



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

Community Planning and Development
Landmark Preservation

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To: Neighborhoods and Planning Committee of the Denver City Council
From: Kara Hahn, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: April 27, 2016
RE: Landmark Designation for Emily Griffith Opportunity School, 1250 Welton St. and 1261 Glenarm Place, 2016L-003

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the findings of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) that the structure meets the criteria for designation of a structure set out in Section 30-3 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code and the recommendation of the Denver Planning Board, Landmark Preservation staff in Community Planning and Development Department recommends approval of this application.

Landmark Preservation Commission Recommendation:

The LPC recommended landmark designation of a structure, application #2016L-003, Emily Griffith Opportunity School, 1250 Welton St., including the proposed Design Standards and Guidelines, based on History Criterion 1a and c, Architecture Criterion 2a, and Geography Criterion 3a, citing as findings of fact for this recommendation the application form, including the addendums, public testimony, and the April 19, 2016, staff report. Vote 6-0.

Request for Landmark Designation:

Application: #2016L-003

Address: 1250 Welton Street

Zoning: DC, UO-1 with State Capitol View Plane on southwest portion of site

Council: #9, Albus Brooks

Blueprint Denver: Entertainment, Cultural, Exhibition

Applicant: Denver Public Schools (DPS) and Historic Denver Inc. (HDI)

Legal Description:

Lots 1 through 32 inclusive and the vacated alley lying adjacent to said lots, Block 170 East Denver Addition. A surveyor has provided additional legal descriptions for the various sub-areas called out in the designation in Addendum C.

Case Summary:

David Suppes, Chief Operating Officer, Denver Public Schools (DPS) submitted a Landmark Designation application for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School to Community Planning & Department (CPD) on April 1, 2016. The property is owned by DPS, which supports the designation. Historic Denver Inc. is a co-applicant for the designation application.

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 April 19, 2016.

The Landmark Preservation Commission held a public hearing on April 19, 2016, and recommend the landmark designation be forwarded to City Council.

Background Information:

In 2002, Denver Schools Board of Education adopted policy FB – Historic Designation of Facilities to address the historic significance and designation potential of Denver’s older public schools, as well as the responsibility of DPS to achieve its educational mission and protect the public’s investment. The policy identified schools with the highest potential for landmark designation, and laid out an evaluation and coordination process for DPS to follow when a school is proposed for designation. This policy, which included a historic property survey of schools, identified Emily Griffith as a Tier 1 school. Tier 1 schools were defined in the policy as those “most clearly appropriate for Denver Landmark Designation.”

FB Policy – Evaluation Process: When a landmark designation is proposed by an outside entity or person, the FB policy charges DPS to:

- a. Evaluate the facility’s current condition, programmatic requirements, preservation factors and financial costs;
- b. Convene a committee to include representatives from History Colorado, Denver Landmark Preservation Commission and Historic Denver, Inc. to confirm the historical significance of the school and to review the evaluation; and
- c. Forward results to the DPS Board of Education to take appropriate action.

Implementation of the FB Policy for the Emily Griffith Site. The FB Policy was implemented for this site as follows:

- DPS filed a Certificate of Non-Historic Status for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School block on November 30, 2012, anticipating a relocation of the school to a larger facility. This certificate, if issued, would have given DPS or a subsequent buyer the right to demolish all structures on the site for a period of five years.
- DPS withdrew the application on December 20, 2012, after Historic Denver Inc. expressed an interest in landmark designation.
- In 2013, DPS initiated the FB Policy evaluative process, hiring SlaterPaul Architects to complete a Historic Structure Assessment (HSA) (step a. of the FB Policy). The HSA confirmed prior National Register eligibility determinations for the block, and concluded that the buildings were generally in good repair, and could be adaptively reused.
- In 2013, DPS convened the Historic Evaluation Committee (step b of the FB Policy). This committee confirmed the findings of the HSA. While the committee concluded that the entire block qualified for landmark designation, it also found that a prioritized designation focusing on the Welton St. face of the school block was appropriate.
- In 2014, DPS formed the Emily Griffith Sales Advisory Committee to inform the sales process. This included HDI, Denver Landmark Preservation, as well as the Downtown Denver Partnership, Denver Mayor’s office, City Council, and representatives from the real estate and financial community. The committee concluded that DPS needed a sales process to obtain best value and meet its capital needs, that the site warranted a signature dense development, and that there was value to preserving buildings on the Welton St. face.
- In 2014, DPS moved out of the 1250 Welton St. campus.
- In 2015, the City and County of Denver hired Humphries Poli architects to study development options for the site to: provide flexibility for a signature downtown project; preserve the site’s preeminent historic building and integrate it into new development in a meaningful way; and respect and retain the character-defining features of the significant building.
- In 2015, representatives from the former DPS Advisory Committee participated in the city-

