

To: Denver City Council
From: Kara Hahn, Landmark Planning & Regulatory Supervisor, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: February 8, 2023
RE: Landmark Designation for 1618 East 38th Avenue

Staff Recommendation:

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

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2022L-003
Address: 1618 East 38th Avenue
Zoning: Currently PUD 17, proposed rezoning to U-MX-2x
Council: Council District #9, Candi CdeBaca
Owner: 1618 E 38th Ave LLC (Nathan Beal)
Applicant(s): Nathan Beal

Case Summary:

Michael Flowers, Director of Preservation Action at Historic Denver, submitted a Landmark Designation application on behalf of the owner National Beal for 1618 East 38th Avenue to CPD. 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 on December 6, 2022. At the public hearing, the Commission voted (6-0-0) to recommend approval and forward the designation application to City Council.

On January 3, 2023, 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 February 13, 2023.

Concurrent with the designation review, a rezoning application requesting a change from a former Chapter 59 PUD to U-MX-2x is also under review. The designation and rezoning cases are scheduled for concurrent review by City Council.

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 Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church is associated with the development of the city, and more specifically the Cole neighborhood and the large number of Swedish, as well other European, immigrants that resided in the area. Many of the Swedish immigrants who came to the United States found industrial and railroad jobs in the West, including places like Colorado. A main reason for the development of neighborhood was its close proximity to various industrial-type work options. The new arrivals typically built vernacular worker and utilitarian style houses. The Swedish immigrants also established churches in their neighborhood and within walking distance of their residences. The utilitarian focus of this church mirrors the economics of the community and reflects the worker's own housing.

As a church embedded within the neighborhood, its use reflected the makeup of the community. The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church was initially built to serve the Swedish immigrants of Cole and did so through the 1950s, while the Swedish community resided in the neighborhood. However, the building's ownership and the church's congregant changed with the demographic changes of the neighborhood. As the Latino/a/x population grew within the neighborhood, it became the Spanish Seventh Day Adventist Church. It later became the Rising Star Baptist Church, a primarily Black congregation, that reflected the high African American population in the neighborhood. The 1970s brought increased vacancy rates to many of Denver's central neighborhoods, including Cole. As fewer people resided in the area, there may have been less need for a church to serve congregants in the neighborhood. After Rising Star moved to a new location, they sold it to a private owner, who converted the building into a residence. The small church represents the origins of the neighborhood through the area's shifts, trends, and changes into the present era.

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

The church embodies the visible characteristics of vernacular Gothic church architecture. It was built as a mission church serving the working-class immigrants of the Cole neighborhood, and its simple architecture reflects that. It is a vernacular building with a few important details that denote it as a church. The notable features include the flared eaves, cosmetic buttresses, vestibule, and the arched vent/window in the gable end. The side buttresses and arched, pointed window are reminiscent of more formal church Gothic architecture. The simplified architectural details may also reflect a Lutheran tradition, which eschews the iconography that is often seen in other Christian faiths. The basic rectangular form with a front vestibule, gable roof, with windows and buttresses along the side elevations is also seen in other churches built by other Swedish immigrants who lived in the West. Considering the church's functional purpose of serving the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church mission and residents of a working-class neighborhood, it was a simple vernacular Gothic church design representing the neighborhood it served.



Front, north façade of church
Photo provided by Historic Denver

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

The church at 1618 E. 38th Avenue promotes an understanding appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics and rarity. The church is a rare example of a working-class vernacular church that retains good integrity. While many vernacular buildings are altered, covered up, or demolished as insignificant, this church building remains, embedded within the neighborhood. This building still stands with its intact historic architectural features. It continues to represent Cole's working-class origins, the building's initial history as a Swedish church, and its evolution over time reflecting the neighborhood's changing demographics. Working-class neighborhoods, housing, and buildings often were meant to be functional. While it does not have the same features as churches of high style, this rare building brings its own appreciation to the development of the neighborhood and the congregants it served.

Integrity:

Chapter 30 requires that a landmark designated property maintain 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 property retains a high degree of integrity, within minimal changes. The building is still in the same location, and, although there have been some changes to the surrounding area, due to redevelopment, the neighborhood is still residential in nature; retaining both integrity of location and setting. The integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are strong as the addition of stucco and the covering of rafter tails are within the period of significance and help tell the story of the building. While the removal of the non-historic addition has altered the rear corner of the building, the changes are small enough that they do not impact the overall integrity. The building also retains integrity of association. It was constructed within a residential neighborhood to easily serve congregants who lived nearby before transportation were easier and cheaper, and it still conveys that association due to its close association with the surrounding residential buildings.



East elevation (above); West elevation (below)
Photo provided by Historic Denver



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 property is directly related to the working-class Swedish immigrant that resided in the Cole neighborhood and their Lutheran faith. They built a vernacular style church that was functional but relatively unadorned. As the neighborhood demographics changed, the congregants reflected those shifts in population. The period of significance is the year of construction 1888 extending through 1980 when it is ceased use as a church.



Historic photo of front, north façade
Circa 1930

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

The easterly 32' -5" of lot 1 and the north half of lot 2, block 12, Provident Park, 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)
 - Cole Neighborhood Association
 - United Community Action Network (UCAN)
 - Opportunity Corridor Coalition of United Residents
 - Reclaim the Eastside
 - United Northeast Denver Residents
 - Unite North Metro Denver
 - East Denver Residents Council
 - Strong Denver
 - Historic Denver, Inc
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - History Colorado
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments:

As of February 8, 2023, CPD has received no public comment regarding this application.

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation