



To: Denver City Council
From: Jenny Buddenborg, Senior City Planner, and Becca Dierschow, Senior City Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: December 9, 2021
RE: Landmark Designation Application for East Seventh Avenue Historic District – Steele Street Extension, Application #2021L-005

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 no direct effect on the surrounding neighborhood, staff recommends approval of the application.

Request to Designate a District:

Application: #2021L-005
Address: Multiple
Zoning: U-SU-C
Council: #10, Chris Hinds
Owner: Multiple
Applicant(s): Jane Pritzl, Kenda Fuller, Thomas J. Heese

Case Summary:

Three property owners in the proposed district submitted to CPD a Landmark designation application for the East Seventh Avenue Historic District – Steele Street Extension on September 2, 2021. Staff performed an investigation and found the application to be complete and to meet Denver landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set the LPC public hearing for November 2, 2021.

Prior to the LPC public hearing, in August and October of 2021, Landmark staff hosted two community meetings – one in person and one virtual – to provide information to the community about the application and Landmark Preservation processes. Staff provided an overview of the designation proposal and Landmark Preservation design review guidelines and answered questions from residents and community members.

At the public hearing, LPC recommended landmark designation of a district for the East Seventh Avenue Historic District – Steele St Extension, application #2021L-005, based on Landmark ordinance criteria A, B and C, citing as findings of fact for this recommendation the application form, public testimony, and the October 26, 2021, staff report. Vote 8-0-0.

At the Denver Planning Board meeting on November 17, 2021, the board voted 8-0-0 to recommend to City Council the approval of the proposed district with respect to conformance with the Comprehensive Plan, effect upon the surrounding neighborhood, and other planning considerations.



On November 30, 2021, the Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure 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 December 13, 2021.

Please note that this application is for a new historic district. It is not an amendment to the existing East Seventh Avenue Historic District. This proposed district encompasses a broader period of significance (1912-1990) than the East Seventh Avenue Historic District (prior to and including 1943). This approach follows the model set forth by the Curtis Park neighborhood whereby several historic districts were independently designated, recognizing the different periods of significance and criteria met by each.

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 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 considers the district's historic context

Criteria Evaluation:

The application meets the following significance criteria:

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

The proposed East Seventh Avenue Historic District – Steele Street Extension, located in the Congress Park Neighborhood, is significant for its close association with the City Beautiful movement and with the development of the East Seventh Avenue Parkway, which runs between the two blocks of the proposed district. The City Beautiful movement was a philosophy of urban planning and design that emphasized grand public buildings, curated public spaces and the incorporation of green space. The goal of the City Beautiful movement was to instill civic pride and encourage moral virtue among all citizens.

The City Beautiful era in Denver began in 1904 with the election of Mayor Robert Speer and extended through the 1920s. Inspired by what he saw at the 1893 Columbian Exposition, Mayor Speer's vision included developing an extensive park and parkway system modeled on the City Beautiful movement. This included beautifying Cherry Creek, constructing Civic Center, and establishing the network of parks connected by boulevards and greenways. The homes in the proposed district were constructed between 1914 and 1924, when the City Beautiful movement was in full swing in Denver.

Part of the City Beautiful movement included the creation of pastoral parks and parkways throughout Denver, including the East Seventh Avenue Parkway. The western section of the East Seventh Avenue Parkway was constructed between 1912 and 1914 – predating many of the homes in the district but serving as an enticing amenity for future development. Since its implementation, the parkway has been the focal point of the neighborhood. The shift in the parkway's design as it meets the proposed district at Steele Street is notable, making these blocks geographically significant as a marker between the

older, more high style part of the East Seventh Avenue Parkway and the newer section where bungalows and other, more modest, housing styles flourished. The newer section of the East Seventh Avenue Parkway was designed by Saco Rink DeBoer – a well-known landscape designer in Denver. DeBoer’s approach to landscape design emphasized the use of local planting materials, water conservation and low-impact changes to the existing landscape.

B. It has direct and substantial association with a recognized person or group of persons who had influence on society;

The proposed Steele Street Extension historic district is also significant for its direct and substantial association with Judge Raymond D. Jones, who owned and lived at 780 Steele Street for over 40 years. Judge Jones was a well-known personality on Steele Street, who played an active role in the Civil Rights Movement in Denver, was a notable attorney and judge, and was the first African American to serve on the Appellate Court in Colorado. Judge Jones originally rented the house at 780 Steele Street and eventually purchased the building in 1977.

Born in Pueblo, Colorado, Jones studied political science at Colorado College, one of only five African American students in attendance in 1964. After graduating from Colorado College, Jones went on to earn a law degree from Harvard University in 1971. He then worked in New York City on Wall Street but returned to Denver to clerk for the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court, Justice Pringle. He was appointed as a trial judge for the Denver County Court, where he served for two years before serving for nine years on the Denver District Court and two years as the Chief Justice of the Aurora Municipal Court. In 1988 he was appointed an Associate Judge of the Colorado Court of Appeals, the first Black judge to hold such a position. He remained in this post for fifteen years and authored over 1,400 opinions.

Later in his life, Judge Jones taught at Colorado College (his alma mater) and Metro State University. He helped form the Sam Cary Association of Black Attorneys, and Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Theatre.

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

The homes in the proposed district embody the Craftsman architectural style, with 16 out of 19 structures exhibiting the distinguishing characteristics of the style. Defining features of the Craftsman style include low-pitched gabled or hipped roofs, wide, overhanging eaves, often with exposed rafter tails, ridge beams, or knee braces, and full- or partial-width porches with substantial square or tapered piers supporting the porch roof. The bungalows in the proposed district were constructed between 1914 and 1924, at the height of the style’s popularity in Denver. The only homes not built in the bungalow style include one Foursquare and one Central Passage Double Pile, but these two homes were built within the period of significance, and their brick construction and setbacks blend neatly with their Bungalow neighbors. There is one building that is considered non-contributing to the district: 716 Steele Street was constructed in the Craftsmen style, however, a fire in the 1980s required extensive remodeling, which impacted the integrity of the original design.



Figure 1 The Bungalow porches present physical and design-based connectivity up and down Steele Street

Integrity:

Chapter 30 requires that a landmark designated property maintain its integrity, 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 proposed district retains a high degree of integrity. Although there have been some changes outside the district due to changes and growth in the surrounding area, the neighborhood is still urban residential in nature and in the same location, retaining both integrity of setting and location. While there have been modifications to some of the structures within the district, the overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are readily apparent. The continued use as a residential area helps retain a strong sense of feeling and association.

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.



Figure 2 The proposed historic district maintains its historic character, with the houses maintaining their historic style, setback, and sense of scale

Relates to a Historic Context and Period of Significance:

The district relates to the City Beautiful era development of properties in central Denver along streetcar lines and adjacent to parks and parkways. It also represents the evolution and changing demographics of the Congress Park Neighborhood from its early 1900s residential expansion to the city’s urban renaissance in the 1970s to 1990. The period of significance for the proposed historic district is 1912-1990. This period of significance reflects the district’s many areas of significance, starting with its construction during the late City Beautiful movement and extending through its association with Judge Raymond Jones, who lived in the district during his active life. The historic context and the Period of Significance are strongly associated with the criteria and are well documented.

Planning Board Considerations, per Chapter 30-4.6, Denver Revised Municipal Code:

The Landmark ordinance provides the opportunity for the Planning Board to make a recommendation to City Council regarding designation of districts. The ordinance specifically directs the Planning Board to consider a proposed designation with respect to:

1. Its relationship to the Denver Comprehensive Plan;
2. The effect of the designation upon the surrounding neighborhood; and
3. Such other planning considerations as may be relevant to the proposed designation or amendments.

Zoning Context:

The district is zoned U-SU-C.

