



To: Denver City Council
From: Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: May 6, 2021
RE: Landmark Designation for 123 Speer Blvd., KLZ Communications Center/Denver7

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, staff recommends approval of the application.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2021L-001
Address: 123 Speer Blvd.
Zoning: C-MX-12
Council: Council District #10, Councilmember Hinds
Owner: Scripps Media
Applicant(s): Brad Cameron, Michael Henry, and David Wise

Case Summary:

On December 4, 2020, a Certificate of Demolition Eligibility (CDE) application for the property at 123 Speer Blvd. was submitted to CPD. Landmark staff reviewed the property, found it had the potential to be an Individual Denver Landmark, and prepared a staff report stating Landmark staff's findings for potential for designation. Staff also posted public notice of the CDE application. During the public notice period, three residents of Denver filed a Notice of Intent, which extended the posting period and initiated third-party facilitated stakeholder meetings. At the end of the 60-day posting period, no consensus was reached through the stakeholder meetings and three Denver residents prepared and submitted an owner-opposed designation application. Per the Landmark Ordinance, Chapter 30 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code (DRMC), staff reviewed the application and found that the application was complete and that the structure is eligible for designation. As such, staff set a public hearing before the Landmark Preservation Commission on April 6, 2021 for the Commission to review the designation application.

At the public hearing, the LPC considered the application, staff report, submitted documentation, and public testimony. They voted (6-1-0) to recommend approval and forward to City Council the landmark designation, based on the Landmark Ordinance criteria A, B, C, D, F, and G, written comment, public testimony, and the staff report. On April 20, 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 is set for May 10, 2021.

Designation Criteria and Evaluation, Chapter 30, DRMC:

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

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Criteria Evaluation:

Landmark Preservation Commission found that the structure 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 property at 123 Speer Blvd., also known as the KLZ Communications Center or Denver7, is significant for its association with the historical development of the television communications industry in Denver. The KLZ Communications Center embodies the history of the development of television as the primary news source through the second half of the twentieth century. Pre-war and into the early-1950s, Denverites consumed their news and entertainment primarily through print and radio, but in 1953 when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) granted the first television licenses in Denver, news and media were transformed. By the late 1960s, network television was the dominant mass medium in the United States. Daily radio listening dropped precipitously, as did movie theater-going, and the public was spending multiple hours per day watching television. Nationwide, the rapid growth of the industry prompted broadcasters to expand their studio and offices.

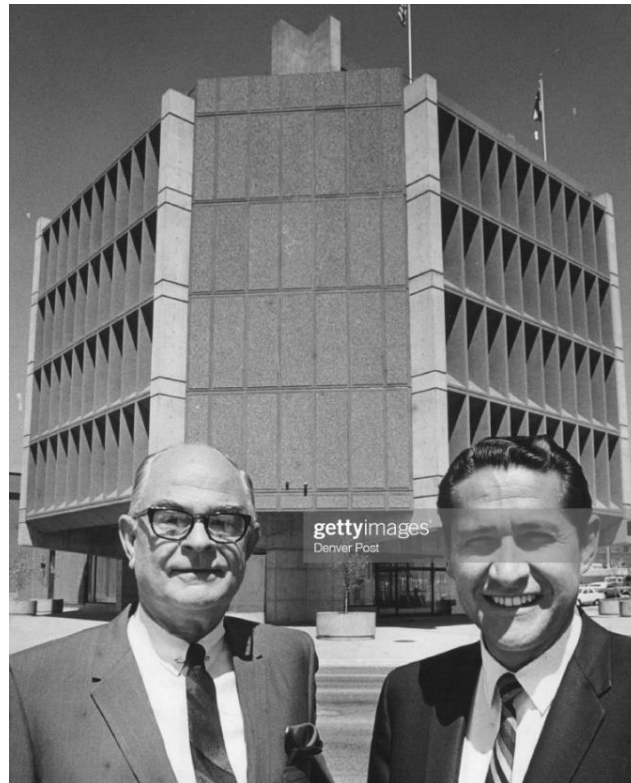
The block at 123 E. Speer Blvd. has been the site of the station, first as a converted Packer/Studebaker dealership and warehouse and then as a purpose-built communication center and television studio. After a rigorous and competitive application process for an FCC television license, in November of 1953 KLZ radio and television operated in the converted studio and broadcast as a CBS affiliate. With the success of KLZ, the exponential growth of television, and as part of a nationwide trend of studio expansion, in October of 1967, KLZ broke ground for a new purpose-built studio and office building that housed the latest in broadcast technology. Tripling the size of the first studio this, at the time, the state-of-the-art studio opened to great fanfare and served as the home for KLZ and later, after 1972, as KMGH-TV. The building embodies the history of KLZ and serves as a physical representation of television industry's explosive growth during the 1960s, and its continued dominance in the following decades, as the preeminent source of news and entertainment for Denver-area residents.