and consultant-led process. The study:

- Determined that the school site had more value, certainty and a better potential re-development outcome through an integrated preservation-redevelopment option for the entire block.
 - Evaluated redevelopment scenarios of the site in an effort to provide flexibility for dense new development while also ensuring high quality, well designed development which preserves and integrates the historic Welton Street building and street front.
 - Recommends the approach reflected in this application, which preserves the most significant Welton St. facing historic building masses on the site, their character-defining architectural features, and general appearance from key public vantage points.
- In early 2016, DPS agreed to landmark designation of the block (step c. of the FB Policy), per the findings of the city’s study group, and consistent with two years of careful study and discussions by DPS, the City and County of Denver, Historic Denver Inc. and other key stakeholders.

Designation as a Landmark Structure

On November 20, 2012, the Landmark Preservation Commission adopted the policy “Landmark Designation Types: Structure and Historic District.” This policy delineates the two types of landmark designation, a landmark structure and a historic district, and when each application type would apply. In this policy, designation of a landmark structure is appropriate when there is “a primary historic building” with “closely associated accessory structures.” The policy provides examples when designation of a landmark structure would apply, such as “a large historic school with detached...building on same parcel of land; a main house on one parcel with corresponding garage and barn on a second land parcel...”

Because the Emily Griffith Opportunity School property consists of a large primary historic classroom building (1926 school house; 1947 and 1956 additions) with closely associated accessory structures on one parcel of land, the designation was submitted as an application for a landmark structure.

Designation Criteria and Evaluation, Chapter 30, DRMC:

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code (DRMC), a property must be more than 30 years old....and meet the following criteria:

1. Maintain its physical and historical integrity
2. Meet one designation criteria in two or more of the following categories: history, architecture, and geography
3. Relate to a historic context or theme

Period of Significance and Integrity:

Based on the application’s historic context and statements of significance, the proposed period of significance for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School extends from the opening of the school on this site in 1916 through 1956, the original build-out of the classrooms on the Welton Street face of the school in 1956.

Chapter 30, DRMC requires that a landmark designated property maintain its historic and physical integrity, defined as “the ability of a structure...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 in Chapter 30 are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The 1926 building, and its 1947/57 additions have a high level of integrity with few modifications. The building's massing, original design, exterior brick and terra cotta materials, and decorative architectural elements remain intact. As such, the building largely resembles its appearance in 1957 when the last major classroom addition was completed. The most significant alteration to the 1926 portion of the building is the replacement of original windows and doors. While the windows on the 1946/57 addition remain, the doors on the additions have also been replaced. Even with the window and door replacements, the configuration, sizing and operation of the replacement windows/doors are largely the same.

Relate to a Historic Context/Theme:

The property relates to the historic contexts for the landmark designation application for Emily Griffith Opportunity School are: Vocation and Continued Education; Women's History in Colorado.

Landmark Designation Criteria Evaluation:

The Landmark Preservation Commission found that the property met History Criterion 1a and c; Architecture Criterion 2a and Geography Criterion 3a.

