

To: Denver City Council; Jolon Clark, President
From: Jenny Buddenborg, Senior City Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: January 23, 2020
RE: Landmark Designation for 4431 E 26th Ave, #2019L-010

Landmark Preservation Commission Suggested Motion:

Based on ordinance designation criteria and findings of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) that the application meets the criteria for designation of a structure, staff recommends approval of the application.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application:	#2019L-010
Address:	4431 E 26 th Ave
Zoning:	U-SU-C
Council:	District 8, Christopher Herndon
Blueprint Denver:	Urban Future Neighborhood Context / Low Residential Future Place Type
Owner:	Dennis Residency Family Trust
Applicant(s):	Owner

Case Summary:

The applicant submitted a Landmark Designation application for 4431 E 26th Ave to CPD on October 28, 2019. Staff performed an investigation and found the application to be complete and to meet Denver Landmark designation criteria. As such, a public hearing with the LPC was scheduled for December 3, 2019.

At the public hearing, LPC recommended approval of the landmark designation application for 4431 E 26th Ave based on History Criterion C, Architecture Criterion A and Geography Criterion A, citing as findings of fact for this recommendation the application form, public testimony and the November 25, 2019, staff report. Vote 6-0-0.

On January 7, 2020, the Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee forwarded the case to the full City Council. At first reading, City Council ordered the bill published and the public hearing is set for January 27, 2020.

Designation Criteria and Evaluation, Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code:

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30-4, Denver Revised Municipal Code, a structure must meet the following criteria:

1. Meet one designation criteria in two or more of the following categories:
 - History

- Architecture
 - Geography
2. Maintain its historic or physical integrity
 3. Relate to a context or theme

Criteria Evaluation:

Landmark staff found that the application meets History Criterion C, Architecture Criterion A and Geography Criterion A.

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:

- c) Have direct and substantial association with a person or group of persons who had influence on society*

The property has direct and substantial association as the residence of three persons who had influence on society: Charles Marble Kittredge, Charles Ginsberg and William “Bill” Forrest. The first, Charles Marble Kittredge, resided in the house with his extended family between 1911 and 1915. Kittredge gained wealth in banking and real estate, developing such property as the Kittredge Building in downtown Denver and the now-demolished Kittredge Castle in Denver’s Montclair neighborhood. Kittredge suffered financially from the 1893 Silver Crash and sold the castle in 1904. He continued his real estate development in the early 1900s with the Park Hill Heights Realty Company. The company platted the blocks on Clermont Street between 26th Ave and 28th Ave, of which the property at 4431 E 26th Ave was a part. Kittredge would continue his real estate ventures in other east Denver neighborhoods including Montclair and East Colfax, and built several more houses designed to treat tuberculosis, like 4431 E 26th Ave.

In 1920, Denver attorney Charles Ginsberg purchased the property and lived there until 1929. Ginsberg earned a law degree from the University of Denver and while living at 4431 E 26th Ave was embroiled in the racial politics that dominated Denver and Colorado at the time. Specifically, he opposed the influence of the Ku Klux Klan on local and state politics. Ginsberg, who was Jewish, debated Klan supporter Reverend William Oeschger, minister of Denver’s Highlands Christian Church, at the University of Colorado in May 1924. The well-attended debate is considered by some to be the single most successful anti-Klan event in Colorado and contributed to the downfall of the white-supremacist hate group in the state.

Lastly, William “Bill” Forrest, mountaineer and inventor, owned and resided in the house from 1971 to 1998. Until 1985, he operated Forrest Mountaineering Ltd, inventing and selling technical mountaineering gear that advanced the sport. Simultaneously, he continued his climbing adventures, in part to test his gear, including an attempt at Mt. Everest. One of his most well-known inventions is the Denali snowshoe, invented during his residency at 4431 E 26th Ave. Mountain Safety Research (MSR) bought the design rights and it became the company’s best-selling snowshoe. Forrest was eventually hired by MSR as the manager of Research & Development. At

the time of his retirement from MSR in 2010, he had over 100 products on the market and 17 patents to his credit. Many of his inventions and achievements occurred while he lived at 4431 E 26th Ave.

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

The primary structure embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Mission Revival style with Craftsman style elements. The curvilinear-shaped gables and string course illustrate the Mission Revival style while the exposed rafter ends, knee braces at eaves, overhanging eaves and divided upper window lights illustrate the Craftsman style.

The structure is also a representative example of a “tuberculosis home.” When the structure was built in 1911, tuberculosis was still a national pandemic and Colorado’s climate conducive to natural treatment of the disease. The characteristic feature of such structures is the sleeping or “cure” porch where patients could take in the fresh air. All the bedrooms in this structure, located on the west end, open directly onto an enclosed “porch” with 15 large windows.



Figure 1 4431 E 26th Ave in 2019



Figure 2 Enclosed "cure porch" on the west elevation

3. Geographical Significance

To have geographical significance, the structure or district shall:

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

The structure is prominently located on a large parcel consisting of four lots at 26th Ave and Clermont St. It is one of a few houses along 26th Ave in Park Hill with its façade facing 26th Ave, a well-traveled collector street, as opposed to facing the side street as most homes are situated in the neighborhood. The Mission Revival style architecture, unique in Denver, lends to the prominence of the property.

Integrity:

Chapter 30, DRMC requires that a landmark designated property maintain its historic or physical integrity, defined as "the ability of a structure or district 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 are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The primary structure retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association. Alterations to the property have been minimal and the key character-defining features of the structure, like the curvilinear-shaped gables, brick coursework, stained glass and large windows of the enclosed “cure porch” are preserved. Likewise, the location and setting of the property have experienced minimal change over time.

The solar panel installation on the roof does affect the aspect of feeling, because it introduces a modern feature to a historic house. However, the panels are reversible, and their placement maintains the original roof slope with the flush, minimum rise above the roof plane. They do not conceal the essential physical features of the property that help it meet its significance under the History, Architecture and Geography criteria. For example, the property retains the physical features that constitute the Mission Revival style, even with the solar panel array. Ultimately, the property retains the identity for which it is significant.

Please note that the *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmarks & Districts* support energy efficiency improvements to historic structures while ensuring that they are compatible with the building and surrounding historic context (Intent Statement 2p) and the installation of solar collectors that minimize potential adverse effects on the character of a historic property (Guideline 2.33). If the property is designated as a structure for preservation, the façade-facing solar panels may be maintained and repaired in their existing configuration, as necessary, in accordance with the design guidelines. Any new solar panel installations must follow the design guidelines.

Relate to a Historic Context/Theme and Period of Significance:

The property has multiple periods of significance related to the significance criteria it meets: 1911-1915, 1920-1929 and 1971-1998.

The property and its associations relate to several historic contexts and themes. These include:

- Colorado’s history of tuberculosis treatment in the late 1800s and early 1900s;
- Early development of Park Hill from the late 1880s to the early 1900s;
- Influence of the Ku Klux Klan on Denver and Colorado politics during the 1920s; and
- The growth and prominence of Colorado’s outdoor recreation industry from the 1970s onward.

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Denver (2019) and Park Hill Neighborhood Plan (2000):

The proposed designation is consistent with Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Denver and the Park Hill Neighborhood Plan. It is consistent with several Comprehensive Plan 2040 vision elements, most directly with the Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods vision element. This element includes the goal to “preserve the authenticity of Denver’s neighborhoods and celebrate our history, architecture and culture.” It also meets the Environmentally Resilient vision element, specifically the goal and strategy to mitigate climate impact by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions using clean and local energy that comes from renewable sources. The solar panel array located on the roof of the primary structure at 4431 E 26th Ave illustrates a successful

application of energy efficiency improvements that are compatible with the character of the historic property and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

According to Blueprint Denver, the property is within the Urban future neighborhood context and is a Low Residential future place type. The plan states that the urban neighborhood context is found broadly throughout the city and any development within it should be sensitive to the existing neighborhood character. Designation of 4431 E 26th Ave is consistent with Blueprint’s vision to improve quality of design that preserves and creates authentic places. It meets Strategy 2A under Land Use & Built Form that recommends using historic designation to ensure residential neighborhoods retain their unique character as infill development occurs. It also helps advance the Blueprint Denver metric related to increasing the percent of the city subject to design-focused standards including the *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts*.

The proposed designation is also consistent with the Park Hill Neighborhood Plan. Of the seven vision elements within the plan, included is to “preserve and continue to build on the beautiful architecture, urban design, tree-lined streets and parkways with lively pedestrian-oriented commercial areas, positive, safe and usable parks, and open space for meeting places and recreational activities.” That vision element is met in various ways, such as the Land Use goal to preserve areas of historical significance through historic districts and “historic landmark” designation. Urban Design goals also include the preservation of the historic character of the community.

The designation of 4431 E 26th Ave aligns with the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan, Blueprint Denver, and the Park Hill Neighborhood Plan as it helps retain Denver’s authenticity by preserving a historically and architecturally significant building.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the following legal description:

LOTS 25 TO 28, INCLUSIVE, BLOCK 2, 2ND ADDITION TO PARK HILL HEIGHTS,
CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER, STATE OF COLORADO.

Public Review Process:

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.

Notifications:

- Owner notification letters regarding the LPC public hearing
- City Council, Planning Board, and Building Inspection email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications
 - Opportunity Corridor Coalition of United Residents
 - City Park Friends and Neighbors (CPFAN)
 - Northeast Denver Friends and Neighbors (NEDFANS)

- Denver Arts and Culture Initiative
- Greater Park Hill Community, Inc.
- Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
- Historic Denver, Inc.
- Colorado Preservation, Inc.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- State of Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing
- Owner notification letter regarding City Council meetings

Public Comment:

As of the date of this staff report, CPD received 10 public comments regarding the designation application for 4431 E 26th Ave:

- At the LPC public hearing two members of the public commented
 - 2 in support
 - 0 in opposition
- Comments submitted to CPD from individuals
 - 8 in support
 - 0 in opposition

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation application
- Map of property
- Public comment