Denver Post via Getty Images, October 1967, (L. E. Hastings, FCC regional engineer, Denver Mayor Tom Currihan, Colorado Gov. John Love and Hugh B. Terry, president & GM of KLZ at demolition ceremony)

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

The building at 123 Speer Blvd. is directly associated with Hugh B Terry, who managed and ran the TV station from its first broadcast in 1953 to his retirement in 1974. Terry was initially involved in, and part owner, of KLZ radio and was a primary leader of the station’s transition from radio to television. Through fierce competition, he ensured that KLZ acquired one of only four FCC television licenses for Denver. When describing the fight to acquire the license, the Rocky Mountain News noted that Terry was “so impressive...he was characterized as ‘Mr Denver,’ and that it was largely due to his strenuous efforts that KLZ was granted a license to broadcast television.” Terry presided over the initial development of KLZ television in Denver, the transition in ownership from Aladdin Television to Time-Life, and the station’s continued growth through the ensuing decades. Beyond his work in Colorado, he served on the National Association of Broadcasters board for six years and expanded his role as president and general manager of KLZ to include oversight of Time-Life’s Western Division. His work earned multiple awards and accolades. Additionally, as president and general manager, Terry oversaw the transition from the repurposed Studebaker building, which initially housed the television station, to the purpose built KLZ Communication Center in 1969. While his time working in this building was limited to a few years, and that duration of association is an important factor in determining significance, the original warehouse converted to a TV station, is no longer extant. Therefore, this building is the best remaining structure to be associated with the influential work of Hugh B. Terry and his productive life.



Denver Post via Getty Images, 1969 (President and General Manager Hugh B. Terry and his assistant, Paul Blue in front of 123 Speer Blvd.)

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

The KLZ Communication Center at 123 Speer Blvd. embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, as a distinct example of the Brutalist style. Coming into usage in the 1950s, the terms “brutalist” or “new brutalism” were used to describe a style that celebrated raw materials, eschewed decoration, and presented an honest architectural expression by exposing a building’s structural and mechanical components to view. The style reached its peak of popularity in the 1960s and 1970s and was most frequently used for large civic or institutional purposes often by governmental entities, colleges or universities, or larger corporations. Architectural historian and critic Reyner Banham identified three critical characteristics of Brutalist architecture: memorability as an image; clear exhibition of structure; and valuation of materials ‘as found.’ Those characteristics are often seen in Brutalist buildings through monumental scale, exposed concrete structure, cantilevered mass or monumental first floors, geometric forms, and windows that are inset or are slits in the wall. These distinctive visible characteristics are evident in the KLZ Communications Center in its siting at an important and prominent intersection, monumental cantilevered octagon tower, combination of cast-in-place and pre-formed concrete, and recessed windows.



