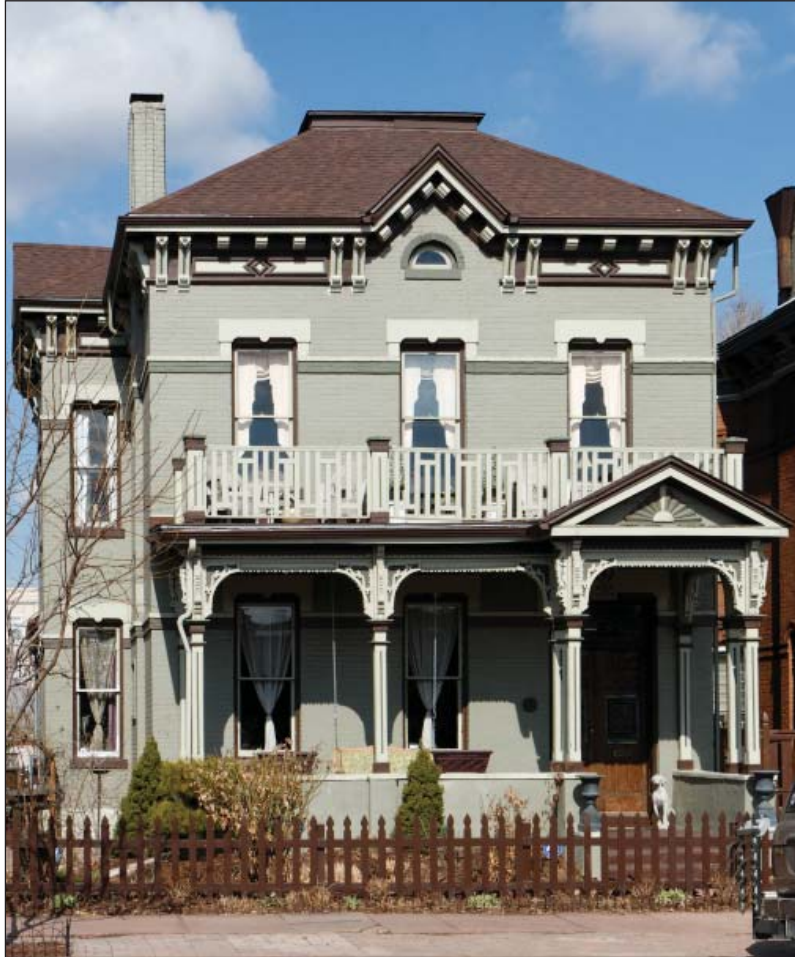


# CURTIS PARK LANDMARK DISTRICT H



2343 Stout Street

An Application for Landmark Designation  
to the  
Denver Landmark Preservation Commission  
November 24, 2010

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# AN APPLICATION FOR THE CREATION OF A NEW LANDMARK DISTRICT

## CURTIS PARK DISTRICT H

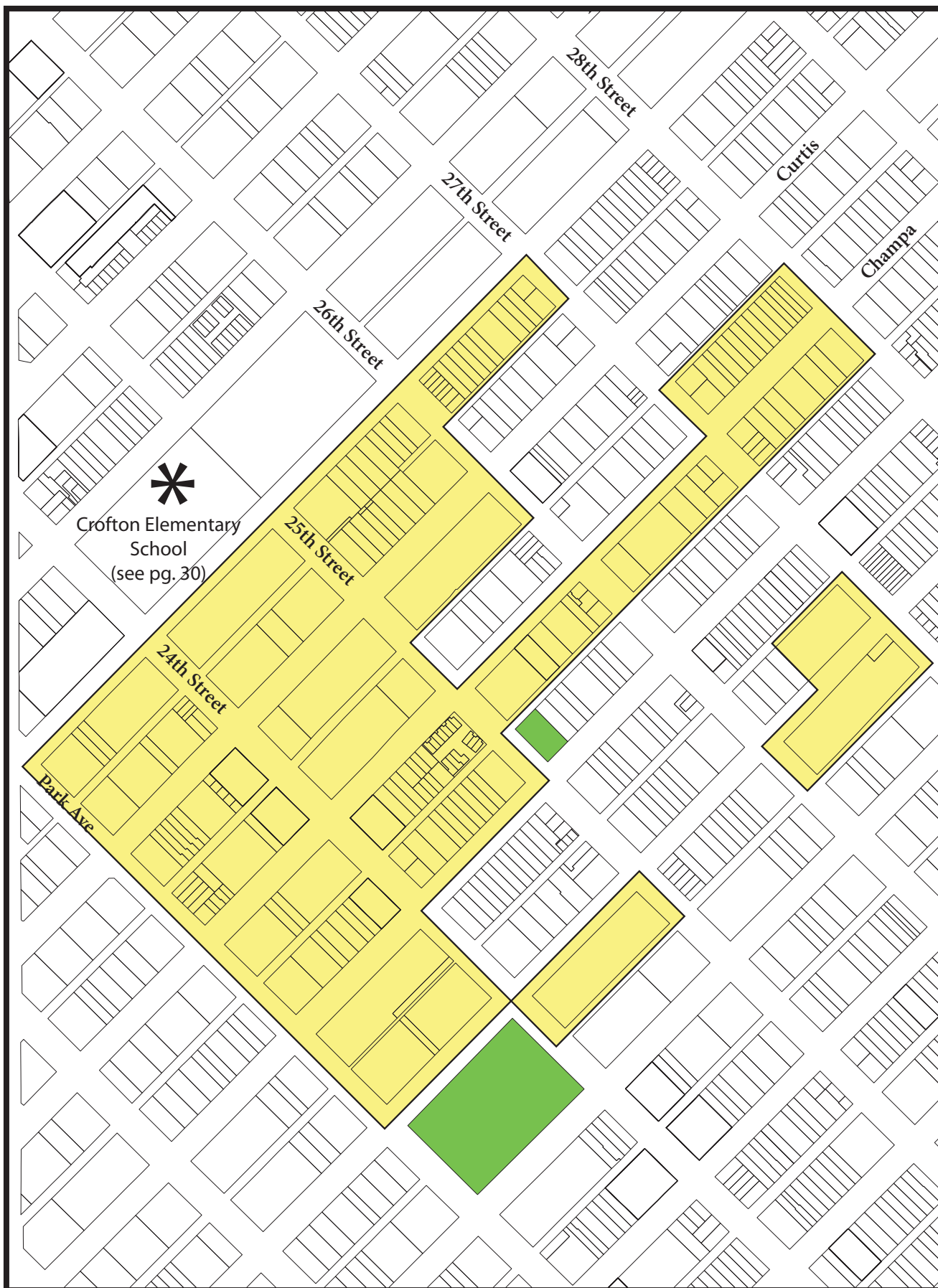
### 1. DISTRICT IDENTIFICATION

#### **Boundaries of the District**

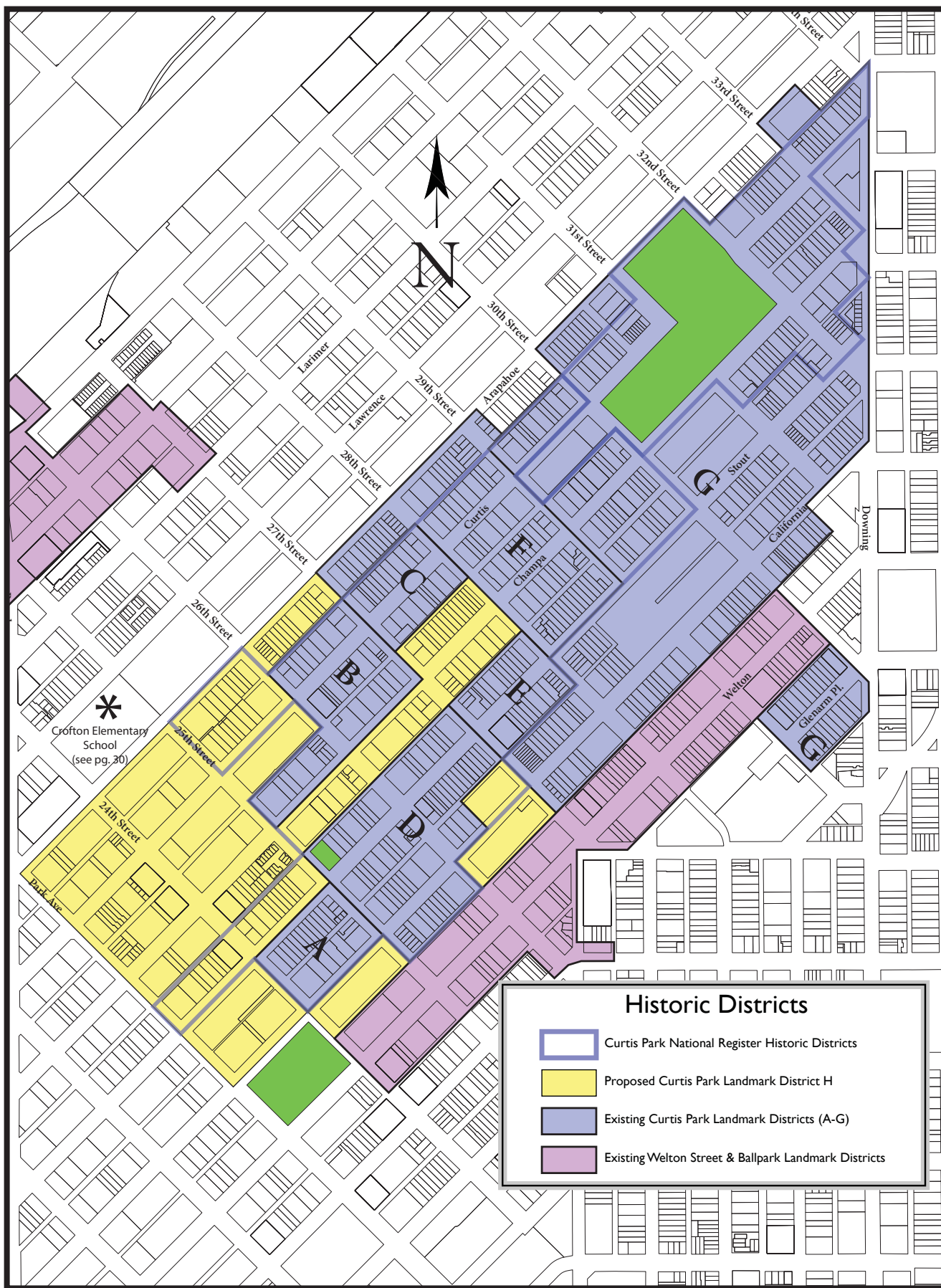
The middle of Park Avenue West, from the middle of Arapahoe Street to the middle of California Street; the middle of California Street, from the middle of Park Avenue West to the middle of 24th Street; the middle of 24th Street, from the middle of California Street to the middle of Stout Street; the middle of Stout Street, from the middle of 24th Street to the middle of 25th Street; the middle of 25th Street, from the middle of Stout Street to the extended middle line of the alley between Stout and Champa Streets; the extended middle line of the alley between Stout and Champa Streets, from the middle of 25th Street to the middle of 28th Street; the middle of 28th Street, from the extended middle line of the alley between Stout and Champa Streets to the extended middle line of the alley between Champa and Curtis Streets; the extended middle line of the alley between Champa and Curtis Streets, from the middle of 28th Street to the middle of 27th Street; the middle of 27th Street, from the extended middle line of the alley between Champa and Curtis Streets to the middle of Champa Street; the middle of Champa Street, from the middle of 27th Street to the middle of 25th Street; the middle of 25th Street, from the middle of Champa Street to the extended middle line of the alley between Champa and Curtis Streets; the extended middle line of the alley between Champa and Curtis Streets, from the middle of 25th Street to the middle of 26th Street; the middle of 26th Street, from the extended middle line of the alley between Champa and Curtis Streets to the extended middle line of the alley between Curtis and Arapahoe Streets; the extended middle line of the alley between Curtis and Arapahoe Streets, from the middle of 26th Street to the middle of 27th Street; the middle of 27th Street, from the extended middle line of the alley between Curtis and Arapahoe Streets and the middle of Arapahoe Street; the middle of Arapahoe Street, from the middle of 27th Street to the middle of Park Avenue West.

The middle of 26th Street, from the middle of California Street to the extended middle line of the alley between Welton and California Streets; the extended middle line of the alley between Welton and California Streets, from the middle of 26th Street to the middle of 27th Street; the middle of 27th Street, from the extended middle line of the alley between Welton and California Streets to the extended middle line of the alley between California and Stout Streets; the extended middle line of the alley between California and Stout Streets from the middle of 27th Street to the extended middle line of the property boundary between 2625 California Street and 2633 California Street; the extended middle line of the property boundary between 2625 California Street and 2633 California Street, from the middle of the alley between California and Stout Streets to the middle of California Street; the middle of California Street, from the extended middle line of the property between 2625 California Street and 2633 California Street to the middle of 26th Street.

The middle of 24th Street, from the middle of California Street to the extended middle line of the alley between California and Welton Streets; the extended middle line of the alley between California and Welton Streets, from the middle of 24th Street to the middle of 25th Street; the middle of 25th Street, from the extended middle line of the alley between California Street and Welton Street to the middle of California Street; the middle of California Street, from the middle of 25th Street to the middle of 24th Street.







Legal Description:	See Attachment G
Historic Name of District:	None
Proposed Name of District:	Curtis Park Landmark District H
Historic Uses:	Residential
Present Uses:	Residential
Zone District:	Predominantly U-RH-2.5 and D-AS, with some U-MX-3, G-MU-3, B-8-A OD-5, and U-MX-2.

## **2. APPLICATION INFORMATION**

### **Applicants**

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### **3. DOCUMENTS**

A map showing the boundaries of the district is included on page 3, and in the broader context of existing historic districts on page 4 of this application. Maps indicating the location of contributing/non-contributing structures are included in section 5 of this application. A list of owners of record is included as Appendix C.

Photographs showing the contemporary character of the district are included in Appendix B. Petitions and copies of letters sent to absentee property owners are included as Appendices D and E. Outreach flyers included in letters, left with neighbors, and provided at meetings are in Appendix F.

### **4. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Curtis Park Landmark District H meets the criteria for designation in all three categories.

*1. HISTORY. To have historical significance, the district shall be 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 history of the area now known as Curtis Park, named for the park — Denver's oldest — in its midst, is intimately connected to the history of early Denver. When the railroad finally reached the city in 1870, Denver was scarcely more than another frontier town that serviced nearby mining activities, its population only 4,759. By 1880, however, in just ten years, that figure had jumped to 35,629, and another ten years later, in 1890, to 106,713, a twenty-fold population increase in only 20 years. Denver grew faster in that brief period than any other city in the country.

So large a population increase was accompanied, needless to say, by a building boom. Denver's streets, originally laid out more or less parallel to the Platte River, were extended in a northeasterly direction, and it was along the old town site streets — Curtis, Champa, Stout, California, and Welton — that Denver's first residential building boom occurred.

A visit to the *Robinson Real Estate Atlas*, published in 1887, indicates that most of the houses along the old town site streets had been built out by the time of the atlas' publication. That means that in a mere approximately ten-year period, Denver had acquired a substantial residential section, extending from the downtown area all the way to Downing Street where the old streets ended and a new grid system was established.

The heyday of Curtis Park lasted only briefly. Two events had an adverse affect upon the area. First, the development of Capitol Hill in the 1890s gave those with money or social pretensions an option they had not hitherto had: namely, to live among others of the same social and economic status. In contrast,

Curtis Park had, from its inception, been characterized as an area where men and women from a wide variety of economic levels lived cheek by jowl, their economic status reflected by the sizes of the houses they built or occupied. It represented a truly democratic mix of peoples.

It took a while for the development of an elite new neighborhood to effect the old. In 1892, Denver's first social register appeared. Already by that time, a majority of those listed lived in Capitol Hill, but the Curtis Park area was still well represented. When another social register appeared just six years later, in 1898, almost no one who lived outside of Capitol Hill was deemed worthy of notice. There were a few who remained behind as most others of note migrated out of the old neighborhood, but they were a minority.

The second event that adversely affected Curtis Park was the Silver Crash of 1893, an event that affected the whole state of Colorado as well as the nation. Many of Curtis Park's larger homes, no longer occupied by their first, affluent owners, were soon divided into smaller units, a practice that continued well into the future as the decline of the neighborhood went on.

**Please note: This is the first application for local historic district designation submitted for Curtis Park in which recent history is included for special consideration. See pp. 37-42 for that important portion of this application.**

*2. ARCHITECTURE. 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 houses that were built during the brief period of the building boom that produced them represent two dominant architectural styles: the Italianate and the Queen Anne. In fact, the houses represent the shift that was occurring at the time, from the earlier style (the Italianate) to the newer, more ornate style (the Queen Anne). Other houses combined elements from both styles in often unusual and original combinations of eclectic design, representing the eclectic nature of much of Victorian architecture.

Houses that were built in the period after the Silver Crash of 1893 reflect less decorative trends, though they were built in ways that honored the built environment already in place: i.e. they were set back on their lots, in alignment with adjacent houses; and they continued to be built of brick, sometimes with decorative shingles on the upper levels. The scale of the newer buildings also matched that of existing structures. The result was the creation of a homogenous streetscape of various elements, none of which seemed out of place and most of which remains today.

*3. GEOGRAPHY. To have geographical importance, the structure or district shall:*

*b) Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics*

*c) Make a special contribution to Denver's distinctive character.*

The streetscapes of historic Curtis Park are made up of remarkably intact collections of houses from the late 19th century. One of the most historically interesting aspects of the neighborhood is the difference not only in the styles of the houses, but in their scales as well. The difference in the sizes of the houses represents the brief time in Denver's earliest days when people of widely varying social and economic backgrounds shared a common neighborhood in a truly democratic mix. That period didn't last long, because, with the establishment of Capitol Hill, many of those who could afford to began to leave for greener pastures. The footprint of that early egalitarian time in Denver's history, however, is still perfectly apparent in the makeup of Curtis Park. Happily, the area continues to represent a true mix of the city's diverse population.

Three of the four earliest local historic district designations in Curtis Park (Districts A, B, and D) were made in what has been for over 50 years the "B-8" zoned portion of Curtis Park. Those areas not included in the earlier Landmark districts for one reason or another nonetheless also contain superb examples of late 19th century houses in groupings that constitute wonderful streetscapes from the past, and are included in this, the proposed final Curtis Park Landmark district. This new "Curtis Park Landmark District H" would furthermore tie together and unify the districts already in place, finally providing the neighborhood with the kind of comprehensive protection still needed to assure its continuance into the future.



## **5. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

### **Location and Setting (5a)**

The Curtis Park Landmark District H is part of the greater Curtis Park neighborhood, Denver's oldest intact residential neighborhood, located northeast of Denver's downtown core. This area is near Curtis Park Landmark Districts A, B, and D. (See map on page 3.)

### **Architectural Description (5b)**

#### **The Italianate Style**

Curtis Park has Denver's best collection of houses in the Italianate style, probably the most prestigious style of the city's early history. The most impressive of these are two-story, all-brick structures, usually with stone embellishments. They rise to overhanging eaves decorated with ornamental brackets (the style is sometimes called the bracketed style) above which there is a low pitched, truncated pyramidal roofs, often originally crowned with iron cresting. The windows and doors of the buildings' exteriors are symmetrically arranged so that the windows on the second story are perfectly aligned with the windows and doors of the first. Full wooden porches stretch across the front of them, many with ornate decorative feature.

One of the most impressive examples of the Italianate style in all of Curtis Park is the Kaub house at 2343 Stout, a richly ornamented example of the type. Like other Italianates, the house is characterized by its low pitched, truncated pyramidal roof that overhangs the metal cornice work at the top of the façade. A small pediment rises from the middle of the cornice, a not unusual feature of an Italianate house, rising above a half-round window. Both side elevations of the house come forward under higher gables than the one in front that rise above round windows at the third floor level. The house also illustrates another feature of the typical Italianate, namely the balance and symmetry of its façade elements: the windows on the second floor are directly above the windows and door on the first. Above the windows are heavy smooth stone caps, left plain. The stone above the front door is divided by a keystone, with an elaborate incised design. The original full front porch of this house is especially fine. There are three brackets at the top of the columns that support the porch roof, one on each side, and a shallower one that comes forward from the post. All the brackets are richly ornamented and,



2343 Stout Street

together with the elaborate cornice, make the house an especially decorative Italianate. The house has its original pair of handsome front doors, though the stained glass in them is not original.



2461 Champa Street

Another fine early Italianate – this one by one of Denver’s earliest trained architects, Emmet Anthony – is the house at 2461 Champa. This example, like the previous one, is characterized by a gable that rises from the center of the building’s façade. The overhanging eaves of the house are supported in the classic fashion by wooden brackets, between which run rows of dentils. The usual symmetry of the Italianate prevails: the double doors in the center of the first floor are balanced by a large window on the second floor; and the pairs of windows on either side of the front door are in perfect alignment with the pairs of windows that flank the large window above the front door. The narrow stone window and door caps are ornamented with incised geometric designs; and the top portion of the decorative front porch has survived. Unfortunately the current owner of the building has played fast and loose with the window replacements he has installed, but the house is fundamentally intact.



2752 Champa Street

Though not as obviously impressive as other Italianates in Curtis Park, the house at 2752 Champa nonetheless deserves to be given special consideration as a kind of story-book example of the type. The house consists of a simple solid block, topped with the characteristic low, truncated pyramidal roof typical of virtually all Italianates. Supporting the overhanging eaves of the roof, there are pairs of brackets, between which run rows of dentils. The symmetry of the windows and door on the front façade is also typical of the form. The stone of the window and door caps is incised with modest stylized floral ornaments, the stones of the first floor level being somewhat larger than those above, while those on the second level have a bottom cut not found on the stones below.

Everything about the house seems both proper and restrained until the eye comes to its full, original front porch which stands forward as a truly distinguished architectural feature. The posts which hold up the porch roof are surmounted with brackets considerably more complicated and decorative than those at the top of the house; and spanning the space between the posts, cut-work boards come together in the middle of the span where finials drop down to join them. The delicacy and richness of the porch gives this otherwise somewhat restrained house its distinguishing, refined



aspect, making it a truly admirable example of the Italianate house.

There are also one-story Italianate cottages, like the twins at 2523 and 2525 Curtis, and another pair of twins at 2729 and 2733 Champa. They follow a simple form found elsewhere in the neighborhood that may in fact be the most popular of the house forms built to satisfy persons of modest means in the early days of the neighborhood when those of widely differing economic levels settled here. These four have central gables that rise to the level of the truncated pyramidal roof lines, in which small, arched windows are placed. The houses are relatively plain, straightforward. There are overhanging eaves, but no brackets; and simple brick arches cap the windows and doors. The two on Champa are slightly more ornate than their cousins on Curtis. Barge boards with sawn decorative edges are still in place at 2733 Champa, and both of the Champa houses have flat boards with decorative edges that outline the roof and gable lines. The house at 2729 is exceptional among houses of this type in that it still has its original front porch.



2523 Curtis Street



2525 Curtis Street



2729 Champa Street



2733 Champa Street

Another pair of twin Italianate cottages shows how far this simple form could be taken, with the introduction of elements common to the Queen Anne style. These unlikely survivors at the corner of Curtis and 24th (2357 and 2361 Curtis), have the same gable that rises to the level of the truncated pyramidal roofs, like their neighbors up the street, though these gables are brought forward over slightly projecting bays which contain two windows. The houses are primarily noteworthy for the elaborate decoration on their facades. Their stone window caps are deeply carved with stylized flowers. Bracketed only at the two side corners, flat panels run from bracket to bracket and up the central gable, each panel cut



2357 & 2361 Curtis Street





2737 Champa Street



2426 Champa Street

with a stylized leaf design. The overall effect on such small houses is sumptuous and entertaining.

A variation of the Italianate style is the row-house type, so called because of its perfectly flat and usually unornamented side walls which made it look as if it might have been intended to be attached to similar buildings. This type has a flat roof. As a rule, the ornamentation of such houses, which in some cases may be considerable, is only found on their front elevations. Again, the front walls rise to cornices, the top portions of which come forward and appear to be supported by brackets

A classic example of this type is the house at 2737 Champa. A two-story, three-window front bay dominates the front of the house. At the top of the façade, an overhanging eave is supported by decorative brackets. Like other Italianates of the row-house type, the windows and doors on the façade are arranged in symmetrical alignments. Here, the windows are capped with low brick arches which are centered on stone keystones. The sides of the house are perfectly flat. It has unfortunately lost its front porch.

Another good example of the row-house Italianate style is the house at 2426 Champa. Here the two-story front bay is flat and contains pairs of windows that are united by stone window caps that span both windows. The bottom of the stone caps has a sawtooth edge, and stylized geometric designs are incised into the centers of the stones. Crowning the façade, as usual, are brackets that rise to an overhanging projection. The sides of the house are perfectly plain.

An unusual assemblage of three row-house style Italianates stand side by side in the 2500 block of Curtis (2531, 2537, and 2541).



2531 Curtis Street



2537 Curtis Street



2541 Curtis Street

Almost certainly originally identical, the three have lost many of the stylistic features that would once have visually united them. Their most apparent similarity is the two-story, three-sided front bay that constitutes their most important architectural feature. Another obvious similarity is the raised brick window and door arches, centered on stone keystones, common to all three. Only the center house, 2537 Curtis has its original cornice at the top of its façade, consisting of an overhanging shelf supported by decorative brackets. None of the porches are original, though the bottom portion of the porch at 2537 Curtis probably goes back to the early 20th century. The houses are somewhat unusual in that their sides are not perfectly flat and plain which is a common feature of row-house Italianates: the slightly projecting window caps and sills that occur on the front of the buildings are found along their sides as well.

The house at 2347 Stout is another good example of the row-house variation of the Italianate style. The cornice work at the top of the façade appears to be supported by the brackets usual to the style. The window pairs on the two levels are aligned, and there is a small second story window in alignment with the front door, so that the usual symmetry of the Italianate house is observed, though the rounded window caps are unusual and suggest the influence of the Queen Anne style. What is also unusual in this example of the row-house Italianate is that the metal cornice from the front of the house is carried around onto the left side of the house, which features a two-story bay window as well. The front porch here is almost certainly original



2347 Stout Street

Another example of the row-house Italianates included in this application for landmarking stands at 2751 Champa. A shallow, two-story bay projects slightly from the left of the primary front surface of the house in which pairs of windows, surmounted by plain stone caps, are located one above the other in symmetrical alignment, typical of the Italianate. Brick banding runs between the stone caps on the second story level. A gable rises above the shallow bay, interrupting a slightly overhanging eave which is supported by pairs of brackets. The inside of the gable is decorated by flat panels cut with ornamental scroll work. The elaborate façade of the house is crowned by iron cresting, originally a common decorative feature for Italianate house of all kinds. The house is fortunate to have its original front porch. It was recently handsomely restored, for which it won an Historic Denver award.



2751 Champa Street

## The Queen Anne Style

The Queen Anne style represents a dramatic shift away from Italianate norms. The use of shingles rather than brick, along with other wooden decorations, for the upper portions of a Queen Anne, make it appear lighter, more ornate, than the all-brick Italianate; and steeply pitched roof lines, instead of the truncated pyramids and flat roofs that typify Italianates, give the style a verticality that is new. The style is also characterized by the asymmetrical arrangement of its massing and details. In *A Guide to Colorado Architecture* published by the Colorado Historical Society, the Queen Anne is characterized as “perhaps the most ornate style of the Victorian Period ... and was popular between 1880 and 1910 ... General characteristics include a vertical orientation, asymmetrical massing, corner towers and bays, prominent front porches, projecting gables, and contrasting materials, particularly brick and wood.”

The Queen Annes of Curtis Park are considerably more modest than those erected in newer residential areas that spread out from Curtis Park. The proposed district does not have collections of fine Queen Annes like those found along Lafayette Street, just to the east of Curtis Park, or like the large examples to be found in the San Rafael neighborhood or upper Capitol Hill. As Curtis Park grew in the direction of Downing Street, more and more Queen Annes were built; there are fewer in the older part of the neighborhood, toward downtown Denver, the area being addressed in this application for Denver Landmark designation.



2329 Stout Street

The house at 2329 Stout is an example of a modest Queen Anne style house, characterized by its peaked roof and its use of wooden shingles. Here, the gabled roof comes down over the upper portion of the side brick walls; and the wooden shingles are only used in the upper portion of the gable. The house has its original full front porch with its own gable centered on the front door to the left of the façade. The porch gable is inscribed with a stylized flower and leaves, a motif echoed in smaller detail in the wood trim above the windows of the house. Another typical Queen Anne feature of the house is the asymmetrical arrangement of the windows on the front façade: the two on the second story are not in alignment with the two on the first story. The brick arches above the windows on the two levels are also different, which is in keeping with the asymmetrical tendencies of the Queen Anne style. The first floor windows have projecting brick arches of a fairly traditional kind, while on the second level



fans of vertically laid brick rise from the window tops to a straight course of brick just below the shingles of the gable.

