

**To:** Denver City Council  
**From:** Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)  
**Date:** July 29, 2021  
**RE:** Landmark Designation Application for La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District

#### **Staff Recommendation:**

Based on the ordinance designation criteria, on the findings of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) that the application meets the criteria for designation of a district, and on the findings of the Denver Planning Board that the designation is consistent with applicable plans and will have minimal impact or effect on the surrounding neighborhoods, staff recommends approval of the application.

#### **Request to Designate a District:**

**Application:** #2021L-003  
**Address:** Multiple  
**Zoning:** U-TU-B, U-RH-3A, U-MX-2X, OS-A, PUD338  
**Council:** Council District #3, Jamie Torres  
**Owner(s):** Multiple  
**Applicant(s):** Fatima Hirji, Allyson Crabtree, Mary Gould, Cathy Preto, and Felix Herzog

#### **Case Summary:**

Members of the community submitted a Landmark designation application for the La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District to CPD. Landmark Preservation staff reviewed the application and found it to be complete and to be eligible for designation. Staff set the public hearing at the Landmark Preservation Commission for June 29, 2021.

The LPC voted unanimously (9-0-0) to forward the designation application to Denver City Council. On July 7, 2021, Denver Planning Board reviewed the designation application for consistency with approved plans and for the district's effect on surrounding neighborhoods. Denver Planning Board unanimously recommended approval (5-0-0) and forwarded the designation to City Council. On July 13, 2021, the Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee forwarded the case to the full City Council. At first reading, a floor amendment was offered by Councilmember Torres to amend the boundary to remove two non-contributing edge properties. Denver City Council voted to approve the amendment, ordered the bill published, and the public hearing is set for August 2, 2021.

Prior to the LPC public hearing, to help provide information to the community about the application and Landmark processes, CPD staff created a [webpage](#) and mailed flyers to owners and residents in the proposed district. In April and May of 2021, Landmark staff hosted two virtual community meetings providing an overview of the designation and answering questions from residents. Landmark Preservation staff also held office hours and one-on-one meetings with residents or owners who had questions. In conjunction with the applicants and Historic Denver staff, Landmark Preservation staff knocked on doors, distributed flyers in the neighborhood, and held an informational and Q&A meeting in July. CPD staff also mailed notification letters about the LPC public hearing to owners and residents within the district, and placed signage around the boundary proposed district.

### **Customized Design Guidelines:**

Over the course of a year, Landmark Preservation staff worked with community members to customize design guidelines to better reflect the La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood's significant historic, architectural, and cultural heritage. These draft customized design guidelines address early architectural styles and the evolution of the buildings over time. Landmark staff, with community input, drafted design guidelines to better fit the neighborhood and removed guidelines that were not consistent with the historic fabric of La Alma Lincoln Park. If the district is designated, the customized design guidelines would be submitted to LPC for review and approval. The draft customized design guidelines can be found on the La Alma Lincoln Park application [webpage](#).

Since the number of buildings torn down in the neighborhood is relatively small, the streetscapes, the form and rhythm of buildings, and the size of structures in this district has historically remained the same. However, over time there have been changes to some of the materials, cladding, porches, and fences in the neighborhood. As a result, the design guidelines that address massing or form remain unchanged, but greater flexibility would be provided in guidelines that address materials, cladding, porches, and fencing. For example, since stucco, alternative siding materials, vinyl windows, PermaStone, and chain link fences are prevalent in the proposed district, those materials would be allowed with the draft customized design guidelines.

