



**To:** Denver City Council  
**From:** Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)  
**Date:** December 17, 2020  
**RE:** Landmark Designation for 910 Galapago Street

**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:** #2020L-006  
**Address:** 910 Galapago Street  
**Zoning:** U-RH-3A, UO-3  
**Council:** District #3, Jamie Torres  
**Owner(s):** Matt Slaby  
**Applicant(s):** Matt Slaby

**Case Summary:**

The Landmark Designation application for 910 Galapago was received by CPD, and staff preliminarily reviewed it. Landmark staff found the application to be complete and to meet Denver landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set the public hearing at the Landmark Preservation Commission for November 17, 2020.

At the public hearing, the LPC voted (8-0) to recommend approval and forward to City Council the landmark designation of 910 Galapago Street, based on the Landmark Ordinance criteria. On December 8, 2020, 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 December 21, 2020.

**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 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 building at 910 Galapago Street, also known as Smith’s Chapel, is directly tied to the development of Denver’s Westside, particularly La Alma Lincoln Park, one of Denver’s oldest surviving residential neighborhoods. Alexander Cameron Hunt, an early resident and developer, deeded land to the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad for Burnham Yards, spurring both commercial and residential building. Beginning in the 1870s the area developed as a residential neighborhood for laborers and immigrants who worked for the emerging railroad, mining, and other industries. The chapel was constructed early in the next decade through a donation by Denver land developer John W. Smith.

The chapel at 910 Galapago represents the early growth of the La Alma Lincoln neighborhood. When Smith’s Chapel was completed in 1882, it was “situated on the outskirts of the city.” However, at least seven other churches were constructed in the area between 1882 and 1893, clearly reflecting that there was enough residential growth there to support them. Beyond their religious significance, churches historically demonstrate that a community is well-established and stable, and as such, speculators could use a church’s presence as a form of advertisement for potential investors. In 1881, notable Denver businessman John W. Smith gifted four lots plus \$10,000 in design and construction costs for a chapel to the Church for the Evangelical United Brethren. A shrewd investor, it is likely Smith saw the church as a way to attract both parishioners and other potential residents to this side of the neighborhood. By the 1890s, the area was a dense and thriving neighborhood, with additional room to grow, but at the time there were enough residents to justify essential neighborhood services including commercial buildings and churches. The chapel at 910 Galapago St is the oldest extant church extant in Denver’s Westside neighborhood.



Photo of west and south facades of 910 Galapago St. (Shannon Schaefer Stage, 2020)

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

Smith's Chapel was completed in 1882 in the Gothic Revival style of architecture, which was typical for the period. Smith's Chapel is listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties under Criteria C, for its architectural style. The character defining features of the Gothic Revival style that can be seen in the chapel include its steeply pitched front-gabled roof, use of ashlar masonry (rhyolite stone), distinct patterns produced by a contrasting blonde sandstone detailing atop the engaged buttresses and along the water table and belt courses, tall pointed arched windows on the main façade clustered in a group of three, as well as pointed arched windows and doors found throughout the 1882 building, and the prominent steeple.

As the Colorado State Register nomination points out, "Smith's Chapel is also a good local example of Gothic Revival style ecclesiastical architecture in Denver. The Chapel and property retain good overall integrity, and the original exterior design remains visible in its plan, masonry construction, and pointed arch window and door openings." A 2 ½ story addition from 1923 on the east side of the original chapel building, doubled the size of the overall building. While the addition is clearly of its own era, constructed of red-brick in a square footprint, it is compatible with the original chapel. By including pointed arch windows on the upper floor and half-height engaged buttresses capped in contrasting masonry on the south façade from the ground to the top of the second floor, it references the gothic revival design.



Photo of west facade of 910 Galapago St (Shannon Schaefer Stage, 2020)

**I. 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.**

La Alma Lincoln Park, where 910 Galapago is located, is one of Denver’s oldest surviving residential neighborhood that it embodies the history of the early Denver, and is significant a century later for its central role in the Chicano Movement. Over the years, the Westside became the soul of Denver’s Hispanos, Mexican American, and Mexican community. Throughout the early twentieth century the United Brethren Church congregation continued in the neighborhood as Westside residents suffered from the Great Depression and subsequent discriminatory housing, urban planning, and financing policies.

The United Brethren Church congregation was dwindling at a time when neighborhood community organizations were arising in response to the systematic discrimination that had affected Westsiders for decades. In the early 1960s the United Brethren either deeded or sold Smith’s Chapel to the Denver Inner City Parish (DICP), an organization that would contribute significantly to the Chicano Movement in the city. Smith’s Chapel provided a home to the DICP, which quickly became a “meaningful institution at the heart of the community.” The Chicano Movement was seeding an explosion of neighborhood and community organizations, among them the Denver Inner City Parish. In its first decade, DICP served as a place of worship, a social agency, a food bank, a school, a meeting center, and its leaders lobbied for welfare, student, and farm workers’ rights – issues that directly impacted many residents of the area.

The important role of the Denver Inner City Parish and 910 Galapago is perhaps most evident during the West High School blowouts of 1969. After years of unequal treatment, Westsiders responded to rising tensions among the backdrop of the national Civil Rights Movement and opposition to Vietnam. Spurred in part by ill-treatment by a teacher whose insults about Chicano culture went unabated, students at West High School walked out on March 20, 1969. More than 300 students and community members converged in protest, and the police responded with tear gas, billy clubs, and arrests. DICP provided a physical refuge to many protesters during the turmoil and was a rallying point for Crusade for Justice leader Rudolfo “Corky” Gonzales. This event became the catalyst that spawned more walkouts among hundreds of students from other Denver junior high and high schools.

In the following decades, the Denver Inner City Parish became even more vital to the community, expanding programs run by local leaders such as Gerry Garcia. Other notable former directors that were involved with the development of DICP and its programming include: Gloria Leyba (who went on to serve as one of the first Latinas to serve in the Colorado House of Representatives), Clark Vestal (who went on to serve for several decades as a Presbyterian Pastor in a neighborhood church in the Baker neighborhood), Tom Friesen (who worked with international NGOs and then worked as regional director for HUD), Steve Johnson (who spearheaded and developed most of DICP’s more visionary programs including Young Father’s Program, La Academia, Community RE-entry for the Formerly Incarcerated). Through the 1960s, 70s, and 80s Smith’s Chapel provided a place for the Chicano community to meet, socialize, and solidify their attempts for equality and democracy.

**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 property at 910 Galapago Street retains overall good integrity. It is still situated on its original location at 9th and Galapago and maintains excellent integrity of location. The minimal changes to the surrounding neighborhood support the integrity of the setting. The continued use of the chapel as a place of worship and social gathering through 2017 has helped the chapel retain feeling and association. While there are multiple additions to the property, they were added within the period of significance and have achieved their own significance. At an unknown time, the stained-glass windows were removed; however, the windows were restored to their original wood sash frame design (on both the 1882 chapel and 1923 addition) by a State Historical Fund grant. Even with these changes, the integrity of design, workmanship, and materials has been maintained, and is seen in the rhyolite and sandstone detailing, brick work, fenestration pattern, and overall massing.



Photo of south and east facades of 910 Galapago St (Shannon Schaefer Stage, 2020)

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

The historic context is intricately linked with areas of significance and the period of significance. At its time of construction in 1882, 910 Galapago was one of the first chapels or churches in the

neighborhood, reflecting the growth of neighborhood. It was constructed in style prevalent at the time for ecclesiastical buildings. In the 1960s the chapel then became the home of the Denver Inner City Parish, an organization directly associated with important moments and leaders of the Chicano Movement in Denver.

The period of significance begins at the date of construction in 1882 and extends through 1986 when significant interior changes were made to the property by the Denver Inner City Parrish. The period of significance reflects its architectural significance, its importance in the early development of the area, and its role in the Chicano movement.

**Boundary:**

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:  
Lots 17, 18, 19 and 20, Block 9, Smith's Addition to the City of Denver.

**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)
  - United Northwest Denver
  - La Alma Neighborhood Association
  - Denver's Art District on Santa Fe
  - La Alma / Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association
  - Center City Denver Residents Organization
  - 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 the staff report, CPD has received two public comment regarding the designation application.

- One written comment of support
- One individual spoke in support at the LPC public hearing

**Attachments Provided by CPD:**

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation
- Written public comment