Another classic, if relatively simple example of the Queen Anne style is the house at 2750 Champa. It has the typical high pitched roof. The main front gable is filled with fish-scale shingles in two patterns. Within this main gable is the smaller gable of the two-story front porch, also decorated with shingles; and its skirt, which comes down over the top of the main entry level, is entirely covered with shingles as well. The low arched window on the main floor is another typical feature of a Queen Anne, this one surmounted by a raised brick cap which connects to a band of brick course work across the front of the house.



2750 Champa Street

### **Eclectic Houses And Rowhouses**

A majority of the houses of Curtis Park are best described as eclectic structures. They were designed by builders rather than trained architects borrowed elements from the dominant styles of the day, the Italianate and the Queen Anne, assembling them in new and interesting ways, to create original, unique statements of their own.

The house at 2335 Stout nicely illustrates how the Italianate and Queen Anne styles come together in an eclectic manner. The main body of the house has the straightforward mass of an Italianate house. The façade elements are symmetrically arranged in the usual Italianate manner, windows on the second level above those on the first and, in this case, the main door aligned with another door at the second level. The roof, however, is steeply pitched; and the gable at the top of the house is ornamented with shingles, very much in the Queen Anne mode. Where the sides of the top gable meet the brick wall of the façade, a pair of heavy brick brackets come forward in support, again a feature associated with Italianate houses. The house is fortunate to have its original full front porch; and on the second level, a small porch comes forward just behind the gable on the porch roof which is covered with shingles, again a Queen Anne feature.



2335 Stout Street



2351 Stout Street

The smaller eclectic house at 2351 Stout seems similar to the Italianate row-house next door at 2347, which it abuts. It, too, has a cornice at the top of its façade, similar to the one beside it, very much in the Italianate mode. However, the large round-headed window on the first floor is obviously indebted to the Queen Anne Style, as is the two-window oriel just above it. Its original front porch comes forward into a gable which is filled with open lattice work, as are the sides. Above the front porch, there is a small round-headed window, dwarfed by the oriel window next to it.



2435 Stout Street

The important and unusual house at 2435 Stout was built to the designs of Frank Edbrooke, among Denver's most important early architects. The house seems primarily to be a row-house style Italianate with perfectly plain side walls and a fully furnished façade. Here the cornice is entirely of brickwork that projects slightly out from the main surface of the house in the Italianate manner. But the large low arched window on the first floor shows the influence of the Queen Anne style which favored such windows. Perhaps its most distinctive features are the massive rusticated sandstone caps above the second-story windows as well as above the front door which are characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque. The house has its original full front porch.



2648 Champa Street

Another eclectic house that uses rusticated stone to striking effect is the house at 2648 Champa. The mass of the house is again fundamentally Italianate, its façade containing roughly symmetrical elements. Its high pitched roof, however, is clearly a Queen Anne element, as are the shingles used within the front gable. The bands of rusticated stone that frame the tops of the windows on both the first and second floor are decorative elements that belong to neither the Queen Anne nor the Italianate styles and create an overall asymmetrical effect for the façade of the house. The wrap-around front porch is original to the house.

2418 Champa was most likely a house designed by an architect. The all-brick basic block of the house suggests an Italianate structure; but the overall effect of the building is more Queen Anne than Italianate. The roof, though not especially steep, nonetheless rises to a point which is ornamented by metal finials. Within the front gable, shingles are used to decorative effect; and both the main gable and the porch gable are richly decorated with wooden elements. The two pairs of windows, one above the other, at the front of the house, separated by bands of decorated wood, are topped by low brick arches, the whole ensemble more suggestive of the Queen Anne than the Italianate style. The beautiful front porch is an original feature of the house.



2418 Champa Street

Two row-houses included in this application for designation are eclectic structures also worthy of note. The triplex at 821-23-25 27th Street must seem, given its highly ornate façade, fundamentally inspired by the Queen Anne idea. The vertical arrangement of its façade elements is strictly symmetrical, which suggests an Italianate influence, but the elements themselves, including the use throughout of round-headed windows, are much more richly varied than in the earlier style. The crown of the building represents original ideas. The two end units rise to gables, flanked by tall finials, within which there are round-headed windows surmounted by decorative raised brick arches; while the central bay, with a three-light window on the first level, above which three separate windows stand, rises to three arches within which there is decorative brick work and over which, at the top of the building, an ornate flat pediment presides, again within finials that match those which flank the end gables. Unfortunately, the building has lost its original porches, but it remains an eclectic *tour de force*.



821-23-25 27th Street





2355-63 Stout Street

Another truly remarkable eclectic building, also originally a triplex, stands at 2355-63 Stout. It is unique in the use of rusticated stones, in two contrasting colors, to cover its façade. To the right of each front door, the entryways still covered by original front porches, two-story bays rise, the central one a curved bay with three windows on each level, the windows separated by stones of alternating colors. The two end bays are brought forward from the main wall with rounded corners that yield to a flat surface at the front of the bay. At the first floor level of these side bays there is a large round-headed window, above which is a pair of smaller windows. All the windows here are framed with red sandstone. Surmounting the central rounded bay is a squat tower with a round roof, topped with a decorative metal finial. This central tower rises from the cornice at the top of the façade. The two end bays rise to lower towers which commence just above the second story pair of windows where ornamental shelves project forward from the façade. Gables rise from the shelves to odd square top-notches, like keyholes. The peaks of the shorter end tower roofs are also topped with elaborate metal finials, different from the taller one in the center of the building.



2355-63 Stout Street

The overall effect is one of remarkable complexity and richness. The use of both white and red rusticated stone in elaborate design arrangements, and the powerful massing of architectural elements, constitute a truly original masterwork. According to the *Western Architecture and Building News* issue of January, 1890, the building was further decorated with stained glass, most of which has been lost. Otherwise, the impressive façade of the building is completely intact and has recently been restored.



The building now numbered 814 24th Street was originally a duplex built behind 2355-63 Stout Street in 1890. Unlike the triplex, this structure was not faced with stone but with the brick which was the primary building material of both buildings. Here there is red sandstone coursing and the same rusticated stone foundation that appears in the front building. The building has been substantially altered over the years, primarily by the application of thick stucco to its façade and the creation of a single entryway into the building, replacing whatever porches the two units originally had. Its connection to the Stout Street triplex is made clear by the bay on the alley which is identical in shape to the two end bays at 2355 and 2363 Stout.



814 24th Street

Built in 1890, just after the triplex at 2355-63 Stout Street, the two-building apartment complex now known as the Peerless at the corner of Champa and 24th Streets, again attests to the remarkable diversity of Curtis Park's architectural heritage. An early instance of the Spanish revival which was later to become popular and much more common, the upper portion of the building is reminiscent of such Spanish mission structures as the famous Alamo in San Antonio, Texas. All first floor windows have round headed windows, as do the entryways into the building. The second floor windows, which are not rounded, are connected by common sills, supported by graduated rows of brick coursing. Three individual porches along the Champa Street side and two facing 24th Street have survived in remarkably good condition. The porch roofs are supported by round columns which are spanned by unusual tri-part arches, again reminiscent of Spanish models.



908-918 24th Street



2747 Champa (c.1939)



2747 Champa

### The French Second Empire Style

2747 Champa is one of Curtis Park's few French Second Empire style houses, and the only one included in this application for landmarking. The crowded façade of this example features an original front porch and a three-sided bay whose windows at the second story level protrude out from the Mansard roof under their own hoods. Unfortunately, the wooden cornice that once divided the bay into an upper and lower portion has been lost. It is still apparent in the vintage photograph. The Jan. 1, 1889 edition of the Denver Republican indicates that the then owner of the house, John F. Adams, a jeweler, had added onto his house in 1888 which suggests that the Mansard roof second story part of the house was an addition to the original structure.

### The Richardsonian Romanesque Style

Curtis Park's best example of a Richardsonian Romanesque building is the remarkable fourplex at 816 – 818 25th Street, designed by Robert Roeschlaub and built in 1890 for \$14,000. The massive square columns, with capitols carved with stylized Romanesque designs, support the heavy architrave of the front porch in a way reminiscent of the work of H. H. Richardson, champion of the Romanesque Revival. The pairs of rounded windows on either side of the porch, capped by heavy stone arches that rest on blocks carved with Romanesque scroll work, find their echo in four more pairs of round-headed windows on the third floor level where the building



816-818 25th Street (c.1960)



816-818 25th Street



breaks into its most ornamental flourishes, complete with the terracotta tiles which Roeschlaub was especially fond of using, some of which was stolen when the building stood blackened by fire and abandoned in the 1960s. Fortunately, it was rescued and restored in the nick of time and survives as one of Curtis Park's most noteworthy buildings.

### Post-Victorian, Early 20th Century Styles

Five residential structures included in this application as contributing structures were built in the period immediately after the high Victorian era, characterized by its love of architectural embellishment, when simpler styles became preferred. The houses fall into the category named the Foursquare in *A Guide to Colorado Architecture*, published by the Colorado Historical Society, though such buildings are also referred to locally as Denver Squares. They are relatively simple and straightforward in their design. All have low hipped roofs, with a dormer placed in the middle of the front elevation of the roof within which small windows are placed. They are also characterized by their front porches, whose roofs are supported by stylized Greek columns with fairly simple capitals at their tops.

The five houses included in this application fall into two groups. The twin houses at 2654 and 2656 Champa have overhanging roofs, with bands of dentils to mark the juncture of the overhang and the vertical wall. The tight ensemble of three houses at 2560 Champa and 832 and 840 26th Street are made somewhat more interesting by the use of rusticated stone window caps and sills. The upper panes of the second storey windows of the house at 2560 Champa is further ornamented by wooden dividers for the glass. The house at 832 26th, is a one-story version of its neighbors.



2654 Champa



2656 Champa



832 26th Street



840 26th Street



2560 Champa Street



“Drawing of the 24th and Curtis Street Temple” from *Temple Emanuel: A Centennial History* by Marjorie Hornbein

## Non-Residential Contributing Structures

### The Temple Emmanuel Synagogue

Located at the corner of Curtis and 24th Streets (2400 Curtis), the Temple Emanuel synagogue is a massive structure of indeterminate style, though some of its details were originally described as “moorresque.” Its walls are supported by heavy exterior buttresses, an unusual feature; though its most distinctive feature is a large tower at the corner of the building which was originally extended by a wooden spire, the victim of a fire early in the building’s life.

Ornamental sculptural features at the front of the building, within the gable of its shed roof, have unfortunately been damaged and these elements are lost.

For more information on Temple Emanuel, please see p. 28 (Architecture) and p. 36-37 (History).



2400 Curtis Street, Curtis side



2400 Curtis Street, 24th side



2400 Curtis Street (December 1985)



### **The Original National Guard Armory**

Built in 1889 to the design of William Quayle at the corner of Curtis and 26th (2565 Curtis), the old armory has served in a number of capacities since its original use. Among other things, it has been a dance hall and boxing arena. Now stuccoed, the building's original shape is still perfectly apparent.



2565 Curtis Street



2565 Curtis Street - Colorado National Guard, mustered to combat the labor strike of the Western Federation of Miners, march on Curtis Street. (1903)

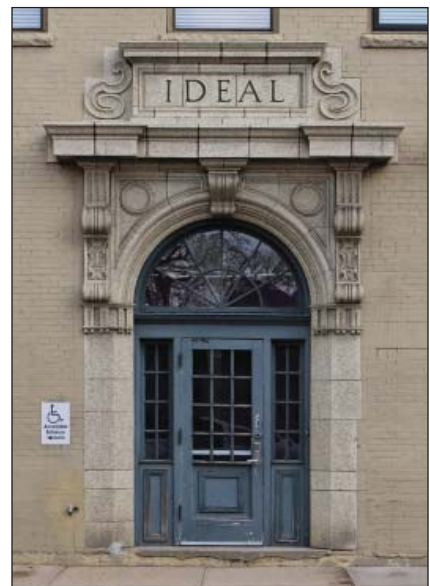


2565 Curtis Street

### **The Ideal Laundry Building**

The first portion of the Ideal was built in 1910. Additions were made in over several years, by which time the building occupied almost an entire half of the 2500 block of Curtis. When fully operational, the laundry used its own artesian well water, pumped on site.

The building is now the home of a Montessori School.



2500 Curtis Street (detail)



2500 Curtis Street



2433 Curtis Street

### **The A.E. Meek Trunk and Baggage Co. factory**

The luggage factory at 2433 Curtis Street, built for the A.E. Meek Company circa 1905, has typical Italianate features. The projecting brick cornice at the top of the facade is its main decorative feature. The windows on the second level that face Curtis have simple caps of raised brick, as well as stone sills. At street level, the building once had large windows which have been bricked up. Both sides of the building have long banks of windows, on its downtown side on both levels, on the other side on only the second level. The windows have brick arches and stone sills.

### **Nearby Structures of Note**



2409 Arapahoe Street

### **Crofton Elementary School**

Crofton Elementary School, located at 2409 Arapahoe Street, was constructed in 1919. A later addition to the structure was constructed in 1958. The original building is a classic school building of the period. Two entry doors stand at either end of the façade, above which dramatic tall windows rise from shallow, false balconies over the doorway arches. A flat, vertical bay, containing small windows, separates the decorative entry walls from the main architectural feature of the building, namely a great window wall, typical of early school buildings. Two groups of six windows each, three over three, are separated by long pilasters which rise to art deco cornices. The windows are large, 8 panes over 12, and give the structure its airy, comfortable look.

Crofton Elementary School is not currently included in this landmark district, pending the outcome of a Denver Public Schools-required review of its designation. A committee including representatives from the Colorado Historical Society, Denver Landmark Commission, and Historic Denver, Inc. will be assisting the school district with this review, after which it is hoped that this landmark district's boundaries will be amended to include Crofton Elementary School and designate it as a contributing structure in the district.

## Architects

This application contains the work of more of Denver's prominent early architects than any Curtis Park district designated so far.

### Emmet Anthony

A noteworthy early Italianate, the house at 2461 Champa, is probably the only surviving house in Denver designed by Anthony, a pioneer architect of Denver.



2461 Champa Street

### Henry Dozier

Dozier is the architect responsible for the remarkable triplex at the corner of Stout and 24th Streets, the front of which is covered with stone.



2355-65 Stout Street

### F. C. Eberly

Three of Eberly's fine houses (2535, 2545, and 2663 Champa) are already contained within Denver Landmark districts in Curtis Park, but he also designed the impressive house at 2335 Stout which is designated as an individual structure for preservation in Denver, but would now be included in a Denver Landmark district.



2335 Stout Street





2400 Curtis Street

### The Edbrooke brothers

W. J. Edbrooke designed the original Temple Emanuel Synagogue at 2400 Curtis. Built in 1882, it suffered a major fire in 1897. In 1902, the building was repaired for another congregation under the direction of Frank Edbrooke, W. J.'s brother, making it the only structure in Denver in which both Edbrookes had a hand.

Frank Edbrooke also designed the house at 2435 Stout Street.

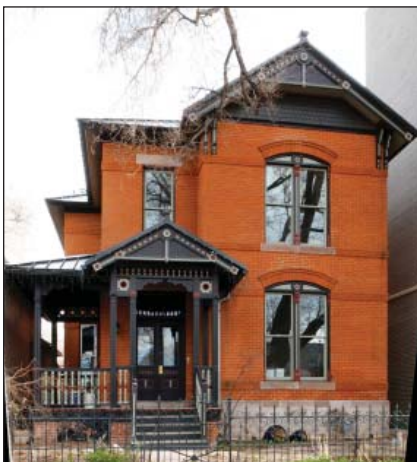


2435 Stout Street

### William Quayle

Though the house at 2418 Champa is not a documented Quayle structure, it has enough stylistic features characteristic of his work—especially the attic windows on the right side of the house—to attribute this to Quayle.

The former Colorado National Guard Armory building, at 2565 Curtis, is another Quayle building. Though somewhat disfigured by its heavy stucco, its heavily Romanesque features still give it the look of an armory.



2418 Champa Street



2565 Curtis Street

### **Robert Roeschlaub**

The massive fourplex residence at 816-818 25th street, built in 1890 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style.



816-18 25th Street

### **Inventory List and Contributing/Non-Contributing Map (5c)**

Please see Appendix A for a complete inventory of properties, contributing/non-contributing status for each, and block-by-block maps also showing contributing/non-contributing status.

### **Character-Defining Features (5d)**

All the contributing structures, except for the six buildings described above, were built as residences.

All of the contributing structures except for 2544 and 2556 Arapahoe Street were built within the period of significance (see section 6).

Nearly all of the historic contributing buildings within the proposed new district were built of brick or a combination of brick and wood, a characteristic of the Queen Anne style. There are no surviving all-wooden houses. There is a mixture of one-story and two-story buildings, with one three-story residence at 816-818 25th Street.

Historic, contributing residential structures' setbacks are largely consistent throughout the proposed district, although it should be noted that the setbacks along the numbered streets are less than those along the named streets that come out of downtown Denver. Non-residential structures are sited at the front property line, with the exception of the school.

All contributing structures have entrances that are oriented to the street.

All of the early residential structures would have had front porches originally.

## **Criteria For Contributing/Non-Contributing Status (5e)**

The criteria by which each structure was evaluated for contributing/non-contributing status included the following:

- The structure should be visually reflective of the Period of Significance.
- The structure should be constructed in a manner appropriate to the period
- The structure should reflect one of the architectural styles used in the period of significance in Denver.
- The structure's front entrance(s) should be oriented to the street, and should have a front setback compatible with structures on its face block from the period of significance
- The structure must retain its original integrity, considering the seven aspects of integrity (Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, Association) as defined in the Denver Landmark Preservation Ordinance.

Most of the criteria must be met to be considered contributing, but original integrity is required.

## **Contributing Structures Post-Period of Significance**

### **2554 and 2556 Arapahoe Street**

These two small, one-story houses, built in 1926 and 1920 respectively, were built so that they are perfectly aligned with the other houses on the block, all of which are perched atop at fairly high embankment looking out in a northwesterly direction. Because they are built of brick, 2554 in red and 2556 in tan brick, and because of their alignment with other earlier houses on the block, they seem perfectly at home in their setting and are therefore counted as contributing structure.

### **Special Note About Crofton Elementary School, 2409 Arapahoe (1919)**

Crofton Elementary School is nearby but not within the initial boundaries of this application, due to an ongoing review process required by Denver Public Schools and agreed to by the Landmark Preservation Commission. The review by the school district also includes outside experts from the Colorado Historical Society, the Denver Landmark Commission, and Historic Denver Inc. At the conclusion of the review, the Board of Education will take action and, it is hoped, will work with the City of Denver to amend this district to include Crofton Elementary School as a contributing structure in the Curtis Park H district. (Note that the later addition on the northeast side of the building, constructed in 1958, is recommended to be considered non-contributing. ) Councilwoman Carla Madison is supportive of this later addition to this district, once the required review has been completed.

This is a classic early 20th century school building whose most distinguishing characteristic are its banks of large windows that face Arapahoe Street. Its other architectural details are discussed in the architectural section of this application. Though the building is currently not in use, it appears to have been well maintained and its red brick presence on the edge of the neighborhood is a Curtis Park asset. It is the only remaining school building in Curtis Park from its early period.

## **Alterations to Contributing Structures**

The most frequent change to the contributing historic houses included in this application for Curtis Park Landmark District H is related to their front porches. Originally, both the base of the porch and the superstructure above it would have been constructed of wood, a material subject to rot. During the long period when the area was occupied by home owners and tenants without the means to adequately repair or replace deteriorating porches, many of the original ones were removed or replaced using inappropriate materials or design. Frequently, the wooden bases were replaced with concrete, and in a number of cases the superstructure was supported by heavy brick columns. Already as early as the 1920s and 30s, new heavier porches began to make their appearance throughout Curtis Park. Alternatively, the superstructure was simply not replaced with anything.

Another, though less frequent, alteration to the look of the houses from the period of significance is the result of removing original windows and replacing them with so-called picture windows.

### **Trends in the District (5f)**

The downtown edge of the Curtis Park neighborhood suffered the same neglect that the rest of the neighborhood did, though it was more seriously impacted because the spread of downtown Denver inevitably led to the demolition of many of the earliest houses that stood in its way. The destruction of the downtown portion of the neighborhood was heightened by the zoning ordinance passed in 1956 which imposed the B-8 zone from 23rd (now Park Avenue West) to 27th Streets. The blocks between 23rd and 25th were especially hard hit by the new zoning.

After a district designation on the National Register of Historic Places was awarded to Curtis Park in 1976, enough attention was given to the area that a new generation of home-buyers began to purchase long-neglected houses in the neighborhood, many of them buying homes in that portion of the neighborhood most at risk because of the B-8 zone which did not encourage residential use. A neighborhood organization was soon established which began to lobby for local preservation; and though there were still some serious losses, the neighborhood stabilized and slowly but surely began to improve. Most of Curtis Park is now protected by Denver Landmark designation, and the new zoning code has further strengthened the prospects for the future of this historic part of Denver.

In the recent past, the reputation of the area has sufficiently improved that developers have begun to look favorably upon it and have purchased empty land to build new structures. The good news about that development is that virtually all of it has been residential in character; the bad, however, is that some of the development has not been compatible with the neighborhood. It is the purpose of this application for landmark status to guarantee the protection of the old and to assure that new development will be compatible and harmonious with the historic structures found this earliest of Denver's residential neighborhoods, with review that will seek to ensure good urban design.

## **6. HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS**

### **Period of Significance**

A great majority of the houses herein nominated for inclusion in a new landmark district were built in the building boom that lasted roughly from the late 1870s until 1893, the year of the Silver Crash and the depression that followed it. Nearly all of the contributing structures included in this application for landmark designation fall within the period **prior to and including 1915**, which is the Period of Significance for this district.

### **Circumstances of Construction (6a)**

Details concerning the dates of construction can be found in Section 5.



## Specific Historical Associations (6b)

### Early History

The downtown edge of Curtis Park shares its history with the rest of the neighborhood. As the early city expanded from its historic core, what we now think of as Denver's downtown streets – Arapahoe, Curtis, Champa, Stout, California, and Welton – were extended in the direction of Downing Street and became the city's primary residential area. When the home of Wolfe Londoner, Mayor of Denver 1882-1892, at 2222 Champa was razed in 1940, a newspaper article said of it that "For many years [it] was a show place of the district, then regarded as the most fashionable of Denver." Another article said that "In the immediate neighborhood [of Londoner's house] were homes of many other early-day civic leaders."

Unlike later residents of Capitol Hill, many of whom, like Molly Brown, made their money in mining towns and then moved to Denver, the early residents of Curtis Park tended to be purveyors of the goods and services which the young city needed if it was to survive.

Among the several Curtis Park residents who owned retail establishments of one kind or another,



2461 Champa

serving the needs of early Denver, were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ballin. Their store, the Paris Bazar, located on Larimer Street, catered to women of fashionable tastes who wanted to be dressed a la mode. According to an article in the *Denver Tribune*, Jan. 1, 1880, "Their laces and embroideries are of the most exquisite designs, most of which . . . are imported directly from the manufactories in France and Germany." After only ten years in their house at 2461 Champa, the Ballins followed other Curtis Park residents of means and moved to Capitol Hill, an out-migration with important consequences for the area. Ironically, though the house to which they moved when they left Curtis Park is gone, their old one on Champa still stands.

The history of the 2300 block of Stout Street, odd numbered side of the street, is uniquely tied to the history of a single family who made considerable contributions to the young city of Denver. The paterfamilias was Frank Kaub, who lived with his wife at 2343 Stout. Born in southern Germany, he and his bride-to-be came to the US in their 20s, he for political reasons. His story is a classic American tale of hard work and enterprise which made it possible for him to prosper in his new homeland.

Beginning as a porter in a saloon in New York City, Frank Kaub moved on to Illinois where he became a master mechanic for the Chicago and North Western Railroad. In 1871, at a time when Denver was just getting started, he came here to install a pump in the city's first water works. He went on to become a locomotive engineer and worked for the narrow gauge South Park and Pacific Railway in its early days, the rail line that ran between Denver and Leadville. He also served as the driver and engineer on Denver's first horse-drawn steam pumper of the Denver Fire Department. Around 1885, he bought or built the Kaub Block at 17th and Champa, a commercial building that paid so well he was



able to live off its income for the rest of his life. When he died in his house at 2343 Stout in 1911, the Denver Post said of him that “He accumulated a fortune in Denver real estate.” The house (individually designated a Denver Landmark, as with 2335 Stout) is of special interest because it is that extremely rare thing in Curtis Park: a house with much of its original interior decoration still intact.

The Kaubs had four daughters and a son. Three of their daughters eventually came to live on the same block as their parents.

Ten or twelve years after Frank Kaub came to America, another young German, age 21, also arrived in New York City. His name was Henry Nagel. While in NYC, he learned the watchmaker’s trade. In 1869, three years after arriving in the US, he decided to come west. He went by train to Cheyenne, thence to Denver by stage coach, there being no rail connection at the time. Hired as a watchmaker by Gottesleben & Son, his repair bench faced a front window where he was seen by three of the Kaub daughters on their way home from school. Eventually, Nagel and Clara Kaub met, and the rest is history. About the same time that his father-in-law, Frank Kaub, was building his new home at 2343 Stout, circa 1885, Henry and Clara Kaub Nagel erected a smaller house at 2329 Stout. At the time, they already had four children, and when the family grew larger, they built another house at 2335 Stout on what was probably the Kaub’s side yard. Well before building the Stout Street houses, Nagel had gone into business for himself. His jewelry store was first located on Larimer, then moved on to 17th Street, then to 16th. His long experience as a watch and clock repairman led to his position as the official clock man whose task it was to service the clocks in all of Denver’s public schools. He also became the official watch-inspector for the engineers and trainmen on the railroads running into Denver, a position he probably got through his father-in-law who was the local treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Nagel also dabbled in real estate. He owned the four lots at the corner of Stout and 23rd (now Park Avenue West), just down the street from his own house, on which some frame houses stood. Around 1890, he tore them down and built a terrace complex, five units facing Stout Street, three facing 23rd, all of them rental units. A number of descendents of the Nagels still live in the Denver area.



Nagels in Germany (1905)

In 1871, another young 21-year-old, Frederick Sigel, arrived in Denver, just a couple of years after Henry Nagel arrived. His father owned a large tannery in New York state, and young Fred went into the shoe and leather business upon his arrival here. In connection with his business, he travelled widely in western Colorado, selling leather and buying hides. At the time, Indian tribes and old trappers and hunters were common on the Western Slope and Sigel knew them and befriended some. In 1876, Sigel became an associate of Philip Zang, the prominent brewer, and three years later married one of his daughters. When she died, Fred met and married Clara Kaub Nagel’s sister, Anna. The same year as his marriage, 1889, Sigel built the five unit complex at the corner of Stout and 24th Streets, three



2355-65 Stout Street

units facing Stout and two facing 24th. He and his new wife lived at 2363 Stout. He died there in 1913. By the time of his death, he was reported to be a millionaire, his wealth coming from a variety of sources — mining, real estate, cattle-raising, and banking among them.

The third of the Kaub sisters to reside on the paternal block of Stout Street was Emilie, who married and eventually divorced Andrew Campion, about whom less is known than his brothers-in-law. He was primarily involved in the livestock and meatpacking businesses. He was one of the two organizers of the Burkhardt Packing Company, which became the Colorado Packing Company. Eventually, he most likely went into business with his brother-in-law, Fred Sigel, in a company called the Sigel-Campion Live Stock Comm. Co. Andrew and Emilie lived at four different addresses on

the 2300 block of Stout, moving with some frequency, which suggests that he rented rather than owned property there. The one house he owned was 2351 Stout, which he gave as his address from 1901 to 1905. That means, that five of the buildings still standing on the 2300 block of Stout were owned by members of the same family, surely something of a record.

In a family history written by Fritz Nagel, one of the children of Henry and Clara Kaub Nagel, he reports that his grandfather, Frank Kaub, liked to play skat, a German card game, with his three sons-in-law, Nagel, Sigel, and Campion in the wintertime; and that “On summer evenings most of the family congregated on Grandpa Kaub’s front porch and discussed the events of the day or indulged in gossip. I remember sitting on the front porch railing and drinking in all that was said.”

The now-derelict synagogue at 2400 Curtis has played an extremely important part in the life of Denver’s Jewish population. Originally built in 1882 as the Temple Emanuel for the Congregation Emanuel (founded in 1873) which consisted of Liberal Jews, primarily of German origin, it took the place of the first temple which had been built in 1875. A number of the prominent founders of the congregation lived in the Curtis Park area, among them Louis Anfenger (in whose home the congregation was organized), John Elsner, the Salomon brothers (Fred, Hyman, and Adolph), Charles Schayer, Isaac Gotthelf, and Sam Rose. With one exception, all of their homes are still standing in parts of the neighborhood already protected by landmark designation.



Louis Anfenger (c. 1890)

In 1889, the legendary Rabbi, William Friedman, came to the congregation. His impact was felt throughout the city, both as a popular orator and as a public figure. In 1890, members of the congregation founded the Jewish Hospital Association which

eventually led to the establishment of the National Jewish Hospital. In 1897, a fire caused serious damage to the temple which led to the decision to erect a new temple, the one now standing at Pearl and 16th Streets.

The Temple was then purchased by the BMH congregation, which kept the building until that congregation, too, left it in 1921 for a new temple at Gaylord and 16th Streets. The old building was then purchased by the few Jews who still lived in the area. At one point during this period of the building's diminishing congregation, Samuel Rose, an orthodox rabbi who had pursued his rabbinical studies in Warsaw, ministered to the small group of the faithful who still attended services in the old Temple building. Rose, who earned his living as a tailor, lived most of his life in Curtis Park in rented accommodations. His son, Maurice, became the highest ranking Jewish officer in the US Army during WWII. Rose Hospital is named for him. The last congregation held the building until after WWII, by which time it was in a sadly deteriorated condition. Despite its remarkable history in serving the needs of a wide spectrum of Jewish congregations, the building then began its sad life as a warehouse.

The factory for the A.E. Meek Trunk and Baggage Co., at 2433 Curtis, was built circa 1905 to supply the well-known company store in downtown Denver. The company was founded circa 1877 shortly after Arthur (A.E.) and his brother Leonard came to Denver from their home in Halifax, N.S. in 1874. When Arthur died in 1898, Leonard took over the business. He was joined by a younger brother, Rupert, in 1905, about the time the factory building was constructed on Curtis. Shortly after WWII, the factory building was sold to the Atlas Luggage Company who held the building until 1977 when it was purchased by the current owner. A *Rocky Mountain News* article in 1963 said that the company was "believed to be the oldest business in the city owned and managed by the same family through the years"; and their own catalogue claimed to be "the state's oldest family-owned retail establishment."

## **Recent History**

In Section 4 of this application, Statement of Significance (1) History, the early history of the Curtis Park area, from its earliest days until the Silver Crash of 1893, is briefly sketched. The slow but steady decline of the neighborhood that had already commenced by the end of the 19th century continued until, by the 1970s, its future was in doubt. Dereliction, abandonment, and demolition were then common.

The area of the neighborhood herein proposed for Landmark status – the part of the neighborhood closest to Denver's downtown – inevitably suffered the most damage. As downtown spread in the direction of the old residential neighborhood, the Victorian houses in the way of its expansion were either torn down and replaced with new buildings serving non-residential purposes or converted to office or business uses.

The destruction of the neighborhood's downtown edge was dramatically accelerated when, on November 8, 1956, Denver's City Council passed what a *Rocky Mountain News* article described as "a new comprehensive and controversial zoning map and law for the city." (Ordinance 392, Series of 1956) As a result, Curtis Park was divided into two zone districts, with 27th Street becoming the dividing line

between the new B-8 and R-3 zones. The actual residential use of the area and its historic importance were ignored. Instead, the B-8 portion of the neighborhood was seen merely as an area that would provide services for downtown Denver, which the new zone abutted. Among the 54 permitted uses in the new zone, 4 were residential; but the overwhelming majority were not only non-residential but were antithetical to normal residential usage: pawn shops, auto repair garages, brewpubs, manufacturing, among a wide variety of other uses which were allowed. The effect was to encourage the demolition of old houses still standing and the creation in their place of non-residential uses.

To be sure, the decline of the neighborhood in the years during which it became primarily an area of working-class or low-income minority families also saw the intrusion of non-residential uses, as witness the Ideal Laundry building on Curtis Street, and the Puritan Pie building on Champa. The first portion of the Ideal Laundry building went up in 1910, with later additions over several years, until it had replaced 11 residential structures. The Puritan Pie building was erected in 1918, replacing 9 residential structures; but the major damage came after the B-8 zone was put into effect.

Coincidentally and instructively, in the same year that the new zoning ordinance went into effect, 1956, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1929 were updated. The maps show the footprints of all buildings standing in 1956. A comparison of those maps with today's conditions shows that in the years since the B-8 zone was inflicted upon the downtown portion of the Curtis Park neighborhood, 88 residential structures have been torn down (row houses and doubles are counted as single "structures" here). If one counts the number of residential units destroyed (counting the number of units in the row houses and doubles as two), that figure rises to 160. What is perhaps surprising is the number of historic houses that have survived. Three of the first landmark districts created in Curtis Park (Districts A, B, and D) are located within the B-8 zone. The early concentration of neighborhood efforts at landmarking in that zone occurred precisely because the danger of demolition in that zone was well known. This application aims finally to fill in the gaps and protect those historic surviving portions of the neighborhood within the B-8 zone that are still not protected. Only the 2700 block of Champa is not in the B-8 zone.

Because the former B-8 zone district no longer exists as a result of the new zoning code adopted in 2010, Curtis Park now has the opportunity to reunify a neighborhood that has been damagingly divided since 1956. Fortunately, the upper portion of the old B-8 (primarily the area of the neighborhood between 25th and 27th Streets) had almost entirely retained its residential character and could, therefore, be assigned the same new residential zone (U-RH-2.5) that now extends, with few exceptions, from 25th to Downing. What hasn't already been designated in a Denver Landmark district between 25th Street and 27th Streets is proposed for landmark designation in this application. Included within the new landmark boundaries are those two early non-residential buildings already referenced: the Ideal Laundry and the Puritan Pie buildings. Their early construction and scale make both seem to be part of the historic fabric of the neighborhood.

The lower Curtis Park portion of the former B-8 zone, the blocks between Park Avenue West (formerly 23rd Street) and 25th Street, present more complicated problems, but that portion of the neighborhood has also been included in this application for landmark designation. A little more than



half of the land between 24th and 25th Streets has also been reunited with the rest of the neighborhood through the application of the same residential zoning now in force between 25th and 27th Streets (U-RH-2.5) because of the surprising survival of the original housing stock there (primarily along Stout and California Streets). The rest of the land between 24th and 25th Streets as well as some of the land between Park Avenue West and 24th Street has been newly assigned zones that reflect the mixed land usage there, both residential and non-residential, at contextually appropriate scale. (Most of the blocks between Park Avenue West and 24th Street are awaiting appropriate zoning, as an in-progress area plan is studying alternatives to the current B-8-A OD-5 (or “D-AS”) zoning for the area.) This is the area of Curtis Park where the detrimental impact of the old B-8 Zone is most apparent. Most of the Victorian housing stock that has survived in the extreme lower part of the neighborhood exists on Stout Street, on both sides of the 2400 block and the odd-numbered side of the 2300 block of Stout Street. Other late 19th century residences are scattered among modern apartment buildings or new rowhouses. We wish nonetheless to include the entire area between Park Avenue West and 25th Street in the new landmark district, extending protection to these remaining historic structures and benefiting from design review in the area.

We do so in the interests of achieving a greater coherence for the neighborhood than can be achieved without the design review which landmark district designation affords. Curtis Park Neighbors, Curtis Park’s registered neighborhood organization, has consistently registered itself with the city as extending from Park Avenue West to Downing. The interests and concerns of the neighborhood are not exclusive to its core intact historic residential areas, since those areas are of course constantly impacted by adjacent parts of the neighborhood without historic interest.

The issue of primary concern to Curtis Park is the quality of future developments in the downtown edge of the neighborhood. The good news about recent developments there is that it is almost exclusively residential, in keeping with the rest of the neighborhood. But without design guidelines or controls, some recent developments have seriously compromised the character of the neighborhood. There remains, within the boundaries of the new landmark district area proposed herewith, a great deal of developable land. One empty block, bordered by Park Avenue West, Stout, California and 24th Streets, was where the new fledgling neighborhood organization cut its teeth in its long battle to save and protect the neighborhood by turning back a development that would have had a permanently negative effect on Curtis Park. For that story, see the section below.

Another large portion of the downtown edge of the neighborhood is owned by the Greyhound Bus Company. Some of its land is built out, some empty and used for parking. Greyhound hopes to relocate out of the neighborhood, and if and when it does, the potential for development — compatible or incompatible — will be significant. Other vacant parcels are also included within the boundaries of the new proposed landmark district with their impact on the rest of the neighborhood yet to be determined.

In the recently-published *Owner's Guide for Historically Designated Homes and Buildings*, put out by Historic Denver and the City of Denver's Landmark Preservation Commission, one of the advantages of landmark designation is to "Promote good urban design." (p.6), echoing the Landmark Ordinance in 30-1 (2)(f). The development that will occur in Curtis Park at its interior edges will be controlled in good part by what the new zoning will allow there, and landmark design review will be a great aid in ensuring compatible design. Of course, new buildings will reflect modern architectural tastes and styles: the 88 late Victorian residential structures lost through demolition cannot ever be replaced.

Virtually all the vacant parcels included in this application for district designation either abut or face the early 19th century residences of Curtis Park, which constitute the interest and beauty of the neighborhood. What is built on them will either enhance or detract from its special charm. It is for that reason that we ask for the inclusion of the vacant parcels shown within this application's boundaries so that new development, as it occurs, will be subject to the review of the Landmark staff and the Landmark Commission.

### **The Recent History Of The Block Between Stout and California, Park Avenue West to 24th Street**

The block across from the odd numbered side of the 2300 block of Stout, bounded by Stout and California Streets, Park Avenue West and 24th, now has nothing on it except for a gas and electric substation that occupies about a quarter of the block at the corner of California and 24th. Nonetheless, the block's history — and particularly its recent history — is of interest and importance to the neighborhood and makes its inclusion in this new application for a Denver Landmark district especially appropriate.

The block never attracted the kind of development that occurred elsewhere in the area where single-family houses were erected in dense profusion. According to two local newspaper articles, the land served as a city market for over 40 years, until the beginning of the 20th century. The market served truck farmers who sold their produce there. The land was also used in part as a circus ground. Such activities obviously would have inhibited residential use, though the Baist Real Estate Atlas of 1905 shows two terraces, or rowhouses, facing Stout, one built from the corner of 23rd and Stout, the other at the other end of the block at Stout and 24th. The same atlas shows another terrace on the other side of the block, at California and 23rd.

By the time of the National Register listing in 1975, the block was occupied both by the Public Service substation and an unsightly empty warehouse that stretched along Stout. On the California side of the warehouse, a heavy-duty loading dock had enabled semitrailers to back in to take on or off their cargoes. Early in 1979, when neighborhood improvements were just getting started, it was learned that the Greyhound Bus Company had purchased the warehouse with the intention of turning it into a maintenance facility for its buses. Jay Feichter, who then owned 2435 California, immediately went into action. Picketing by neighbors began and a petition containing 500 names was gathered. Letters were written to Greyhound's headquarters in Phoenix, which emphasized the National Register listing and the revitalization efforts underway. The response from the Phoenix office indicated that the company planned to proceed with its plans since the B-8 zoning allowed for the use they intended.

Enter Elvin Caldwell, who represented the greater Five Points area on Denver's City Council at the time. Having received the petition of opposition containing 500 names, he wrote to the Greyhound Company, in a letter dated April 17, 1979, as follows: "This is a very proud neighborhood with many residents who have lived there for a number of years, mixed with a number of family-type individuals who are moving back into the core city to rehabilitate some of our structurally sound and architecturally beautiful old homes. This neighborhood needs all the encouragement that we can give it if it's going to continue experiencing this type of improvement. I am aware of your response and the position of your corporation... This was negative in our opinion and unacceptable to us." Caldwell went on to say that the city was prepared to buy the land from Greyhound and find a more suitable location for it maintenance facility.

Instrumental in the final success of getting Greyhound to locate elsewhere was Larry Borger, an administrative assistant to Mayor Bill McNichols. He proved to be as stalwart a defender of Curtis Park as Councilman Caldwell, and between the two of them the crisis ended in the neighborhood's favor. Greyhound agreed to let the city purchase the building and to move its maintenance facility elsewhere. It was a crucial victory, which could not have been won without the direct assistance of Caldwell and Borger. Never since has Curtis Park had such important help from Denver's city government.

After the city purchased the land, DHA was called upon to develop the site in ways that would be appropriate to the historic character of Curtis Park. Two plans were developed. One would have seen the



## Leave the Protesting to Us

The Denver city government, in the person of Councilman Elvin Caldwell, has entered the fight between Curtis Park residents and Greyhound Bus Lines on the side of the residents.

The residents oppose Greyhound's plan to construct a bus maintenance facility on Stout Street, between 23rd and 24th Streets, on the grounds that it will increase air & noise pollution, traffic congestion and danger to children. The site, near many renovated Victorian homes, was formerly used as a truck depot, and purchased by Greyhound last month when the company lost the lease to its old railroad yard facility.

Caldwell, who is up for reelection in District 8, which includes Curtis Park, became involved at the residents' request. At a meeting on Saturday, April 21, he announced that there are funds from the Community Development Agency (CDA) available to the city to purchase the lot in question from Greyhound. However, he added that there are no funds available at this time for turning the lot into a

park, which the residents have also proposed.

"I feel the city administration would find it acceptable, if we can get Greyhound to deal with us reasonably, to acquire the land for future expansion of (Sonny Lawson) park," Caldwell said. "It's important that the land be owned by the city to stop this kind of development."

He also said that he had written to Greyhound both here in Denver and the home office in Phoenix, asking company executives to sit down with residents and city representatives to consider the proposed transaction as well as "using the resources of the city to find a new location" for the facility.

John Harris, of the City Planning Board, said at the meeting, which followed a morning of picketing in front of the lot, that his office "would be very happy to find them a site in an industrial area where they should be."

Greyhound's District Manager, Gordon Cooper, did not attend the meeting and has been unavailable for comment. But a spokesman in

the Phoenix office confirmed receipt of Caldwell's letter and said that no response had been made as of Thursday.

Because of this lack of response, Caldwell is now setting up a meeting between himself, Planning and Zoning Office representatives and the mayor, according to Caldwell aide Barbara Watkins. Some of the ideas they will discuss involve the legal steps by which the city can obtain the land. At the April 21 meeting, Caldwell mentioned that the legal department of the city would have to research the city's right of eminent domain, which could involve condemnation of the property.

The reaction of Greyhound, according to the spokesman: "As of now, there is no change in our plans, but we'll be studying the whole situation." While the building is being constructed on the site, service will continue, but plans are not final on how or where, he said. Construction could begin as soon as three months from now, and take at the very least a year to complete.

K.G. Hawthorne

Article from *Westword*, April 27, 1979



construction of a large apartment-style building for low-income residents only, a plan staunchly opposed by neighborhood residents, 60 of whom showed up at a DHA board meeting to express their opposition. With the help of then-Councilman Hiawatha Davis, who succeeded Caldwell on City Council, that DHA proposal was shelved. A second plan, this one endorsed by the neighborhood, would have seen a private developer erect market-rate side-by-side townhouses. Several were erected on the Stout side of the block, but the demonstration buildings were never completed and were eventually torn down.

More recently, in the early 1990s, Denver's Fire Department expressed a strong interest in building a new firehouse on part of the DHA land. The residents of the neighborhood were mostly in favor of that plan, though nothing came of it following further analysis of the Fire Department's service times in this portion of the city.

The block occupies an extremely important site for Curtis Park. Directly across the street, on the Stout Street side, is an exemplary collection of five houses and one rowhouse, all dating from the late 19th century. Their survival in so exposed a situation is remarkable. They constitute the only intact group of houses in the 2300 blocks of Curtis Park. They also act as a gateway to the neighborhood. Stout Street is a one-way street coming out of downtown Denver. The new, four-storey apartment building at the corner of Park Avenue West and Stout somewhat blocks the great collection of buildings just beyond, but once past the modern building, the observant will realize that they have now entered another world, an impression confirmed by the next block (the 2400 block of Stout) where both sides of the street are intact.

Obviously, an appropriate development by DHA on this empty land, across the street from the group of Victorian buildings it would face, would greatly enhance the entrance to the neighborhood. The other side of the DHA empty block, facing California, would face Sonny Lawson Park, open land that would also attract a quality development.



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Sarah J. Pearce. *A Guide to Colorado Architecture*, Colorado Historical Society, 1983

F. Robinson. *Outline and Index Map of the City of Denver*, Colorado (a.k.a. The Robinson Real Estate Atlas), 1887.

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Numerous articles in the *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Denver Post*, and other periodicals.

## **7. GEOGRAPHY OF THE PROPOSED DISTRICT**

The geography of that portion of the Curtis Park neighborhood herewith proposed for local designation and protection is different from the geography of other parts of the neighborhood already protected. For the first time, what is proposed includes a mixed-use area consisting of some of the finest late 19th century houses in Denver; a few early 20th century commercial buildings, listed as contributing structures; and several non-contributing buildings, some of them constructed in the recent past. In addition to the structures that constitute the built environment of the proposed new district, there are several parcels of vacant land abutting or adjacent to the historic structures, whose eventual development will greatly impact the built environment, including those portions of it of great historic interest. It is therefore that they are also included to assure that new development benefits by the review of the Landmark staff and Commission.

## **8. OUTREACH EFFORTS**

In the residential portions of the neighborhood included in this application, volunteers have gone door to door to speak with their neighbors about what landmark designation means to the individual property owner. Fliers, in both English and Spanish, have been distributed which answer the usual questions raised about what landmark designation means, and the economic benefits of designation. (See Appendix E.)

To reach those who live in apartment buildings, letters have been sent inviting questions and support. Letters have also been sent by first-class mail to all property owners who do not live in the neighborhood, and to resident owners who not be reached or whose signatures could not be obtained in the door-to-door petition efforts, advising them that their properties will be included in the new landmark district application, and whether those properties are contributing or non-contributing structures. An example copy of these letters are included as Attachment D, and the outreach flyers in Appendix E were included with each letter sent.

Earlier, as Curtis Park began this recent series of district applications, the Curtis Park Neighbors organization held a special neighborhood-wide meeting on April 1st, 2008 at the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library. At the meeting, the architectural styles found in Curtis Park were displayed in an hour-long slide show, along with a discussion of Denver Landmark district requirements and limitations. Outreach flyers (Attachment F) were distributed. There were 54 people in attendance who signed in. The meeting was advertised in the monthly *Curtis Park Times*, delivered door-to-door to nearly 1,500 addresses in Curtis Park.

Updates on the progress of the landmark applications in the neighborhood have regularly been communicated through the *Curtis Park Times*, each time including contact information for questions and encouraging involvement. The *Curtis Park Times* is a monthly newsletter produced by Curtis Park Neighbors and delivered by volunteers to approximately 1,500 addresses in Curtis Park, as well as being distributed electronically.