### **LPC Review and Evaluation of Designation Criteria, 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 district must meet the following criteria:

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

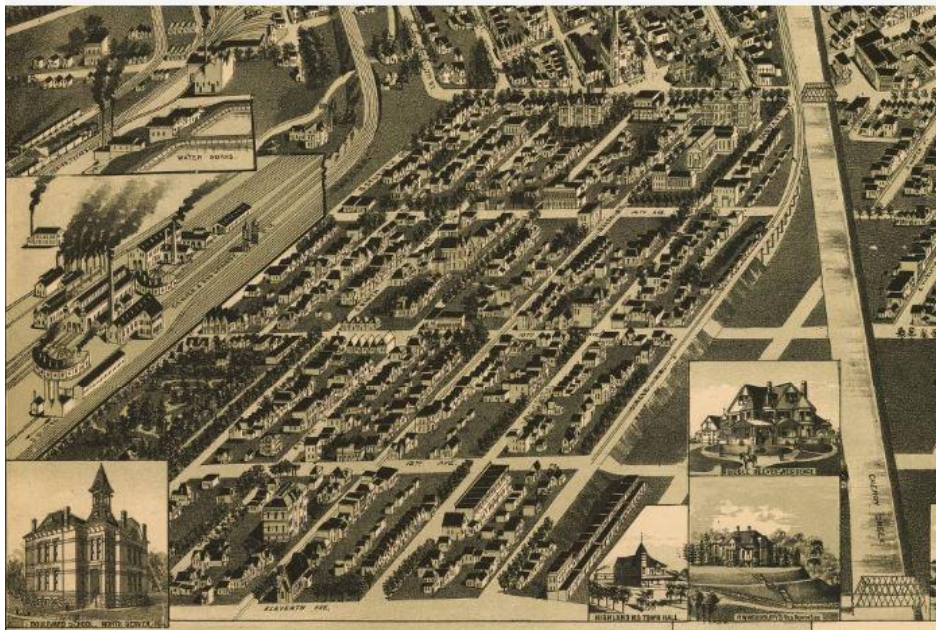
### **LPC Criteria Evaluation:**

Landmark Preservation Commission found that the district application meets the following Criteria.

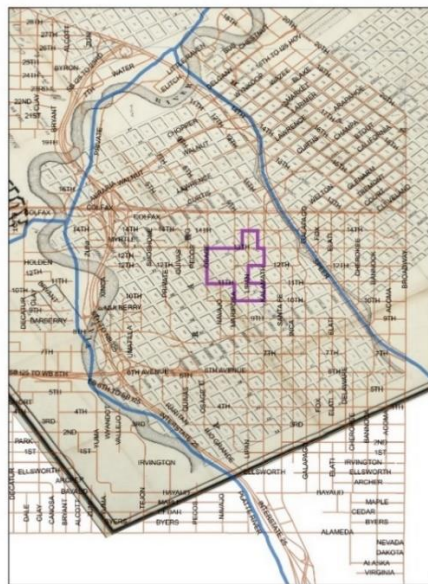
#### **A. It has a direct association with a significant historic event or with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;**

The La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District is significant for its development as of one of Denver's earliest working-class and immigrant communities. A neighborhood initially built around key industries including the railroad, flour mill, and other manufacturing, the area became home to working-class and immigrant communities for nearly 130 years.

The current La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood, was originally home to the Apache, Ute, Cheyenne, Comanche and Arapahoe peoples. This land was along their migratory path and sites along Cherry Creek were part of their seasonal encampments. In the 1870s, after the arrival of the railroad, Alexander Cameron Hunt homesteaded the land that became the future public park, initially known as Lincoln Park and later La Alma Lincoln Park, and platted the surrounding land as *Hunt's Addition*. The homestead and eventual park became a central focal point to the neighborhood's growth, with residential properties constructed to the north, east, and south, and large industrial development along the railroad to the west of the park. From late 1870s through the 1920s nearby industries, such as the railroads (Denver & Rio Grande/Burnham Yards) and flour mills (Mullen and Davis Flour Mill), drew residents to the area.



Library of Congress 1889 Map (West 11<sup>th</sup> at bottom, West Colfax Ave at top, Cherry Creek at right, and Burnham Yards at left)



Overlay of the Auraria Town Company 1859 map by Fosdick & Tappan atop a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Denver map

With major employers within walking distance, German, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Mexican residents established this early Denver community. The neighborhood was outside of the urban core, and horse-drawn-street cars and then trolley lines connected it to downtown Denver. However, the area also developed commercial strips within walking distance along Kalamath St. and then Santa Fe Ave. And, within the greater La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood multiple churches were established. The proposed historic cultural district, centered around the park and adjacent to major industries, is significant for the development of one Denver's earliest residential neighborhoods.

While significant for its early history, by the mid-twentieth century, due to new waves of in-migration, La Alma Lincoln Park had a large population of Latinos, Hispanos, and Mexican American residents and homeowners, including many who became influential Chicano Movement leaders.

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

The district embodies the distinctive visible characteristic of vernacular Italianate, Victorian, Front Gable, Terrace, Foursquare, and Bungalow styles and types. The modest, yet identifiable architectural styles of the La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District represents the mostly intact working-class neighborhood heralding from Denver’s railroad and industrial age. The vernacular styles and types in the district were not architect designed, but were constructed by craftsman and builders using common and readily available materials, which are key tenants of vernacular architecture. As defined by Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Collins Cromley in an *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture* “vernacular architecture is the common form of building in a given place and time, and therefore must encompass materials both handmade and industrially produced, depending on the particular circumstances...” Common or simplified building forms and styles, as well as handmade and industrially produced materials are seen in the vernacular architecture of the district.

Most of the original residences in the district are single-story cottages in restrained or simplified versions of the architectural styles found in the surrounding areas. The district’s buildings are notable examples of the shift in popularity among architectural styles in Denver in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and can still be seen today. One can reliably estimate the year of construction based on a dwelling’s architectural style, with the earliest being Italianate, Queen Anne, and Front Gable, and then shifting to Classic Cottage, Terrace, Four-square, and Bungalow, with the majority built from the 1880s through the 1920s.



Structures in proposed district, example of row of Italianate buildings



Structure in proposed district, example of an Italianate Cottage



Structure in proposed district, example of a Queen Anne Cottage



Structures in proposed district, example of Terrace buildings



Structure in proposed district, example of a Bungalow

**H. It represents an era of culture or heritage that allows an understanding of how the site was used by past generations;**

The La Alma Lincoln Park architecture, with its layers of history and cultural significance, provides an understanding of how the site has been used and changed by past generations. Over the decades, there have been changes to the structures within the district. While the original styles are still readily evident, the alterations that occurred during the Period of Significance reflect the community of people that altered them. When the area saw a change in population, with the in-migration of Latino/Chicano residents, the neighborhood began to take on the character, heritage, and culture of the community.

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and increasing in the 1930s, Mexican American, Hispano and Latino families moved into La Alma Lincoln Park in growing numbers. As new residents and families purchased or rented the older homes, they began to adapt the homes to meet their needs. Common modifications include adding new stucco, siding, or Permastone over the original brick or wood siding. Fences were also added or altered, often in an effort to extend living spaces. Other common adaptations include replacing windows, frequently with vinyl, and enclosing porches and adding modest-sized dormers to create more living space.

Many of these changes took place as the Chicano Movement began to swell in the neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s. These layers of change reflect how new generations of residents creatively adapted and used the buildings, and how the cultural history of the neighborhood is reflected in the built environment. This can be seen through the continuity of transparent front-yard spaces, the introduction of stucco on residences, and the additions that allowed families to grow in the otherwise modest houses. The changes made by the people that inhabited the neighborhood became intertwined with the physical characteristics of the houses and illustrate how the district was used and changed by past generations.