Photo by Bill Wunsch/The Denver Post via Getty Images, 1969 (image of 123 Speer Blvd)



Photo by Brad Cameron, February 2021 (image of 123 Speer Blvd)

D. It is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;

The KLZ Communication Center is a significant example of the work of recognized architectural firm Fulmer & Bowers. While Fulmer & Bowers's work included commercial, educational and industrial buildings, their designs for communications buildings across the United States garnered significant attention. This can be seen in the June 1964 issue of *Television*, which focused on the trends in station design nationwide and highlighted five stations designed by Fulmer & Bowers. The firm is credited with the design and/or construction of numerous television studios across the country, including in Pittsburgh, Hartford, Boston, Memphis, Baltimore, Atlanta, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Syracuse, and Grand Rapids. As is generally typical for architects, they designed for the purpose and need of their clients using architectural styles popular at the time. Their work, particularly for television studios, shows a mastery of mid-century modern design styles ranging from International, New Formalism, and Brutalism, as seen in the KLZ building. As a nationally known architectural firm, with an expertise in the design of television studios in the mid-twentieth century, they are recognized architects. And, as one of the firm's last television studio designs, and the only example in Colorado, the KLZ Communication Center is a significant example of their work.

While the designation application provided background information on N. G. Petry Construction Co. and demonstrated the scope of their work, additional contextual information and comparative analysis of

modern, large-scale construction companies is needed to determine if Petry Construction would qualify as a master builder.

F. It represents an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood, community, or contemporary city, due to its prominent location or physical characteristics;

The building at 123 Speer Blvd. represents an established and familiar feature of Denver due to both its prominent location and physical characteristics. Located at the confluence of Speer Blvd., Lincoln St., and 7th Ave., with visibility from Broadway and 6th Ave., the distinctive octagonal building is sited on a prominent corner of Denver. The architect's intentional consideration of site coupled with the building's arresting design, created an iconic building that has been a well-known and prominent feature along the historic Speer Blvd for over fifty years.

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

The KLZ Communication Center promotes the understanding and appreciation of Denver's urban environment due to its rarity. The communication center is a rare example of Brutalist architecture in Denver. Out of the approximately 160,000 primary structures in Denver, this is one of only a handful of Brutalist designed buildings in the city. Additionally, the headquarters of all four of Denver's oldest television stations have been located within a mile of one another along the Lincoln Street and Speer Boulevard corridors. Today, although all four stations remain in the area, this is one of only two historic buildings associated with Denver's television stations.

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.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of integrity. It is in its historic location, and maintains excellent integrity of location. Although there have been a few alterations to the rear of the building and the addition of digital signage and antennas, they are in keeping with the nature of a news organization and have minimal impact on the integrity of the property. The design, workmanship, and materials are all still readily apparent and maintain good integrity. The continued use as television and media center help retain the integrity of feeling and association. The KLZ Communication Center retains integrity and conveys its significance.

Relates to Historic Context and Period of Significance:

The KLZ Communications Center reflects the history of the development of television as the primary news source over the second half of the twentieth century. The development of the building was overseen by the President and General Manager of the station Hugh Terry and was designed by a well-known firm with extensive experience designing purpose-built television stations. They designed the building in a style popular at the time for large civic or institutional entities.

The period of significance extends from 1969, when construction of the KLZ Communications Center was completed and KLZ-TV began broadcasting from the building, to 1972, when the station was sold, and the call letters changed to KMGH.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:
Arlington Heights Addition, Block 24, Lots 1-15 inclusive north of the Speer Boulevard right-of-way

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)
 - Cultural Arts Residential Organization
 - Neighbors for Greater Capitol Hill
 - Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc.
 - Center City Denver Residents Organization
 - Golden Triangle Creative District
 - 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 11:00 am on May 6th, CPD has received 115 comments regarding the application.

- Public Comments submitted to CPD
 - 23 in support
 - 92 in opposition
- LPC public hearing
 - 2 support
 - 1 opposed

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation
- Public comments received by 11:00am on May 6, 2021
- Owners Response
 - Channel 7 Letter
 - Scripps Media Letter
 - 123 Speer- Rebuttal Report
 - Brutalism Slide Deck