

1 **BY AUTHORITY**

2 ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
3 SERIES OF 2019

COUNCIL BILL NO. CB18-1542  
COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE:  
Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure

5 **A B I L L**

6 **For an ordinance designating 637 Galapago Street, the Samsonite House, as a**  
7 **structure for preservation.**

8 **WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 30-4, Denver Revised Municipal Code, the Landmark  
9 Preservation Commission has transmitted to the Council a proposed designation of a structure for  
10 preservation; and

11 **WHEREAS**, based upon evidence received by the Landmark Preservation Commission at a  
12 hearing on December 18, 2018, the staff report, and evidence received at the hearing before City  
13 Council on February 11, 2019, the structure at 637 Galapago Street meets the criteria for designation  
14 as a structure for preservation as set out in Section 30-3, Denver Revised Municipal Code, as amended,  
15 by:

16 (1) History.

17 *a. Having direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;*

18 The Samsonite House, built in 1890, is directly associated with the Shwayder family and their business,  
19 the Shwayder Trunk Manufacturing Company, founded in Denver by Jesse Shwayder in 1910. While  
20 residing at 637 Galapago Street between 1900 and 1921, the Shwayder family established and  
21 expanded the business to a national market and designed the trademark “Samson” case named for the  
22 Hebrew strongman Samson. The luggage company eventually became the internationally renowned  
23 Samsonite luggage manufacturer. The company’s success contributed to Denver’s commercial  
24 economy and helped the city compete economically on a national scale.

25 *c. Having a direct and substantial association with a person or group of persons who had*  
26 *influence on society;*

27 The property is directly associated with the Shwayder family who lived at the address during the time  
28 the Shwayder Trunk Manufacturing Company started and evolved into a nationally marketed business,  
29 eventually becoming Samsonite. Their story relates to entrepreneurial activity at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>  
30 century that saw the upward mobility of the Shwayders from Eastern European Jewish immigrants to  
31 leaders of a locally prominent manufacturing plant.

1 The patriarch of the family, Isaac Shwayder, immigrated to Central City, Colorado, from England in  
2 1879 to join his uncle who had established himself as a salesman in the mining town. The family had  
3 earlier escaped Poland and the Tsarist government of the Russian Empire. Isaac had spent his time  
4 in England studying to become a rabbi and cantor. He lived in Central City for two years before his wife  
5 Rachael and two children, Solomon and Jesse, joined him. He opened and ran a successful store in  
6 the nearby mining town of Nevadaville and became a major figure in the thriving Jewish community,  
7 serving as rabbi and cantor at religious festivals.

8  
9 As the Shwayder family grew they moved to Denver, eventually settling at 637 Galapago Street in 1900.  
10 Once in Denver Isaac, owned a grocery store, furniture store and ultimately luggage shop before his  
11 son Jesse helped transition the family business into the Shwayder Trunk Manufacturing Company in  
12 1910.

13  
14 The family business was led by Jesse who served as president of the company from 1910 to 1960 with  
15 the assistance of several family members. During the time the family lived at 637 Galapago Street,  
16 family patriarch Isaac passed away (1916). The family invested Isaac’s life insurance money into the  
17 business and it continued to thrive, becoming renowned for durable and inexpensive luggage with  
18 innovations like hidden locks. The family-centric business often marketed itself with images of family  
19 members balancing on suitcases to illustrate their strength. It expanded many times over the years,  
20 and evidence of their factory presence in Denver remains, including a ghost sign on the Zang Building  
21 at 1553 Platte Street that reads “The Shwayder Trunk Mfg. Co.”

22  
23 (2) Architecture.

24 a. *Embodying distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type;*  
25 The 3,000 square foot, two-story residential structure embodies the distinguishing characteristics of  
26 the Italianate Style. The front façade is clad with a polychrome of rusticated rhyolite stone, red  
27 sandstone, and yellow limestone. All other elevations are clad in brick.

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29 Characteristic elements of the Italianate Style are apparent in the verticality of the structure,  
30 decorative brackets in the flat-roofed cornice, prominent two-story bay window, and tall, narrow  
31 windows. Nine ornamental sunburst motifs are incorporated into the lintels on the front façade,  
32 resembling abstracted pediments above the doors and windows.

33

1 The Italianate Style and stone façade composition are unique to the block. Other rhyolite façade  
2 town houses near this property do not meet the level of fine detail with the polychromatic variation  
3 of stone decorative elements. The building stands out amongst its neighbors which are more  
4 modestly sized and designed, although of a similar time.

5  
6 The building retains a high degree of design quality and integrity with minor alterations over time.  
7 Windows and doors have been replaced and a two-story rear porch addition was constructed in the  
8 early 1900s that by 1930 had been enclosed. Windows on the side elevations have been filled in  
9 and others added. The most significant alteration is the rotating style of the front porch, which was  
10 of a Victorian spindle style in 1905, brick and stucco in the late 1970s, and by 1982 a simple concrete  
11 and flagstone stoop which remains today. Despite these changes, the building is clearly identifiable  
12 as an exemplary Italianate Style that retains most of its original character-defining features.

13  
14 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF**  
15 **DENVER:**

16 **Section 1.** That based upon the analysis referenced above, and the evidence received at the  
17 public hearings, certain property herein called the Samsonite House at 637 Galapago Street, and legally  
18 described as follows, together with all improvements situated and located thereon, be and the same is  
19 hereby designated as a structure for preservation:

20 Lot 30  
21 Block 17,  
22 Elmwood Addition to the City and County of Denver,  
23 City and County of Denver,  
24 State of Colorado

25 **Section 2.** The effect of this designation may enhance the value of the property and of the  
26 structure, but may delay or require denial of building permits found unacceptable by the Landmark  
27 Preservation Commission under the criteria contained in the Design Guidelines for Historic Structures  
28 and Districts and Section 30-6 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code.

29 **Section 3.** This ordinance shall be recorded among the records of the Clerk and Recorder of  
30 the City and County of Denver.

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1 COMMITTEE APPROVAL DATE: January 15, 2019

2 MAYOR-COUNCIL DATE: January 22, 2019

3 PASSED BY THE COUNCIL: \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_ - PRESIDENT

5 APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ - MAYOR \_\_\_\_\_

6 ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_ - CLERK AND RECORDER,  
7 EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE  
8 CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER

9 NOTICE PUBLISHED IN THE DAILY JOURNAL: \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_

10 PREPARED BY: Adam C. Hernandez, Assistant City Attorney                      DATE: January 31, 2019

11 Pursuant to section 13-12, D.R.M.C., this proposed ordinance has been reviewed by the office of  
12 the City Attorney. We find no irregularity as to form, and have no legal objection to the proposed  
13 ordinance. The proposed ordinance is not submitted to the City Council for approval pursuant to  
14 §3.2.6 of the Charter.

15 Kristin M. Bronson, Denver City Attorney

16 BY: \_\_\_\_\_, Assistant City Attorney                      DATE: \_\_\_\_\_