Structure in proposed district (note addition of stucco and fencing)

**J. It is associated with social movements, institutions, or patterns of growth or change that contributed significantly to the culture of the neighborhood, community, city, state, or nation.**

The proposed historic cultural district is strongly associated with social movements and institutions that contributed significantly to the culture of the neighborhood, community, city, and state for its central role in the Chicano Movement. In addition to the diversity among the neighborhood's earliest residents, many residents of Hispano, Mexican-American, Mexican, and Latino descent moved to La Alma Lincoln Park during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. In time, the neighborhood and the Park, then called Lincoln Park, became the incubator for Denver's Chicano Movement, as residents came to identify as Chicano/a and advocate for social justice in many forms. Denver was at the forefront of the national Chicano Movement. Numerous leaders and activists recall their youth in the neighborhood and time spent in or near the Park at its heart. The Movement integrated political activism with the promotion of culturally specific education in arts, music, theater, graphic arts, and literature. The Chicano Movement represents the convergence of independent issues: land rights, labor rights, long-term discrimination, opposition to the Vietnam war, civil rights as embodied in the Civil Rights Movement, with cultural identity, lack of equity in education and the inadequacy of the dominant political institutions to represent or address Chicano/a issues.

One of the greatest concerns that galvanized Denver's Chicano Movement was equity in education. A 1947 U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Mendez v. Westminster*) specifically prohibited segregating Latino children from white children. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment guaranteed equal protection to all racial groups (*Hernandez v. Texas*). Fifteen years later, the ongoing unequal access to facilities, the lack of bilingual programs, and disrespect for cultural heritage in many public education programs, led to high school walk-outs that began in Los Angeles, California in 1968 and helped spark the blowout at Denver's West High School in the spring of 1969. The walkout spawned a "blowout" among hundreds of students from other Denver junior high and high schools, with marches to Lincoln Park through the neighborhood from West High School over several days in March 1969. These marches, along with other events and activities, made the Park historically important ground for Chicanos/as rights in Denver and made the La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood an incubator for the Chicano Movement.

Another significant sign of the Movement's connection to the neighborhood is through the murals that exist on both public and private buildings. Artist Emanuel Martinez, who lived in the neighborhood, is a key figure in the creation of these murals and in developing the Chicano/a Mural Movement in Denver. Denver was one of a handful of American cities that simultaneously began to paint community murals in the late 1960s. Many times, Chicano/a muralists would travel to other cities to draw inspiration. Several murals in La Alma Lincoln Park remain, including two in the proposed district's boundaries, and are character-defining features of the area.

The Movement grew out of a number of inequitable circumstances that pushed Latinos, Hispanos, and Mexican American communities across the country to push for a change to government and systems. The Movement was fostered in part through voluntary social service groups (known as *mutualistas*) to assist Chicano/a families and help organize individuals and groups to be involved in the Movement, many of which were located within the district. The La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood provided safe havens where Chicano Movement organizers and supporters lived, worked, and gathered.



Photo of La Alma Rec Center, and “La Alma” mural by Emmanuel Martinez



Photo of Denver Inner City Parish



**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 (7) qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The district retains all aspects of integrity. It maintains excellent integrity of location as the layout of the Park, residential areas, and the streets have remained the same since early development. The integrity of design and workmanship is seen through the rhythm of the streetscape, the retention of historic setbacks, the shape and scale of the original residences, and the intact tree lawn.

The district retains integrity of materials. Although some exterior materials have changed, these changes are primarily within the period of significance and have both achieved their own significance and reflect the layers of history of the district.

The integrity of setting, feeling and association are also maintained through continued residential use. And, in some cases the residences remain in the same families. This generational lineage of homeowners within the district helps retain association and feeling. Additionally, the continued presence and use of the park, along with historic the murals helps retain the setting, feeling, and associate. While there has been some infill construction or larger-scale incompatible additions, overall, the district is remarkably intact, with only 18 non-contributing properties.

Also, note that all outbuildings or accessory structures, as they are not readily visible and do not contribute to the overall character of the district, are considered non-contributing.



Streetscape of Italianate and Queen Anne Cottages

**Relates to a Historic Context and Period of Significance:**

The La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District’s period of significance reflects the layered nature of the neighborhood’s history. From the early construction of permanent structures in the 1870s, with the



**Existing Land Use (2018) Context:**



Existing Land Use: Yellow, single-family; Peach, multi-unit; Orange, two-unit, Red, office building; White, vacant; Blue –other rec facility; Green, park (proposed district noted in blue)

**Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Denver (2019), and La Alma/ Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan**

The proposed district is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Blueprint Denver, and the La Alma/ Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan.

**Comprehensive Plan**

The proposal is most directly consistent with the Comprehensive Plan 2040 vision element for Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods. The most applicable goals and strategies are noted below.

Vision Element: Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods

Goal 1: Create a city of complete neighborhoods

*Strategy D: Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and offers opportunities for increased amenities.*

Goal 2: Enhance Denver’s neighborhoods through high-quality urban design

*Strategy B: Establish a scalable, predictable and adaptable approach to improve design quality across the city.*

*Strategy C: Create people-oriented places that embrace community character with thoughtful transitions, aspirational design and an engaging public realm.*

Goal 3: Preserve the authenticity of Denver’s neighborhoods and celebrate our history, architecture and culture

*Strategy B: Continue the city’s commitment to existing historic districts and landmarks and increase public awareness of the benefits of historic preservation through education and outreach.*

*Strategy C: Ensure city policies and regulations support historic preservation and eliminate barriers in city processes to help all neighborhoods preserve what matters most.*

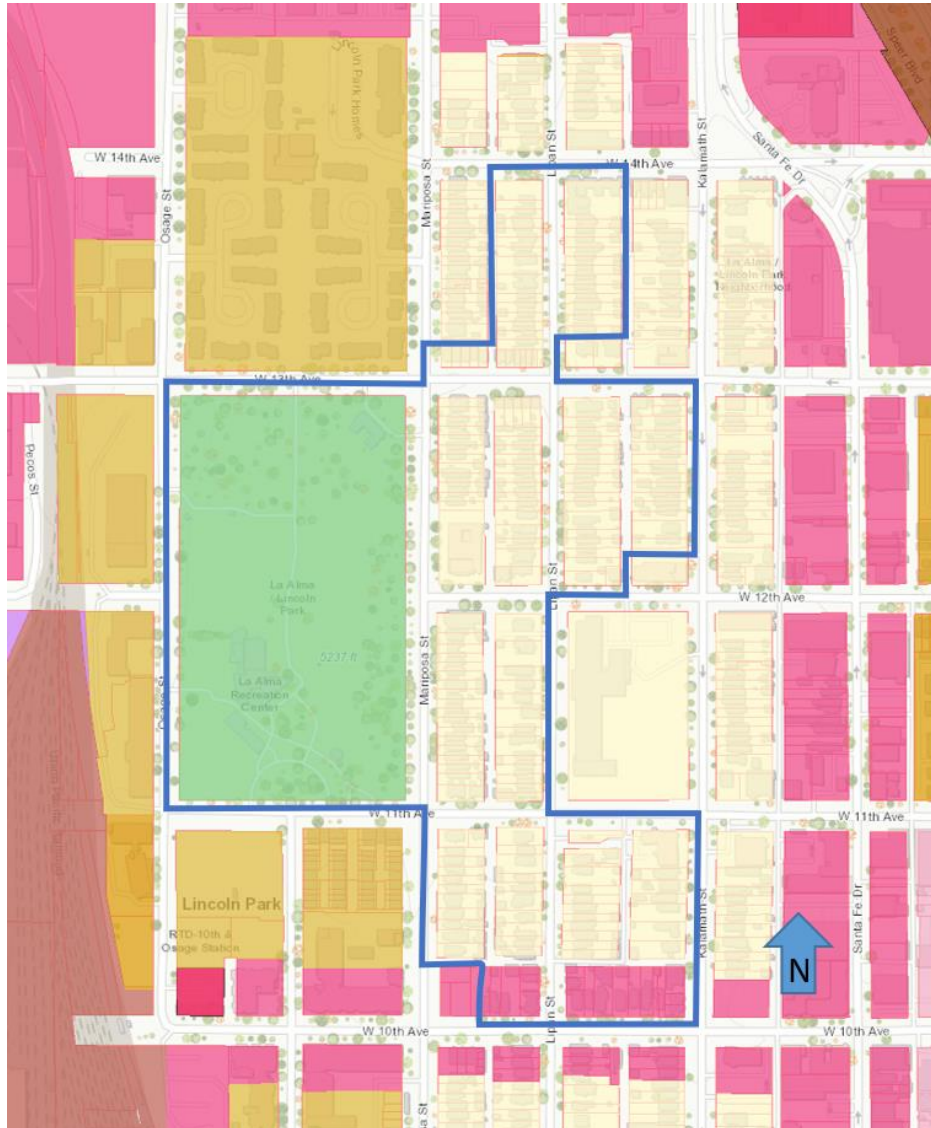
*Strategy E: Support the stewardship and reuse of existing buildings, including city properties.*

The proposed La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District reinforces the vision of Comprehensive Plan 2040 through the preservation of a community cultural assets in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. It preserves the city’s authentic historic character, enhances design excellence, and contributes to a strong sense of community identity. Additionally, it encourages the stewardship of city properties through the continued use of La Alma Lincoln Park and the preservation of the “La Alma” mural on the wall of the recreation center. Designation of the La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District advances these attributes of quality design through design review of new infill, while providing flexibility for the proposed cultural historic district with the draft customized design guidelines.

### **Blueprint Denver**

According to Blueprint Denver, the district’s future neighborhood context is general urban for the park and urban for the remainder of the district. Regarding the quality-of-life infrastructure for general urban, the plan calls for parks of various sizes. The plan also states that the urban neighborhood context consists of small multi-unit residential and mixed-use areas that are typically embedded in 1-unit and 2-unit residential areas. The buildings are lower in scale and closer to the street, typically with alley access.

Based on Blueprint Denver mapping, the future places within the district are public park and open space for the park, low residential for the majority of the district, and community corridor along 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. Blueprint Denver notes that public parks are vital components of the quality-of-life infrastructure and as city-owned spaces are planned to remain parks. The plan states that low residential areas include predominately single- and two-unit, with the possibility of some higher-intensity residential mixed throughout. And, for community corridors it calls for a balance of residential and employment or residential and dining/shopping or employment and dining/shopping uses.



Blueprint Denver: Future places include public park and open space (green), low residential (yellow), and community corridor (pink)  
(proposed district noted in blue)

The character of the La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District aligns with the both Blueprint Denver’s future places and neighborhood context. The district is combination of primarily single-unit and two-unit buildings, with a few multi-family units. It also contains a handful of commercial or institutional buildings, a few open lots and at its center is La Alma Lincoln Park. The buildings are typically one to two stories in height, with a few three-story buildings. The proposed designation will help retain the existing character of the district, which also aligns with Blueprint Denver’s future places. The district would allow for alterations and growth or infill that is compatible with the existing neighborhood character through Landmark design review. Design review would be based on the *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts*, which would contain customized design guidelines that fit the historic and cultural character of the district.



Designation of the district also aligns with multiple recommendations within Blueprint Denver. Designation of the historic cultural district is consistent with Blueprint’s vision to embrace the city’s existing character and cultural heritage (p. 94). Through design review, proposed projects would preserve key historic features and ensure it is compatible with the character of the district (p. 96).

Under Land Use & Built Form: Design Quality and Preservation, the designation of the district meets multiple recommendations and strategies. It meets Strategies 1A and B, by helping to ensure that neighborhoods have equal access to design quality tools, that are more accessible, but which may also require additional staff resources (p. 97). The proposed customized design guidelines were drafted through a year-long process with community members. The goal of the customization was to create guidelines that would better reflect the neighborhood’s significant historic, architectural, and cultural heritage. Based on the character of the proposed district, the draft customized design guidelines would include greater flexibility on materials, cladding, porches, and fencing. Additionally, the LPC has expressed desire to provide flexibility to increase equity and affordability within the district. Landmark designation also meets Strategy 2A, which recommends using historic designation to ensure residential neighborhoods retain their unique historic character (p. 99).

Overall, the proposed designation is consistent with Blueprint Denver recommendations and reinforces the plan’s policies. 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*.

#### **La Alma/Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan:**

The La Alma/Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan supports the designation of the district. One of the plans overall goals calls for the preservation and celebration of the history and cultural diversity of the neighborhood. The plan notes that “La Alma/Lincoln Park is rich in historic legacies within both the built and natural environments. These include public and private structures and landscapes throughout the neighborhood.” The designation of the historic cultural district would help preserve the character and legacies of both the built environment and the landscape of the park. The designation would also align with the recommendation to “[e]xplore historic designation of potentially eligible buildings and districts.”

#### **Effect on Surrounding Neighborhoods:**

The La Alma Lincoln Park Historic Cultural District designation ordinance will help preserve the character defining features of the district and will have little impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. LPC only has purview for the area located within the designation boundary. The intent of the designation is to recognize this unique district, the buildings that define it, and their contribution to the historic and cultural fabric of the city.

#### **Boundary:**

The proposed boundary of the district constitutes an intact and cohesive segment of the neighborhood that reflects the areas early history and encompasses key buildings and places related to the Chicano Movement. The below legal description aligns with the floor amendment at First Reading.

Hunt’s Addition to Denver:  
Block 10, Lots 18 through 40  
Block 11, Lots 1 through 17  
Block 14, Lots 1 through 20 and lots 25 through 40



Block 23, Lots 1 through 14 and lots 19 through 38 and,  
All of Blocks 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, and "C"

In addition thereto those portions of all abutting public rights-of-way, but only to the centerline thereof,  
which are immediately adjacent to the aforesaid specifically described area.

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
  - District 3 Neighborhood Coalition, Inc.
  - United Northwest Denver
  - La Alma Neighborhood Association
  - Denver's Art District on Santa Fe
  - Neighborhood Coalitions of Denver, Inc.
  - La Alma / Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association
  - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
  - Center City Denver Residents Organization
  - Denver Neighborhood Association, 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

#### **Public Comments:**

As of the July 29<sup>th</sup> (10:30am), CPD has received comments from 119 individuals or organizations  
regarding the application.

- CPD received 9 comments from organizations and RNOs
  - Letters of support submitted by:
    - La Alma Lincoln Park Registered Neighborhood Association
    - La Alma Neighborhood Association (2 letters)
    - Casa Mayan, Auraria Heritage
    - Chicana/o Murals of Colorado Project
    - Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center
    - Denver Inner City Parish
    - Auraria Higher Education Center
    - Museo de las Americas
    - Historic Denver
- CPD received 18 written public comments submitted by individuals
  - 14 individuals in support (2 emails submitted by one individual)
  - 4 individuals in opposition

- LPC Public Hearing 12 members of community spoke
  - 8 individuals in support
  - 1 individual neutral/undecided
  - 3 individuals in opposition
  
- Planning Board 7 members of community spoke
  - 7 individuals in support
  - 0 individuals neutral/undecided
  - 0 individuals in opposition
  
- [CPD hosted on-line questionnaire/survey](#) received responses from 73 individuals
  - 50 -Strongly Support
  - 4 - Neutral/Undecided
  - 6 - Somewhat Against
  - 13 - Strongly Against

**Attachments Provided by CPD:**

- Designation Application
- Inventory Forms
- Boundary map of proposed district (updated to reflect amendment)
- Public comments received by 10:30am, July 29, 2021
- Map of city hosted questionnaire/survey, as of 10:30am, July 27, 2021