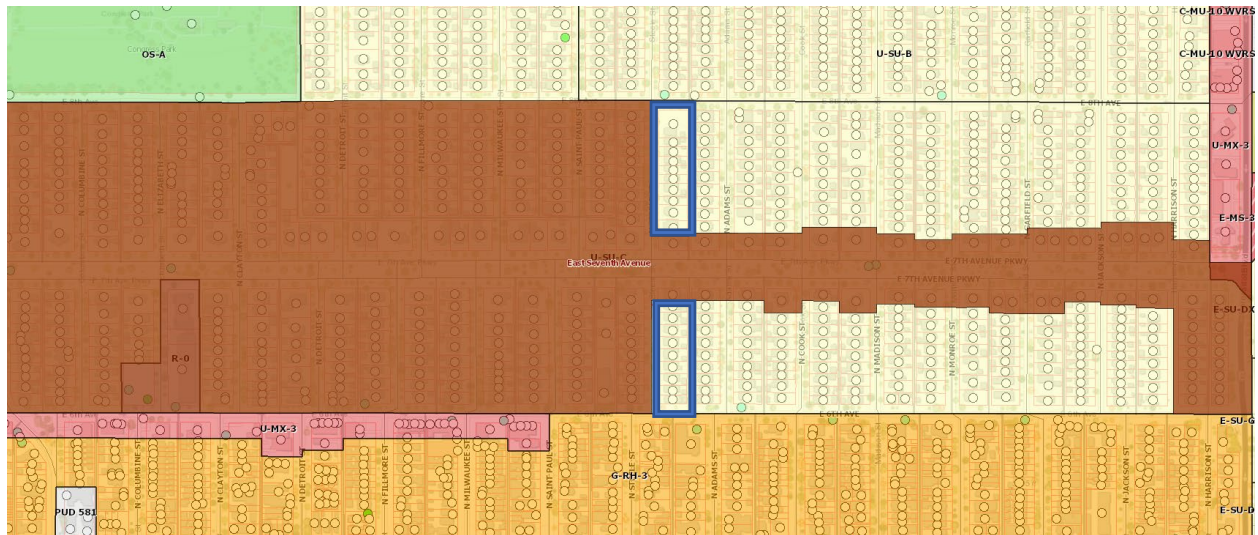


Figure 3. Zoning Map (Proposed district within blue boundaries; existing East 7th Avenue Historic District in brown, which also has U-SU-C zoning)

Relationship to Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Supplemental Plans:

The proposed district is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Blueprint Denver, and East Central Area Plan.

Comprehensive Plan

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

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.

Goal 6: Empower Denverites to be involved and collaborative in city government

Strategy A: Continue to strengthen trust and communication between the city and all neighborhoods.

The proposed East Seventh Avenue Historic District - Steele Street Extension reinforces the vision of Comprehensive Plan 2040 through the preservation of important architectural and historical assets in the Congress Park Neighborhood. It preserves the city's authentic historic character, enhances design excellence, and contributes to a strong sense of community identity. Designation of the proposed district advances these attributes of quality design through design review of new infill and alterations to properties requiring a zoning or building permit.

Blueprint Denver

According to Blueprint Denver, the district's future neighborhood context is urban. Regarding the quality-of-life infrastructure for the urban neighborhood context, the plan calls for parks of various sizes. The plan also states that the urban neighborhood context consists of predominately single- and two-unit uses on smaller lots. The buildings are lower in scale and closer to the street, typically with alley access. The bicycle network is in the form of protected lanes on arterial streets and integrated on local streets.

Based on Blueprint Denver mapping, the future place type within the district is low residential. Blueprint Denver notes that public parks are vital components of the quality-of-life infrastructure and city-owned spaces are planned to remain parks. The plan states that low residential areas include predominately

single- and two-unit with accessory dwelling units and duplexes being appropriate when they can be thoughtfully integrated where compatible.

The character of the proposed district aligns with both Blueprint Denver’s future places and neighborhood context. The district is primarily single-unit buildings and is adjacent to the historic East 7th Avenue Parkway. The buildings are typically one to two stories in height. 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 Preservation design review. Design review would be based on the *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts*.

Designation of the district also aligns with multiple recommendations within Blueprint Denver. It is consistent with Blueprint Denver’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 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*. Lastly, this designation resulted in part from the block’s inclusion in the Congress Park Neighborhood building survey via Discover Denver, and thus also contributes to measuring success of the total percentage of surveyed areas within the city, the target of which is to reach 100% by 2040.

East Central Area Plan

The East Central Area Plan designates the proposed district as an area of historic significance, which is defined as “a collection of structures and features identified by the citywide building survey Discover Denver that is significant for its history, architecture and culture, and is potentially eligible for local historic designation and application of other tools that will maintain its character.”

The proposed historic district aligns with multiple recommendations within the East Central Area Plan, including the following:

L9 - Use Discover Denver citywide building survey to preserve historic buildings and neighborhood character.

A. For areas identified as an “Area of Historic Significance,” partner with Historic Denver to engage residents on the creation of a historic district.

C. Identify additional incentives to encourage property owners to designate, such as:

1. Technical assistance writing designation applications.
2. Additional financial incentives, such as development fee and tax reductions.
3. Guidance on community engagement.

L6: Retain the character of High, High-Medium, and Low-Medium Residential Places and facilitate compatible infill development.

A. Promote preservation of historic and character defining single-unit, multi-unit, and mixed-use buildings. Consider individual landmarks, historic districts, or other tools as appropriate.

The proposed historic district also meets Congress Park’s neighborhood specific policy:

COP-L1: Prioritize land use policies that aim to maintain character in Congress Park

F. Consider Landmark designations where appropriate (see Policy L9)

Effect on Surrounding Neighborhood:

The East Seventh Avenue Historic District – Steele Street Extension designation will help preserve the character of the proposed district and neighborhood, consistent with the neighborhood’s context and future place as identified in Blueprint Denver. LPC only has purview for the area located within the designation boundary, so surrounding areas are not directly impacted by the designation and the requirements and incentives that come along with it. The intent of the designation is to recognize this unique district, the buildings that define it, and their contribution to the historic and architectural fabric of the city.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the following legal description:

Lots 1-20 and the north half of lot 21 except the rear 6 feet of said lots, Block 332, Capitol Avenue Subdivision Third Filing, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

Lots 6-22 except the rear 6 feet of said lots, Block 342, Capitol Avenue Subdivision Third Filing, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

Together with the adjoining public rights-of-way but only to the centerline thereof.

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, Planning Board meeting and City Council meetings
- City Council, Community Planning and Development, and Planning Board email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO) and courtesy email notifications
 - Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc.
 - Cherry Creek North Neighborhood Association
 - Congress Park Neighbors, Inc.
 - 7th Avenue Neighborhood Association
 - City Park Friends and Neighbors (CPFAN)
 - Green Cherry Creek
 - Denver For ALL
 - District 10 Neighborhood Coalition, Inc.
 - Congress Park for ALL, Inc.

- Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
- 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 Comment:

As of 5:00p.m. on December 8, 2021, CPD received comment from 35 Individuals, two RNOs and one Interested Party (Historic Denver, Inc.) regarding the proposed historic district. Public comment includes responses to the City-hosted online survey, emails submitted to LPC staff, and verbal comment provided at the LPC public hearing and Planning Board meeting. Some respondents provided comment multiple times through the various communication channels, and, of those, some shifted their support. Of the properties within the proposed designation boundary that have provided comment, 12 are in support, two (2) are neutral, and one (1) is in opposition.

- RNO Comment
 - Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods – Support
 - Congress Park Neighbors – Neutral
- Individual Comment by online survey or email
 - 28 in support
 - 2 neutral
 - 2 in opposition
- LPC Public Hearing (Seven property owners within proposed district, five Denver residents, one RNO and one Interested Party)
 - 9 in support
 - 1 neutral
 - 4 in opposition
- Planning Board Meeting (Three property owners within proposed district and one Interested Party)
 - 3 in support
 - 0 neutral
 - 1 in opposition

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Proposed District Map
- Public Comment