

1 **BY AUTHORITY**

2 ORDINANCE NO. _____
3 SERIES OF 2023

COUNCIL BILL NO. CB23-0536
COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE:
4 Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure

5 **A BILL**

6 **For an ordinance designating the La Raza Park Historic District as a district for**
7 **preservation.**

8 **WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 30-4, Denver Revised Municipal Code, the Landmark
9 Preservation Commission has transmitted to City Council a proposed designation of a structure for
10 preservation; and

11 **WHEREAS**, the Planning Board has recommended approval of the same; and

12 **WHEREAS**, based upon evidence received by the Landmark Preservation Commission at a
13 hearing on May 2, 2023, the staff report, and evidence received at the hearing before City Council on
14 June 26, 2023, the La Raza Park Historic District (“District”) meets the criteria for designation as a
15 district for preservation as set out in Section 30-3, Denver Revised Municipal Code, as amended, by
16 maintaining its integrity; being more than 30 years old and having exceptional significance; and meeting
17 the criteria in the following four categories from Section 30-3(3):

18 *a. Having direct association with a significant historical event or with the historical*
19 *development of the city, state, or nation;*

20 The District has a direct association with historical events and the historical development of
21 northwest Denver. In 1906 the city acquired the land and turned the site into a playground. The
22 acquisition of dedicated parks and parkland in urban environments was a cornerstone of the urban
23 planning philosophy known as the “City Beautiful Movement”. The playground in the park was designed
24 to teach immigrant children American values and social mores, as part of the wider Progressive
25 Movement which influenced the design of cities across America. In 1931, the name of the park was
26 changed to Columbus Park to honor the Italian residents who called the area home.

27 The District continued to serve as a focal point for the community, even as the demographics of
28 the surrounding area changed, with the Latino population steadily growing between 1945 and 1990. In
29 Denver, the District served as an important location for the nascent Chicano Movement (El Movimiento),
30 to advocate for civil rights causes. It was also where El Movimiento promoted a distinctly Chicano
31 culture by enjoying public space, practicing the arts, religion, and its traditions. The community solidified
32 control of La Raza Park in 1970.

1 In 1981, police harassment of the Latino community in the area reached a boiling point. On June
2 28, 1981, the community gathered in La Raza Park to ‘open’ the park for the summer. An estimated
3 400 - 800 people, including families with small children, gathered in the park that day for festivities.
4 Around 2 pm, the Denver Police shut down the event. As families slowly dispersed from the park, police
5 moved in, armed with batons and tear gas. In 1984, three years after the police attack at the park, the
6 City of Denver closed La Raza Pool, and filled it in.

7 In the late 1980s, Denver Parks and Recreation engaged residents to design a new community
8 space for the park. The Kiosko and Plaza de la Raza were dedicated on May 5, 1990. La Raza Park
9 became a different kind of gathering place for the Latino community, hosting more large-scale,
10 organized events rather than being an area for informal events and gathering. Ceremonial danza, Dia
11 de los Muertos memorials, and La Raza Park Day illustrate the contemporary events that connect the
12 community to their culture.

13 *f. Representing an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood, community, or*
14 *contemporary city, due to its prominent location or physical characteristics;*

15 The District, occupying a full city block between Osage and Navajo Street, and West 38th and
16 39th Avenue, is an established and familiar feature of the Sunnyside and Highland neighborhoods.
17 It is the second largest park in the Sunnyside neighborhood. The prominent Kiosko is visible from
18 38th Avenue – a major thoroughfare of the area. This is the only Kiosko in the City of Denver and its
19 unique physical characteristics and cultural importance make it an established and familiar feature
20 of the neighborhood and the contemporary city.

21 *i. Being a physical attribute of a neighborhood, community, or the city that is a source*
22 *of pride or cultural understanding;*

23 The District is a physical attribute of the neighborhood and Denver’s Latino/Chicano
24 community that serves as a source of pride and cultural understanding. The park was often the site
25 of Chicano Movement actions – including the 1969/1970 take over or liberation of the park. By hiring
26 local community members and activists to staff the pool, the community created a safe space for
27 children, young adults, and elders. This era in the park’s history was marked by a decrease in gang
28 violence. The role the park played as a ‘liberated’ area, under community control is a source of pride
29 for the community today, as it was in the 1970s.

30 La Raza Park’s continued role as a space for cultural events allows the Chicano/Latino
31 community to connect to their culture, and invites the wider Denver community to understand
32 Chicano/Latino cultural practices.