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 Emily Griffith Opportunity School's early and novel approach of providing public education to non-traditional students at all hours of the day, and to offer a diversity of practical workforce-oriented training, have had a significant impact on the development of Denver and Colorado. The school's early training of workers matched to local industry needs, its preparation of workers for military and related industry production during both World War I and World War II, and its diverse and innovative educational offerings have helped Denver and Colorado to build a competitive workforce, to promote business and industrial growth, and to attract new employers. The school's openness to students of all ages, races and economic classes, and its language and citizenship classes, have provided more than 1.5 million Denver and Colorado residents with opportunities for self-improvement and economic mobility over a 100 year period.

- c) *Have a direct and substantial association with a person or group of persons who had influence on society;*
Highly motivated and driven to give her students and all residents of Denver the opportunity to better themselves and their economic situation, local school teacher Emily Griffith employed her political and social skills and savvy to gain Denver Public School's support to create the Opportunity School in 1916. Serving as its visionary and principal from 1916 until her retirement in 1933, she led the school from its initial opening to a regular enrollment of 10,000. She forged partnerships with government and industry to offer dozens of training and educational programs available to students of all ages and races, day and night. Her ability to nurture and teach her students, and to also maneuver within the city's political, business and social spheres, helped to make the school a tremendous success. The school was named in honor of Emily Griffith in 1933 and a stained glass portrait of her was dedicated in the State Capitol in 1975. Emily Griffith remains one of the most important and respected women in Colorado history.

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 Welton Street face of the school, consisting of the 1926 building designed by E. Floyd Redding, combined with its 1946 and 1957 additions together convey themselves as a simple, modern and forward-thinking educational institution. The 1926 schoolhouse at the corner of Welton and 12th Street is an excellent example of a Renaissance Revival influenced school building with Beaux Art embellishments. This style is evidenced by the building's simple brick blocky composition, its ground floor base (or piano noble), full height plasters and strong terra cotta cornice. The Beaux Art embellishments are found in the flat architrave entry with large "O" cartouches and its fanciful torches of learning engraved in fanciful rooftop antefixes. The 1947 and 1956 additions, designed by prominent local architect W. Gordon Jamieson, combine together as an important local example of the International Style. While Jamieson's modern design differentiates itself from the earlier building, its brick and terra cotta materials, corresponding window and entry treatments, and simple detailing are meant to blend with its 1926 forebear. The addition's International School styling is represented by its strong horizontal window bands with shallow planar relief, the lack of ornamentation, and strong vertical circulation towers. The 1926 and 1946/57 Emily Griffith Opportunity School is an iconic downtown school building, embodying distinguishing characteristics of both the Renaissance Revival and International styles of architecture. The structure's architectural importance is enhanced by the fact that, if designated, it will be one of only a few high-style examples of modern post World War II architecture with landmark designation in Denver.

3. Geographic Significance

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

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

The school is prominently situated just off of Colfax Avenue at 12th and Welton Streets on a history artery into downtown. The school has greeted commuters and travelers on W. Colfax since its opening in 1916, and its location was called out on local and state road maps of the early to mid-1900s. At the time of its opening in 1916, the school was located in a residential area on the edge of downtown, but over the years as downtown grew around the school, the Emily Griffith Opportunity School remained as a consistent and high profile visual landmark. This location is also important as the site of a Denver public school since 1882. As one of the few surviving historic school buildings in and around downtown Denver, the Emily Griffith Opportunity School remains an important established, familiar and orienting visual landmark of the community.

Designation Boundary, and Contributing and Non-Contributing Areas:

Refer to legal description above. The proposed designation boundary coincides with the school's current boundary, consisting of Block 170 which block bound by Welton Street, 12th Street, Glenarm Place and 13th Street. This has been the school's historic boundary for many decades.

The application provides landmark designation for the entire block because:

- A large re-development project, requiring a single zone lot for the block, is anticipated with the new development integrating the historic building into the larger project;
- This new large redevelopment will require thoughtful removal of a portion of the historic building and carefully planned redevelopment on the same footprint;
- A full block designation with development/design parameters and design review by the

Landmark Preservation Commission as proposed is important to ensure that the historic building remains predominant on the site and that the new development will be a well- designed signature project for downtown Denver.

