



To: Community Planning and Housing Committee (CPH)
From: Becca Dierschow, Senior City Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: June 18, 2026
RE: Landmark Designation application - Federal Garage Buildings, 2100 California St. and 2101 Welton St.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the ordinance designation criteria and the 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: #2026L-001
Address: 2100 California St and 2101 Welton St.
Zoning: D-AS-20+
Council: #9 - Darrell Watson
Owner: United States of America, General Services Administration (GSA)
Applicant(s): United States of America, GSA

Case Summary:

The buildings at 2100 California and 2101 Welton Street, known as the Federal Garages, were constructed in the early twentieth century as bus depots for intra-state bus routes. These routes, run by the Denver – Colorado Springs – Pueblo Motor Way, provided consistent, affordable intercity travel between three of Colorado’s most important cities. At their peak usage in the late 1930s, the bus system transported over 1500 people per day. The system provided crucial connections between the employment hubs at the Air Force base in Colorado Springs, the steel mills of Pueblo, and Denver. Additionally, the Denver – Colorado Springs – Pueblo Motor Way promoted sightseeing by bus, advertising their routes showcasing the Pikes Peak region and beyond. The main ticket office for the Motor Way was located at 8th and Wazee but has since been demolished, making way for the Auraria Campus. The garages were owned by corporations associated with the Motor Way until 1960.

The United States government acquired the two garage buildings in 1967 and used them for parking, hence the moniker “Federal Garages.” In 2017 the General Services Administration (GSA) listed the buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, which is an honorary designation and does not protect the buildings from demolition. At the time, the buildings were noted for their significance in illustrating Denver’s transportation history and as a rare surviving example of historic buildings in the Arapahoe Square area. During the 1960s and 70s as part of the push for urban renewal, the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) demolished many similar garages and warehouses, which were replaced with surface parking lots. As a result, the area is now comprised of a mixture of parking lots and high-rise buildings, with few historic resources remaining to tell the history of this area of Denver.

The US government is now disposing of (selling) the property, which triggers review through federal environmental laws including the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Through the NHPA review, it was determined that the disposal (sale) of the Federal Garage Buildings would have an ‘adverse effect’ on these historic properties. To avoid this adverse effect, GSA proposed a local individual landmark designation of the

Planning Services
Community Planning and Development
201 W. Colfax Ave., Dept. 205 | Denver, CO 80202
www.denvergov.org/CPD
p. 720.865.2983

CONNECT WITH US | 311 | DENVERGOV.ORG | DENVER 8 TV

Federal Garage buildings to protect the buildings from demolition. After GSA submitted the designation application to CPD, Landmark staff reviewed the application. We found the application to be complete and that the buildings are eligible to be an Individual Denver landmark. As such, Landmark staff set the public hearing before the Landmark Preservation Commission on May 19, 2026.

At the LPC public hearing, the commission voted 5-3-0 to recommend approval and forward to City Council. On May 19, 2026, the Community Planning and Housing Committee forwarded the case to the full City Council. At first reading, Denver City Council ordered the bill published and the public hearing set for June 22, 2026.

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

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code, the application must be complete and the structure must meet the following criteria:

1. The structure maintains its integrity
2. The structure is more than 30 years old, or is of exceptional importance
3. The structure meets at least three of ten criteria
4. The LPC considers the structure's historic context

Criteria Evaluation:

Landmark staff found that the application for designation demonstrates that the structure meets the following criteria.

A. It has a direct association with a significant historic event or with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;

The Federal Garage Buildings are significant for their role in the development of transportation in Denver and along the Front Range. They reflect the change from reliance on rail transportation in the early twentieth century to road and bus transportation over the next two decades. By the 1920s, as rail ridership declined, and roads and highway systems were developing, railroad companies began to actively develop their own bus companies, which were cheaper to run and maintain. These bus services often replaced lightly used railway lines or served as an extension of passenger services where railways did not exist. The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, one of Colorado's largest railroads, created or bought out existing subsidiary bus companies to transport passengers and goods throughout Colorado. The Denver-Colorado Springs-Pueblo Motor Way was one such company. The Motor Way specialized in the passenger traffic between Colorado's three largest cities and was associated with the Rio Grande Motor Way. The garages at California and Welton streets provided the buses with a home base and maintenance space. The California Street Garage, constructed in 1925-26, initially had room for six buses, but the building was expanded in 1938 as the need for more space increased. With the growth of the bus industry, a second garage was constructed about ten years later in 1947 (the Welton Street Garage). These garage buildings are significant for their role in supporting this key shift in transportation patterns in Denver, reflecting how the industry grew over time, and showing how Denver residents moved throughout the region.

