HISTORY OF THE APPLICATION

- The full Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) reviewed the application on August 16, 2011 and found it to be complete and the building eligible for designation.
- LPC held the public hearing on January 3, 2012. LPC voted unanimously to forward the application to City Council with a recommendation of approval.

III. LANDMARK PRESERVATION COMMISSION FINDINGS

Significance

1475 Elizabeth Street meets the criteria for designation, meeting criteria 1C History and 2A and 2B Architecture.

1475 Elizabeth Street is a distinctive building that was an integral part of Denver's rich theater history. The theater was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, Smithsonian number 5DV.4045. 1475 Elizabeth Street meets the criteria for local designation in the following criteria:

CONT.

Historical Significance

To have historical importance, the structure shall be more than 30 years old or have extraordinary importance to the architectural or historical development of Denver, and shall:

c) Have direct and substantial association with a person or group of persons who has influence on society.

The Bonfil Memorial Theater/Lowenstein Theater is associated with three influential Denver entities; Helen Bonfils, the Denver Civic Theater, and Henry Lowenstein. The Denver Civic Theater was founded in cooperation with the University of Denver. When the theater outgrew its space Helen Bonfils donated the Bonfils Memorial Theater to the Denver Civic Theater in honor of her parents. Bonfils was influential in a variety of capacities. Most significantly she was the owner and Secretary Treasurer of the *Denver Post* which was founded by her father, Frederick G. Bonfils. She was involved in many causes including sexual and racial equality, social, and religious causes. Throughout her life she was involved in theater both as a patron and actress. Bonfils personally invited Henry Lowenstein to be a set, costume, and lighting designer for the Denver Theater. He was named producer at Bonfils Memorial Theater in 1967. Lowenstein was influential in establishing the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. The Bonfils Memorial Theater, at 1475 Elizabeth Street, was renamed the Lowenstein Theater in 1985.

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;

1475 Elizabeth Street is an exemplary example of the Art Moderne architectural style. The smooth surfaces, curved corners, and horizontal emphasis of the theater are defining features of the Art Moderne style. The large panels of glass, flat roofs, and the use of aluminum for trim further defines the building as an example of the Art Moderne style.

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

1475 Elizabeth Street is the work of the prominent Denver architect, John K. Monroe. Monroe began his career as Jacques Benedict's chief assistant. He later started his own practice in 1932. Monroe became the principal architect for the Catholic Archdiocese of Denver and designed many churches and schools throughout Denver in this capacity. 1475 Elizabeth Street is one of Monroe's largest secular projects. The theater was designed using Monroe's signature buff colored brick with cream colored terra cotta trim. This is a unique example of a theater designed in the Art Moderne style.

LPC Recommendation:

On January 3, 2012 LPC voted to approve the 1475 Elizabeth Street application and recommend to City Council approval of the designation citing as findings of fact the staff memo dated January 3, 2012 and public testimony.

END