The designation includes a “Non-Contributing Area” and a “Contributing Area.” The “Contributing Area” of the designation contains the 1926 building with its 1946/57 additions. The 2013 Historic Evaluation Committee, and the subsequent advisory groups and studies, all recognized the Welton Street half of the block as the most historically and architecturally significant. The 1926 building, with its 1946-57 additions, is historically the public face of the building, and is the most recognizable structure associated with the school and its history.

The vocational shops and accessory buildings facing onto 12th St./Glenarm Place share an architectural vocabulary with the Welton Street facing buildings. However, the details, materials and design execution of these structures are simpler and more pedestrian than the Welton Street facing classroom buildings. While the 1926 building, and its additions, were envisioned early as an integrated classroom block face, the shops and accessory buildings were added in a more haphazard fashion over the years. These accessory structures were also added onto, modified and replaced many times over the years to meet the changing programmatic needs of the school.

The “Non-Contributing Area” consists of the Glenarm Place half of the block, including the vacated alley. Additional demolition and development parameters apply within the designated area to other sub-areas including: “Preserved Area”, “Restricted Area 1,” “Restricted Area 2,” the “Transitional Height Area,” and the “Zoning-Restricted Area,” as shown in Addendum C.

Demolition and Development Parameters:

The designation includes additional demolition and development parameters that will be incorporated into the designation ordinance. These parameters were developed as part of the Implementation of the FB Policy for the site, as delineated on p. 2 of this staff report. These measures are intended to preserve the most significant Welton Street facing historic building mass, the building's character- defining features as identified in the landmark designation application, and the building's appearance from key public vantage points. The proposal is based on studies found in Addendum C of the designation application (pages 18 through 27). Refer to the maps in the Design Standards and Guidelines for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School for locations of the areas listed below.

The demolition and development parameters include:

- Applications for demolition of buildings in the “Non-Contributing Area” portion of the property would be approved by Landmark Preservation Staff without a public hearing or LPC approval, but the city release of the demolition permit subject to design review approval of a replacement plan by LPC.
- Applications for demolition in the “Demolition Area Contributing” portion of the property would be approved by Landmark Preservation staff without a public hearing or LPC approval including one-story additions and the rear 25 feet of the three-story classroom addition, provided that the applicant evidences to LPC in its replacement plan that protections are in place to ensure that the demolition work does not destabilize the historic building to remain.
- Preservation within the “Preserved Area.” This includes all of the original 1926 building, with a small exception, including north wall face (shown in heavy dashed line on p. 16), keeping the oldest building on the site visually prominent. The “Preserved Area” also includes the front 41 feet depth of the 1947 and 1956 additions, and the full depth of the 1956 addition from Welton Street for its northern 60 feet expanse from 13th Street to protect viewsheds of the building from 13th and Welton Streets. The one-story vestibule entry facing 13th Street is also earmarked for preservation. Any application for demolition within the “Preserved Area” shall follow the demolition review process delineated in DRMC 30-6(6).

- Landmark Preservation Commission will perform design review using its adopted *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts* within the “Contributing Area,” except for the sub-areas: “Transitional Height Area”, “Restricted Area 1,” “Restricted Area 2,” and the “Zoning-Restricted Area.” This design review will focus on preserving and retaining the integrity of the structure within the “Preserved Area.” This will also help to ensure strict landmark review of the space between the building facades on 12th, Welton and 13th Streets, and the right-of-way edge.
- “Restricted Area 1” and “Restricted Area 2,” where no vertical development would be allowed, to protect the historic alley view of the 1926 building, and to provide breathing room and protect views of the 1956 addition and entry vestibule.
- A “Transitional Height Area” located behind the preserved area, capping the height at 112’ to correspond with the adjacent State Capitol View Plane.
- Height in the “Zoning-Restricted Area” would be allowed to the maximum allowed under its current zoning.
- Design Standards and Guidelines – see below

Design Standards and Guidelines:

The Design Standards & Guidelines for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School (“Guidelines”) are intended to provide a customized design approach to address the unique situation where significantly higher and larger new construction would be abutting and connecting with the historic building. The Guidelines encourage an integrated design approach for the new and old construction; design solutions that respect the historic building and which keep it visually prominent on the site; and a high quality of architectural design, articulation and materials for new construction on the site. The Guidelines will be approved by City Council as part of the designation ordinance, and so the Landmark Preservation Commission will review these Guidelines as part of the designation as a whole.