The ticket office was located at 755 Wazee Street in the Auraria neighborhood. This location was demolished and the area is now the Auraria Campus for Higher Education. Therefore, the Federal Garages serve as one of the few surviving buildings associated with the Denver-Colorado Springs-Pueblo Motor Way.



California Street Garage, northwest elevation (2025)

C. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or type;

The California Street Garage, including both the original construction and the expansion, embody the distinctive physical characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was common in the United States from approximately 1915 to 1940 and was especially prevalent in southern and western states. This style is characterized by low-pitched clay tile roofs; round arches at entries and windows; towers, arcades, balconies and terraces; and masonry exterior walls, typically with stucco. Consistent with its utilitarian use, the California Street Garage is a simplified Spanish Colonial Revival style that is seen in its tiled pent roof, red/brown brick walls with stucco accents, and a corner tower. The 1938 addition replicates the original exterior's features and fenestration. The Welton Street Garage was constructed in 1947 to supplement the facility at California Street. Despite its prominent barrel roof, the Welton Street Garage expresses a Spanish Colonial Revival style through reddish-brown brick walls and pent roof, the latter finished with Spanish style tiles (which were removed at an unknown date). Although this style had generally fallen out of popularity by the time this building was built, it was clearly intended to complement the neighboring California Street Garage, albeit in a simplified Spanish Colonial Revival style.

Although the building's windows and entrances are currently covered in plywood, the original windows and opening remain and could be restored.



California Street Garage, southwest elevation (2025)

G. It promotes understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;

The garages are among the few industrial buildings remaining in the area from the early and mid-twentieth century. The buildings reflect the changes over time in this portion of the Five Points neighborhood as it evolved from single-family residential to industrial. The neighborhood first increased in density as numerous apartment buildings replaced houses, and then it transitioned to industrial uses as more industrial and auto-centered business emerged. Denver urban renewal in the 1960s and 70s then radically altered the neighborhood again with widespread demolition, which is still visible in the multiple surface parking lots dotting the area. These garages promote an understanding of how this area was used at one point. The garages retain many of their original features, allowing their original purpose to be easily understood, contributing to both an understanding of the former industrial nature of the area and the transportation experiences of residents of Denver and the region. Additionally, as buildings surrounded by parking lots and large-scale redevelopment, these two remaining garages are rare examples of the previous industrial and transportation make-up of the neighborhood.

Integrity:

Chapter 30 requires that a landmark designated property maintains its integrity. Integrity is defined as “the ability of a structure or district to convey its historic, geographic, architectural, or cultural significance...recognized as belonging to its particular time and place in Denver’s history.” The seven qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The existing property retains integrity. The buildings have not been moved and thus retain integrity of location. There has been widespread change to the surrounding area retaining little integrity of setting. Multiple windows and doors have been covered with stucco or plywood; however, the historic windows and garage doors are present and visible in the interior, making the coverings reversible. While some of the doors have been altered in size or infilled, the historic proportions and use are still recognizable. Overall, the integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are still evident. And the continued use as a parking structure helps retain a strong sense of feeling and association. The buildings still convey the historic use and significance of the garages.



Welton Street Garage, southeast elevation (2025)

Relates to a Historic Context and Period of Significance:

As is appropriate for a property proposed for designation, the historic context is strongly interrelated to both the areas of significance and period of significance. The designation provides context on the evolution of the Five Points neighborhood, the role of bus routes in supplementing and then supplanting rail transportation, and the history of the development and expansion of the garages. The period of significance, 1926-1961, reflects the use and ownership of the buildings.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

Lots 11-20, inclusive, Clements Addition, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

Public Review Process:

Community Planning & Development has met 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 and Community Planning and Development email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
 - Ball Park Collective RNO
 - Curtis Park Neighbors
 - Opportunity Corridor Coalition of United Residents
 - Five Points Business Improvement District
 - Mestizo Curtis Park Coalition
 - Ballpark General Improvement District
 - Denver Neighborhood Association, Inc.
 - Historic Denver, Inc
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - History Colorado
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments:

As 10:00 am on June 18, 2026, CPD has received no written comment regarding the application.

- At the LPC public hearing, 1 member of the public commented
 - 1 in favor (John Deffenbaugh, Historic Denver)

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation