



**To:** Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee  
**From:** Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)  
**Date:** September 5, 2019  
**RE:** Landmark Designation for 4345 West 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Howard Berkeley Park Chapel

**Staff Recommendation:**

Based on ordinance designation criteria and on 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:** #2019L-009  
**Address:** 4345 West 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
**Zoning:** U-MX-3  
**Council:** District #1, Amanda Sandoval  
**Blueprint Denver:** Urban Neighborhood Context and Low Residential Future Places  
**Owner:** Howard Mortuaries & Cemeteries Corp  
**Demolition Applicant:** Koelbel Urban Homes  
**Designation Applicant(s):** Three Denver residents

**Case Summary:**

On May 29, 2019, a demolition application was submitted to CPD. Landmark staff reviewed the property and found it had the potential to be an Individual Denver Landmark. Public notification of the demolition application was posted on the property and email notification sent. On July 10, 2019, three Denver residents submitted a Landmark Designation application, along with the \$875 fee, for 4345 West 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue to CPD. Landmark staff reviewed the application and found it to be complete and to meet Denver landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set the public hearing for the Landmark Preservation Commission meeting on August 20, 2019.

The LPC voted (5-0-0) to recommend approval of the designation application and forwarded it to city council. This determination was based on History Criterion 1a, Architecture Criteria 2a and 2b, and Geography Criteria 3a and 3b, the application form, public testimony, and the staff report.

Per the Landmark Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 30-6(1)(b), a designation application submitted as part of a demolition review, must be reviewed by LPC and forwarded to city council, voted on by city council, signed by the mayor, and published within 120 days of receipt of the demolition application, in order for the property to become an Individual Denver Landmark. If the designation application process is not completed within 120 days or the designation application is terminated, a Landmark demolition approval for the property would be issued. The 120-day deadline for this application is September 26, 2019.

**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. Meet one criterion 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 1a, Architecture Criteria 2a and 2b, and Geography Criteria 3a and 3b.

**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:**

*a) Have direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;*

The structure has direct association with the history and development of the city. Started in 1917 as a small family-operated funeral home, Howard Mortuary's become one of the most successful and long-lasting mortuaries in the city. The company emphasized their longevity and ties to the community in its advertising often referring to the company's "Denver heritage." As the Howard Mortuary grew, they expanded their services and looked to expand to new locations. During the post-war era, the population of Denver and the surrounding suburbs increased exponentially. Howard Mortuary chose this location in Berkeley as the area was unserved and there was a substantial increase in the population in Denver and the metro region. The company's long-term business, ties to the community, and post-war expansion are associated with the development and growth of the city.



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## 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 structure embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a type. Howard Berkeley Park Chapel is a significant example of the mortuary/funeral home type. The character defining features of the mortuary/funeral type include, one to two stories in height, generally residential in character to fit into the surrounding neighborhood, designed to accommodate hearses, porte cocheres, and a mix of specialized rooms such as, operating and dressing rooms, viewing rooms, storage, casket sales, and chapel. These are seen in the property's height and design, architecturally distinguished chapel for funeral services, reposing or "slumber" rooms, facilities for grieving families, a display room for casket selection, garage space for funeral hearses and limousines, sheltered entrances for the arrival of families and guests (a portico and two porte cocheres), and an interior driveway for arrival and departure of grieving family members.

*b) Be a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;*

The mortuary is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect. J. Roger Musick was a well-known and prolific Denver architect who worked both with partners and as a solo designer. This work included extensive residential development, commercial structures, and some civic institutions. When discussing his body of work, Musick emphasized the importance of the Berkeley Park Chapel when he selected this building as one of his five principal works of the 1950s and 1960s. Identified as one of his most important designs over a twenty-year period, this is a significant example of Musick's work.



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### 3. Geographic Significance

**To have geographic importance, the structure or district shall have design quality and integrity, and shall:**

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

The mortuary has a prominent location and has become an established, familiar, and orienting visual feature of the contemporary city. The structure was constructed at a prominent corner in Berkeley, at the intersection of the areas commercial and civic “main street.” The prominent placement of the building, its large size, and the use of high-quality materials to provide a dignified and substantial appearance ensured its place as a focal point and orienting visual feature for the community.

*b) Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;*

The structure promotes the understanding of the urban environment through physical characteristics and rarity. The mortuary displays distinctive physical characteristics in its Gothic and Tudor arches, portico, arcaded porch, porte cocheres, stained and leaded glass (including a rose window), and double-height gabled-roof chapel. Its exceptional terra cotta ornamentation and the substantial size of the building are also unique for the area. These characteristics are both distinctive and rare in the Berkeley neighborhood and in post-war construction.

#### **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 1960 structure retains excellent integrity. It maintains its historic location at the corner of 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Tennyson Street. Although there have been changes along Tennyson Street, with the mix of residential, commercial, and civic structures in the surrounding area, the structure retains integrity of setting. The long-term use as a funeral home helps convey the structure’s integrity of feeling and association. While the Ludiwici clay tiles were replaced and the decorative blue in the terra cotta was painted, these are minimal alterations; overall, the structures maintains strong integrity of workmanship, design, and materials.

#### **Relate to a Historic Context or Theme:**

The structure was constructed as part of post-war growth and strongly relates to Denver’s rapid expansion and suburban development following World War II.

#### **Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver:**

The proposed designation is consistent with both Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver. It is consistent with several Comprehensive Plan 2040 vision elements, most directly with the Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods vision element, which includes the goal to “preserve the authenticity of Denver’s neighborhoods and celebrate our history, architecture and culture.” Throughout

Blueprint Denver, the plan recognizes the importance of historic preservation. Blueprint Denver recommends the reuse of historic structures and the preservation of the unique historic features of Denver's neighborhoods. The designation of 4345 West 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue aligns with the vision and goals of both the Comprehensive Plan and Blueprint, as it helps retain Denver's authenticity by preserving a historically, architecturally, and geographically significant building.

**Boundary:**

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

L 1 to 12 INC FOLLMERS SUB OF PLOT 6 BERKELEY GARDENS EXC PTTO ST & PLOT 7 & W1/2 PLOT 8 EXT PT TO ST BERKELEY GARDENS

**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, Planning Board, and Building Inspection email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications
  - Berkeley Regis United Neighbors
  - Berkeley Neighborhood Association
  - Unite North Metro Denver
  - 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 Comments:**

As of the date of this staff report, CPD received 32 public comments regarding the designation application.

- Neighborhood or organization comment
  - The Berkeley Neighborhood Association and the West Highland Neighborhood Association RNOs submitted letters of support
  - Historic Berkeley Regis and Colorado Preservation Inc submitted letters of support
- Public comments submitted to CPD from individuals
  - 13 individuals in support
  - 2 individuals in opposition
- Public comments at LPC public hearing
  - 12 in support
  - 1 in opposition



**Attachments Provided by CPD:**

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation
- Letter and report from property owner and demolition applicant
- Public comments received by September 5<sup>th</sup>