Landmark Preservation has culled information from the designation application, including the Character-Defining Features of the 1926 building and its 1947/1956 additions in the designation application, the Executive Summary and Diagrams in Addendum C, and the Design Standards and Guidelines in Addendum D.

Staff has reorganized this existing information, added intent statements into the Guidelines for the new construction consistent with the general *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts*, and made other minor revisions.

Notifications:

Community Planning & Development (CPD) has met or exceeded all posting and notification requirements delineated in Chapter 12 (Article III, Section 12-96) and Chapter 30 of the DRMC. Historic Denver Inc. also hosted a community meeting with the Downtown Denver Partnership on March 16, 2016. The designation has also been widely covered in the media.

The CPD notifications have included:

1. *Posting Signage for Landmark Preservation Commission Hearing*
2. *Owner Notifications and Letters*
3. *City Council, Planning Board and Building Inspection Notifications*
4. *Legal Notice in Daily Journal*
5. *Landmark Preservation Commission tour of structure*
6. *Posting of designation application, staff report and design guidelines on CPD website*
7. *Registered Neighborhood Organization Notifications*
 - The Points Historical Redevelopment Corporation
 - Denver Neighborhood Association
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation

#2016L-003

1250 Welton Street (Emily Griffith Opportunity School)

- Downtown Denver Business Improvement District
- Denver Urban Resident Association

Landmark Preservation Commission Public Hearing Summary:

The Landmark Preservation Commission held a public hearing on April 19, 2016. The LPC found that the application met the criteria for landmark designation, and has forwarded a recommendation for landmark designation to the City Council. The public hearing and deliberations lasted approximately 1 hour.

