



**To:** Denver City Council, Albus Brooks President  
**From:** Kara Hahn, Senior City Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)  
**Date:** August 18, 2016  
**RE:** Landmark Designation for 1400 Lafayette Street – First Unitarian Society of Denver

### Staff Recommendation:

Based on the findings of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) that the property meets the criteria for designation of a structure set out in Section 30-3 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code, Landmark Preservation staff in Community Planning and Development recommends approval of this application.

### Landmark Preservation Commission Motion:

The LPC recommended the designation application #2016L-005 be forwarded to City Council for landmark designation of the structure 1400 Lafayette Street – First Unitarian Society of Denver based on History Criteria 1a and 1c, Architecture Criteria 2a and 2b and Geography Criterion 3a, citing as findings of fact for this recommendation the application form, public testimony, and the June 27, 2016 staff report.

### Request for Landmark Designation:

**Application:** #2016L-005  
**Address:** 1400 Lafayette Street  
**Zoning:** G-MU-3; OU-3  
**Council:** #10, Wayne New  
**Blueprint Denver:** Area of stability  
**Applicant:** First Unitarian Society of Denver  
**Legal Description:**

A PARCEL OF LAND AS DESCRIBED IN A DEED OF TRUST, RECORDED ON THE 26TH DAY OF MARCH, 1998, AT RECEPTION NUMBER 1998045663 AT THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER CLERK AND RECORDER'S OFFICE, LOCATED IN THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 2, TOWNSHIP 4 SOUTH, RANGE 68 WEST OF THE SIXTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, STATE OF COLORADO, THEREIN AS:

LOTS 15 TO 20, BLOCK 7, HERR'S ADDITION TO THE CITY OF DENVER, AND THAT PART OF LOTS 9 AND 10, BLOCK 3, GLENCOE ADDITION, DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: BEGINNING AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF SAID LOT 10; THENCE EAST ALONG THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID LOT 10, 125 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF THE ALLEY IN SAID BLOCK; THENCE NORTH ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID ALLEY, 25 FEET; THENCE WEST PARALLEL WITH THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID LOT 10, 125 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF LOT 9; THENCE SOUTH ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID LOTS 9 AND 10, 25 FEET TO BEGINNING, CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER, STATE OF COLORADO.

### Case Summary:

The First Unitarian Society of Denver submitted a Landmark Designation application for 1400 Lafayette Street – First Unitarian Society of Denver to CPD on May 5, 2016.

Staff performed an investigation and found the application to be complete and to meet Denver landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set the public hearing for the Landmark Preservation Commission. The LPC held a public hearing on July 5, 2016 and recommend the landmark

designation be forwarded to City Council. On August 3, 2016, the Neighborhood and Planning Committee voted to forward the case to the full City Council. At first reading, Denver City Council ordered the bill published and the public hearing is set for August 22, 2016.

### **Comprehensive Plan 2000, Blueprint Denver, and East Colfax and Capitol Hill/Cheesman Park Plans:**

The comprehensive plan envisioned Denver in 2020 as vibrant, with well-preserved and appropriately used structures representing every era of the city's history. It included strategies (1-C) that "Preserve Denver's architectural and design legacies while allowing new to evolve."

This property is located in an Area of Stability in Blueprint Denver. Within Blueprint Denver, landmark preservation is identified as a tool to reinforce areas of stability. Blueprint Denver noted that for areas of stability, it is important to respect valued development patterns and attributes of the area, including existing buildings, particularly those adding distinctive character and identity.

The proposed landmark structure is also within the boundaries of the East Colfax planning area. The plan recognizes the need to pursue landmark designation as well as to reuse and rehabilitate historic buildings to leverage economic incentives for preservation. The proposed landmark structure is also within the boundaries of the Capitol Hill/Cheesman Plan. This plan identifies the importance of the historic character and fabric of the neighborhood and calls for additional historic survey and landmark designation.

### **Designation Criteria and Evaluation, Chapter 30, DRMC:**

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code, a property must be more than 30 years old....and meet the following criteria:

1. Maintain its physical and historical integrity
2. Meet one designation criteria in two or more of the following categories:  
History, architecture, and geography
3. Relate to a historic context or theme

### **Integrity:**

Chapter 30, DRMC requires that a landmark designated property maintain is historic and physical integrity, defined as "the ability of a structure...to convey its historic and architectural significance...recognized as belonging to its particular time and place in Denver's history." The seven qualities that define integrity in Chapter 30 are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The church retains a very high degree of integrity. It is in the same location and retains the setting of a church in a dense urban residential neighborhood. Although one of the entrances, on the west elevation, was altered and a rear elevator was added, the overall design, materials, and workmanship are readily apparent. The continued use as a worship space and similar setting, as historically used, helps retain a strong sense of feeling and association.

### **Relate to a Historic Context/Theme, Integrity, and Period of Significance:**

The property relates to the historic contexts of: Late-19th century architecture, the development and growth of Denver, and social justice movements.

## **Criteria Evaluation:**

The Landmark Preservation Commission found that the property met History Criteria 1a and 1c, Architecture Criteria 2a and 2b, and Geography Criterion 3a.

