



**To:** Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee  
**From:** Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)  
**Date:** October 11, 2018  
**RE:** Landmark Designation for the Essex Apartments at 630-638 East 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue

**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:** #2018L-008  
**Address:** 630-638 East 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
**Zoning:** G-RO-3  
**Council:** Wayne New, Council District 10  
**Blueprint Denver:** Area of Change  
**Owner/Applicant(s):** Ben Gearhart

**Case Summary:**

The owner submitted a Landmark Designation application for Essex Apartments at 630-638 East 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to CPD. Staff performed an investigation and 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 October 2, 2018.

At the Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing, the LPC voted (6-0) to recommend approval and forward to City Council for landmark designation of the Essex Apartments at 630-638 East 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, application #2018L-008, based on History Criterion 1a and Architecture Criterion 2b, citing as findings of fact for this recommendation the application form, public testimony, and the September 24, 2018 staff report.

**Designation Criteria and Evaluation, Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code:**

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30-4, Denver Revised Municipal Code, a structure must meet the following criteria:

1. Meet one designation criteria in two or more of the following categories:
  - History
  - Architecture
  - Geography
2. Maintain its physical and historical integrity
3. LPC consider how it relates to context or theme

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**Criteria Evaluation:**

Landmark staff found that the structure application meets History Criterion 1a and Architecture Criterion 2b.

**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 Essex Apartment building is directly associated with the historical development of the City of Denver. The building is located in Clements' Addition of North Capitol Hill, which was established in 1870 as one of three principal historic subdivisions of the neighborhood. At the time, this area seemed far removed from the commercial and residential core of Denver; however, with the construction of the Capitol in 1886, other construction in the area increased.

The eastward movement among Denver's citizens was based on the choice of the wealthy to build residences near the Capitol Building, and away from the urban core. It quickly became fashionable for Denver's more affluent residents to live farther from downtown. Denver's notable streetcar network, along with the advent and popularity of the personal automobile, enabled individuals to live away from the dirt and grime of the city's center and manufacturing operations. Capitol Hill was an ideal location for those with money, to showcase immense homes with exquisite architectural features.

The middle class was quick to follow, as they aspired to live near the wealthier, nicer areas of the city. An affordable means of attaining that status was through apartment living, and the demand for such buildings increased. Architects were commissioned to design the properties, many of which were high style and billed as a desirable alternative to boarding houses, offering amenities to prospective tenants, such as onsite laundry rooms. This property was designed by William Fisher and is associated with the development of Denver and the upper and then middle-class growth of the Capitol Hill area.

**2. Architectural Significance**

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

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

The Essex Apartments building is significant as an early 20th century apartment building designed by William E. Fisher, one of Denver's most well-known architects. At the time, Fisher was in the initial stages of forming a professional union, eventually known and Fisher and Fisher, with his younger brother, Arthur Addison Fisher. While he had designed few single-family homes, Fisher was not yet sought after by wealthy individuals in the Country Club area. The Essex stands out as a comparatively subdued residential design when one considers the future commissions of opulent homes for which he would come to be known. The building was designed by Fisher in the Colonial Revival style with Mission style elements subtly incorporated. This is not surprising, as popular single-family residential works by Fisher around the same time period were designed in Colonial styles. The Essex is also an important work of Fisher, as a fairly early commission in his career and one of his first apartment buildings.



630-638 East 16<sup>th</sup> Ave, north (front) and east (side) elevations  
2018, Kristi Miniello



630 – 638 East 16<sup>th</sup> Ave, north (front) and east (side) elevations  
Ca. 1912, DPL Collection

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**Integrity:**

Chapter 30, DRMC requires that a landmark designated property maintain its historic and physical integrity, defined as “the ability of a structure or district 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 property retains a high degree of integrity, within minimal changes. The property is still in the same location, and, although there have been some changes to the surrounding area, due to the demolition of buildings for parking lots and the recent redevelopment, the neighborhood is still residential in nature; retaining both integrity of location and setting. While the front and side porches have been removed, the front porch is being reconstructed according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, as part of the Federal Tax Credit program. Additionally, the continued use as a residence helps retain a strong sense of feeling and association. Overall, the character defining features are retained and integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are good.

**LPC Consider How Property Relates to a Historic Context/Theme and Period of Significance:**

The structure relates to early residential development of Capitol Hill, first seen through the large single-family residences and then through multi-unit apartment buildings. Residents, who could afford to, sought to escape the grit and grime of the city industrial and manufacturing areas, by literally rising above it on Capitol Hill. The Essex is part of that growth and expansion.

**Boundary:**

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:  
CLEMENTS ADD B336 L37 & 38

**Public Review Process:**

Notifications:

- Owner notification letter regarding the LPC public hearing
- City Council, Planning Board, and Building Inspection email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications
  - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation
  - Center City Denver Residents Organization
  - The Points Historical Redevelopment Corp
  - Uptown on the Hill
  - Colfax Business Improvement District
  - Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc.
  - Enterprise Hill Homeowners Association
  - Colfax on the Hill, Inc.
  - Historic Denver
  - 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

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**Public Comments:**

As of this staff report, CPD has received no comment letters or emails, regarding this application.

**Attachments Provided by CPD:**

- Designation application and associated materials
- Map of structure proposed for preservation
- LPC public hearing draft meeting record