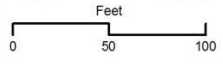
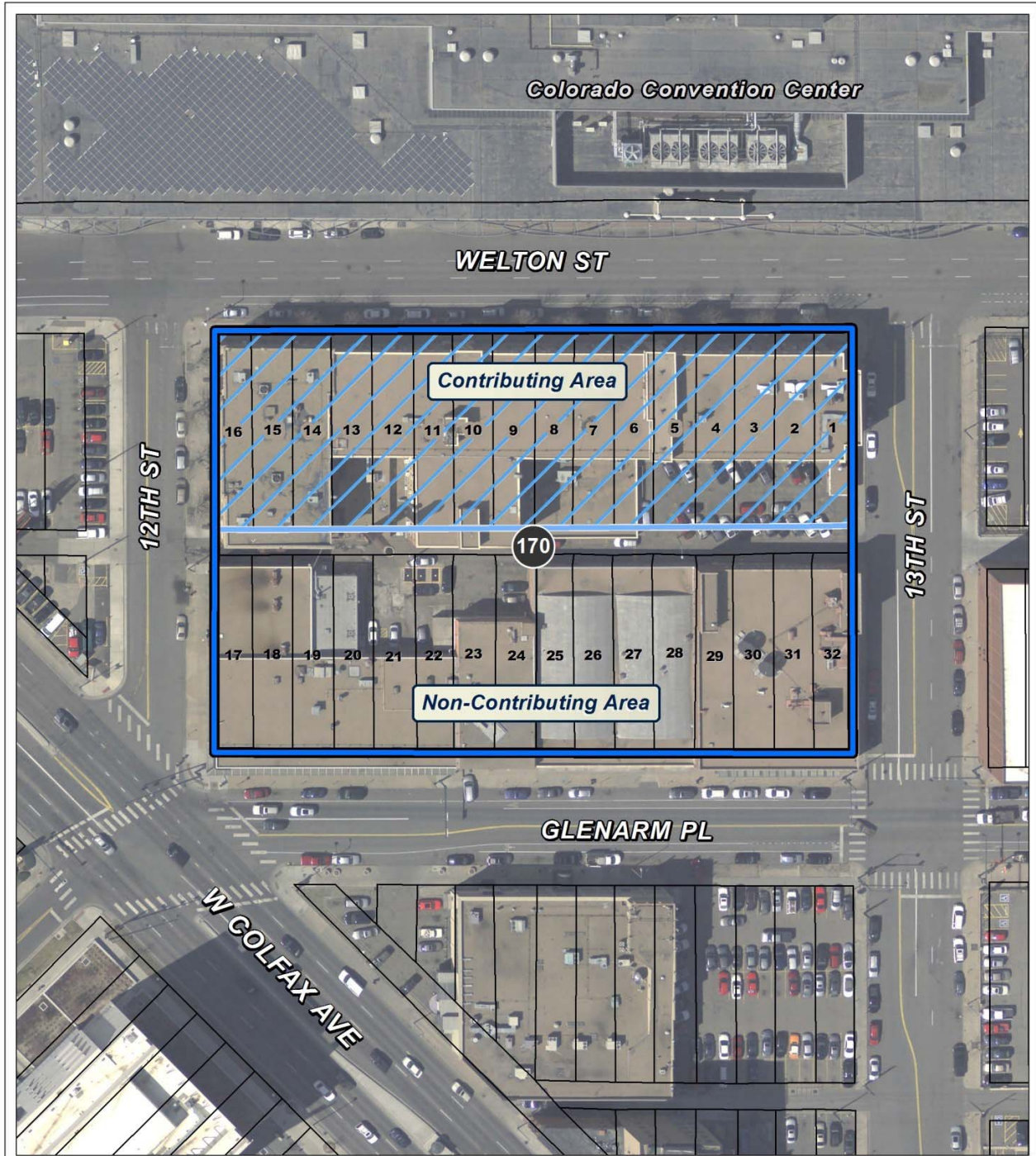
At the LPC public hearing, the LPC chair allocated the speaking time as follows:

1. 10 minutes to the applicants and owners
2. 3 minutes to all other interested parties

The owner and applicants' 10 minute presentation was made by David Suppes, Denver Public Schools; Annie Levinsky, Historic Denver, Inc; DeVita Bruce, Denver Public Schools; and, Jane Crisler, Humphries Poli Architects. There were four speakers at the public hearing, three were in support of the designation and one opposed to the designation.

Attachments:



- Design Standards & Guidelines for the Emily Griffith Opportunity School
- Designation Application with Addendums
- Public comments submitted CPD by noon, April 18, 2016
- LPC Public Hearing draft meeting record



**Emily Griffith Opportunity School
 Proposed Landmark Designation**

March 17, 2016
 Community Planning and Development



-  **Proposed Designation Boundary**
 Lots 1 through 32 inclusive and the vacated alley lying adjacent to said lots, Block 170, East Denver Addition.
-  **Contributing Area**
 Lots 1 through 16 inclusive, Block 170, East Denver Addition.



Historic photograph of the 1926 Addition on left (1941) and the 1947 Addition on right (1949),
Courtesy Denver Public Library



View of the Welton Street façade of the 1926 Opportunity School Building. This is the earliest building on the site and the only one dating from Emily Griffith's tenure at the School.



Photograph looking east down Welton Street at the International Style 1946 and 1957 Additions designed by W. Gordon Jamieson, a prominent local architect



View looking northwest at the rear of the 1956 addition and its entry vestibule from 13th Street



Photo, from left to right, of the 1954 Body Shop, the 1978 Auto Shop and the 1941 Shop Building on Glenarm Place. These accessory structures are located in the Non-Contributing Area of the designation.



The 1956 KRMA Building, located on the corner of Glenarm Place and 13th Street. This structure would be considered Non-Contributing to the Landmark designation.