### **1. Historical Significance**

***To have historical significance, the structure or district shall be thirty (30) or more years old or have extraordinary importance to the historical development of Denver, and shall:***

- a) *Have direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;*  
First Unitarian has a long history of social justice work that has been important to the development of the city, with their work often having broader implications. In its early days, the congregation was involved in the Women's Suffrage Movement and had strong ties with early charitable organizations. Since occupying the building at 1400 Lafayette in 1958, the congregation has been active and influential in a variety of issues, including racial justice, the gay rights movement and marriage equality, women's rights, and immigration justice. First Unitarian has a historical role of serving as an incubator space for nonprofit organizations dedicated to social justice issues. In the 1970s, it created a "Shared Center" in its basement and in the adjacent two homes to the north as a concerted effort to help support these issues. Minorities and marginalized groups often faced discrimination and finding locations to meet could be difficult; the First Unitarian Society building provide both meeting rooms as well as longer-term space for organizational use.
- c) *Have direct and substantial association with a person or group of persons who had influence on society;*  
First Unitarian (while located at 1400 Lafayette Street) has been directly and substantially associated with a number of people who have had an influence on society. Former Colorado Governor Richard D. Lamm and First Lady Dottie Lamm were members of First Unitarian during the 1960's and were married in the church in 1963. A number of church members have been involved in acts of civil disobedience in recent years. First Unitarian Minister Richard Henry was arrested in a protest related to the Vietnam War. Church member Helen Wolcott, among others, was instrumental in the local Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. She was a founding member of the local Congress of Racial Equality, organized picketing in protest of unfair hiring practices, and worked for equality in education and real estate practices.

### **2. 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;*  
First Unitarian church, constructed in the 1890s, is an outstanding example of a Richardsonian Romanesque style building. The style is seen in the configuration, massing, and masonry. The prominent use of rough-faced Ashlar masonry, is a primary characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The stone material itself is a wonderful vernacular component of the church's history, as the Rhyolite stone utilized on the façade was quarried in Castle Rock, Colorado. The building also contains distinguishing features of the Richardson Romanesque style in its wide rounded arches, recessed entryways, and parapeted gable dormers.
- b) *Be a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;*  
This Capitol Hill/Cheesman Park landmark is a significant example of the work of well-known local architects Ernest Varian and Frederick Sterner. Ernest Varian designed the Zion Baptist Church in 1882, and then in 1885 formed a partnership with Frederick J. Sterner. As noted in

the Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch, “the firm of Varian and Sterner went on to become one of Denver’s most prominent architectural designers with many listings in the Denver Building Fees files.” Notable buildings designed by the firm include the Denver Athletic Club at 1325 Glenarm, the First Church of Christ Scientist at 14th and Logan Streets, and a variety of homes throughout the Denver area. Landmark works designed by Frederick Sterner include the Daniels and Fisher Tower, the Pearce-McCall Cottage, and the Tears-McFarland House. The church also contains a unique and historic example of the work of Watkins Stained Glass Studio. The striking rose window on the south façade was designed and fabricated by Clarence Watkins in 1893 and carefully restored by his great-grandson Phillip Watkins, Jr. after a major fire damaged it in 1985.

### **3. Geographic Significance**

***To have geographic importance, the structure or district shall have design quality and integrity, and shall:***

- a) *Have prominent location or be an established, familiar, and orienting visual feature of the contemporary city;*

First Unitarian Society of Denver sits at the corner of 14th Avenue and Lafayette Street. It lies in the heart of Denver’s Capitol Hill, just one block south of Colfax Avenue. The church is directly adjacent to 14th Avenue, which is also an important thoroughfare in Denver that travels one-way (west to east). With its Richardsonian Romanesque architecture and Castle Rock Rhyolite bricks, First Unitarian is a highly recognizable building along the 14th Avenue corridor. The “castle-like” building is a strong orienting element along 14th Avenue and in Capitol Hill. Although First Unitarian lies in proximity to a variety of historic districts and buildings, it is unique in its architecture for the surrounding area. As such, the building is notable to passersby on 14th Avenue. In providing directions to the church, members frequently find that would-be visitors are familiar with the building and have noted it as a visual reference in passing on prior occasions.

#### **Boundary:**

The designation application proposes to designate the legal parcel as described above.

#### **Notifications:**

Community Planning & Development has met or exceeded all posting and notification requirements delineated in Chapter 12 (Article III, Section 12-96) and Chapter 30 of the DRMC. Landmark preservation staff worked closely with the owner, toured the property, and has kept the owner informed of key hearings, meetings, and dates related to this case.

The required notifications include:

1. *Posting Signage for Landmark Preservation Commission Hearing*
2. *Owner Notifications and Letters*
3. *City Council Notifications*
4. *Registered Neighborhood Organization Notifications*
  - Colfax on the Hill, Inc.
  - Denver Neighborhood Association, Inc.
  - City Park Friends and Neighbors
  - Friends & Neighbors for Cheesman Park
  - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
  - Colfax Business Improvement District
  - Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc. Historic Denver, Inc



- Colorado Preservation, Inc
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- State of Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

**Landmark Preservation Commission Public Hearing Summary:**

The Landmark Preservation Commission held a public hearing on July 5, 2016. The LPC found that the application met the criteria for landmark designation, and has forwarded a recommendation for landmark designation to the City Council. The public hearing and deliberations lasted approximately one hour.

At the LPC public hearing, the LPC chair allocated the speaking time as follows:

1. Ten minutes to the applicant/owner
2. Three minutes to all other interested parties

The owner's presentation was made by Christopher Hahn, Mike Morran, and Karen Derrick-Davis. There were 13 speakers at the public hearing and all were in support of the designation.

**Attachments Provided by CPD:**

- Designation Application
- Public comments submitted CPD by noon, August 18, 2016
- LPC Public Hearing meeting record



1400 Lafayette Street – First Unitarian Society of Denver, west elevation



1400 Lafayette Street – First Unitarian Society of Denver, southwest elevation




1400 Lafayette Street – First Unitarian Society of Denver, southwest elevation



## Proposed Landmark Designation



### Proposed Landmark Designation First Unitarian Society of Denver 1400 Lafayette St.

 See attached legal description



0 25 50 100 Feet

Aerial Photo: 2014

Map Date: 6/1/2016

END