1 The renaming of the park in 2020 serves as a point of pride for the Chicano/Latino community,
2 as it had been colloquially known as La Raza Park for over 50 years before its official renaming.
3 Removing the name of Columbus – a man associated with the colonization and genocide of
4 indigenous peoples in the Americas – from the park, represents a reclaiming of the land by
5 indigenous voices. The Kiosko, murals, and sculpture in the park all celebrate indigenous arts and
6 culture, a source of pride for the community.

7 *j. Being associated with social movements, institutions, or patterns of growth or change*
8 *that contributed significantly to the culture of the neighborhood, community, city, state, or*
9 *nation;*

10 The District is associated with El Movimiento, a civil rights movement from the 1960s that
11 contributed significantly to the culture of the area, in addition to Colorado and the nation as a whole.
12 The Chicano movement encouraged the embrace of a distinctly Chicano identity, in opposition to
13 the ideal of assimilation into wider American culture. While the Chicano Movement had distinct
14 historic events (see above, Criterion A), it had a tremendous influence on the culture of the area. La
15 Raza Park served as a site of direct action through marches and protests, but it also served as an
16 incubator for Chicano and Latino culture.

17 The District was also home to early murals by local Chicano artists that represented Chicano
18 culture as a unique artistic practice, a visual retelling of important cultural beliefs and traditions, and
19 a visual claiming of the park. Muralist David Ocelotl Garcia, who designed and painted El Viaje within
20 the Kiosko in 2016, continued this practice. The District also serves as the center of many
21 contemporary cultural activities, such as the ceremonial danza, Dia de Los Muertos event, and La
22 Raza Park Day. This culminated with the renaming to La Raza Park and the 2021 rededication of
23 the park with installation of Emanuel Martinez’s La Raza Unida sculpture.

24 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF**
25 **DENVER:**

26 **Section 1.** That based upon the analysis referenced above, and the evidence received at the
27 public hearings, certain property, herein called the La Raza Park Historic District (“District”), and legally
28 described as follows, together with all improvements situated and located thereon, be and the same is
29 hereby designated as a district for preservation:

- 30 Lots 1-30, inclusive, and the vacated alley,
- 31 Block 23,
- 32 Downing’s addition to North Denver,

1 City and County of Denver,
2 State of Colorado.

3 **Section 2.** The Landmark Preservation Commission shall utilize the Design Guidelines for
4 Denver Landmark Structures & Districts in conducting design review for projects in the District. The
5 Landmark Preservation Commission may adopt further district-specific guidelines utilizing the
6 application for landmark district status, the Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures &
7 Districts and Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code (Landmark Preservation) in formulating said
8 district-specific guidelines. Such district-specific guidelines must be adopted in open session of the
9 Commission by an affirmative vote of five members of the Commission.



10 **Section 3.** The effect of this designation may enhance the value of the property in the District,
11 but may delay or require denial of building or zoning permits found unacceptable by the Landmark
12 Preservation Commission under the criteria contained in the Design Guidelines for Historic Structures
13 and Districts and Section 30-6 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code.

14 **Section 4.** The period of significance for the District is established as being prior to and
15 including 2021.

16 **Section 5.** The Kiosko, Plaza del Raza, and the La Raza Unida sculpture are contributing
17 structures to the District.

18 **Section 6.** This ordinance will be recorded among the records of the Clerk and Recorder of
19 the City and County of Denver.

20 **[THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]**

1 COMMITTEE APPROVAL DATE: May 9, 2023
2 MAYOR-COUNCIL DATE: May 16, 2023
3 PASSED BY THE COUNCIL: June 26, 2023
4  - PRESIDENT
5 APPROVED: _____ - MAYOR _____
6 ATTEST: _____ - CLERK AND RECORDER,
7 EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE
8 CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER
9 NOTICE PUBLISHED IN THE DAILY JOURNAL: _____;
10 PREPARED BY: Adam C. Hernandez, Assistant City Attorney DATE: May 18, 2023
11 Pursuant to section 13-9, D.R.M.C., this proposed ordinance has been reviewed by the office of the
12 City Attorney. We find no irregularity as to form and have no legal objection to the proposed
13 ordinance. The proposed ordinance is not submitted to the City Council for approval pursuant to
14 §3.2.6 of the Charter.
15 Kerry Tipper, Denver City Attorney
16 BY: , Assistant City Attorney DATE: May 17, 2023