

To: Denver City Council
From: Abigail Christman, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: December 9, 2024
RE: Landmark Designation for the Curie/Dryer Cottage at 4450 Tennyson St.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on ordinance designation criteria and on the recommendations of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC), staff recommends forwarding the application to the full council.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2024L-004
Address: 4450 Tennyson St.
Zoning: U-MX-3, DO-8
Council: #1 - Amanda Sandoval
Owner: Casas Felices, LLC
Applicant(s): Casas Felices, LLC

Case Summary:

The owner (daphne salone/Casa Felices, LLC) submitted a Landmark Designation application for 4450 Tennyson St. to CPD on July 19, 2024. Staff performed a preliminary review and found the application to be complete and to meet Denver landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set a public hearing before the Landmark Preservation Commission on November 5, 2024 for the Commission to review the designation application. At the public hearing, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval and forward the designation application to City Council. On November 12, 2024, the Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee forwarded the case to the full City Council. At first reading, Denver City Council ordered the bill published and the public hearing set for December 9, 2024.

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

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code, the application must be complete, and the structure must meet the following criteria:

1. The structure maintains its integrity
2. The structure is more than 30 years old, or is of exceptional importance
3. The structure meets at least three of ten criteria
4. The LPC considers the structure's historic context

Criteria Evaluation:

Landmark staff found that the application demonstrates that the structure meets the following criteria.

A. It has a direct association with a significant historic event or with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;

The property at 4450 Tennyson St., known as the Currie/Dryer Cottage, is significant for the historical development of the city. It is associated with the early development of Tennyson St. and the

surrounding Berkely neighborhood. The Denver & Berkely Park Rapid Transit Company, created by real estate developers to bolster sales of residential properties, established a streetcar line in the late 180s with expansion into the early 190s. Tennyson St. soon emerged as a streetcar-influenced commercial, civic, entertainment, educational, and residential thoroughfare. As Kevin Pharris observes in *Riding Denver's Rails*, the linkage of Berkeley with other parts of Denver via rapid transit systems provided a way for people "of ordinary means to maintain a residence outside the expensive heart of the city while still having access for work and entertainment."

The development of housing for ordinary Denverites in the Berkely neighborhood is evident in the construction of the Currie/Dryer Cottage. In 1909, experienced carpenter, Arthur Wellington Currie, purchased two residential lots on Tennyson St. He first constructed a small frame cottage toward the rear of the southern part of his property. His family lived here while he built a larger brick residence sited toward the front of the northern part of the parcel. Upon completion of both houses, the cottage provided a source of income as rental housing, while the larger house served as the Currie family home. After the death of Mary Currie, Arthurs's wife, the property was sold to Joseph and Josephine Dryer. They resided in the larger brick dwelling and continued to rent the smaller cottage. During the Dryer family's 79-year ownership, the cottage continued to provide an affordable housing opportunity accessible to a variety of people, including immigrants, non-Protestants, widows, laborers, young families, seniors, and others, whose presence lent diversity to the Berkeley neighborhood. The Currie/Dryer Cottage is representative of the development of Tennyson St. as a commercial and residential corridor and "main street" of the Berkeley neighborhood.

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

The Currie/Dryer Cottage embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of a type - the alley house. Located near an alley, varieties of this type of dwelling were built in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries in the U.S. The alley house was a form of affordable urban housing, often utilized by immigrants, BIPOC, working class people, and young families. Although often deceptively simple in appearance, alley houses were challenging to design due to the need to maximize functionality of limited spaces, focus on cost and practicality, and take into account tight spaces and the presence of adjoining houses with varied heights and setbacks. Available light, window placement, and privacy were key design considerations.

In the Berkeley neighborhood, most alley houses were rental properties or homes for extended family members. Generally, the dwellings were vernacular in design, with little ornamentation, and they blended in harmoniously with the surrounding architecture of the community. The alley house setting is an integral component of its significance as an architectural type, notable for its deep setback from the street and closeness to the alley behind. The Currie/Dryer Cottage exhibits many of these features—smaller size, vernacular architecture, deep setback and alley location—with a few restrained decorative flourishes, perhaps due to Currie's personal experience as a carpenter. The interior of the cottage demonstrates that some alley houses were designed with elaborations, such as its doorway surrounds with ornamental moldings, as well as pragmatic spatial efficiency in their modest dimensions employed to provide a sense of privacy, beauty, and comfort. The parlor window with stained glass, bull's-eye window, and wood window surrounds with architrave lintel trim distinguish this house from more utilitarian alley house designs, as does the broad projecting porch with dentil molding on the frieze.



G. It promotes understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;

The Currie/Dryer Cottage promotes understanding and appreciation of the urban environment, as a rare example of an early twentieth century alley house. Alley houses were once found throughout the Berkeley neighborhood. Today, the Currie/Dryer Cottage represents a rare surviving example of the alley type of dwelling, which provided an early affordable housing option as well as attracting those who desired the convenience of renting a small house in the city without the costs and responsibilities for its maintenance, such as recent immigrants, unskilled workers, seniors, and widows.

An examination of 1930 Sanborn fire insurance maps covering an 18-square-block, 87-acre area between West 38th and West 46th avenues from Raleigh to Utica streets reveals 25 examples of the alley house type. In 2024 only four examples survive, based on a Google Earth analysis. The Currie/Dryer Cottage is the only one-story frame representative of the type remaining. The landscape of the property constitutes a rare remaining example of an early twentieth century design associated with an alley house featuring a long expanse of front lawn planted in grass and with mature trees. Due to the extensive redevelopment of Tennyson Street, the Currie/Dryer Cottage is now also a rare example of the broader category of single-family residences along the street. While the early development of Tennyson featured both residential and commercial buildings, many single-family houses were demolished. There

are only three other remaining early twentieth-century houses in residential use standing on Tennyson Street between West 44th and West 46th avenues.

H. It represents an era of culture or heritage that allows an understanding of how the site was used by past generations;

The Currie/Dryer Cottage represents an era of culture and heritage that allows an understanding of how the site was used by past generations. The cottage's history is representative of the early diversity of Tennyson Street and the larger Berkeley neighborhood. More than 10 percent of the neighborhood residents were immigrants from other countries when the dwelling was built. As was common for alley houses, the property was owned by and rented to people with a variety of cultural backgrounds, including Canadian, Bohemian/Czech, German, Swedish, Russian, and Italian immigrants. The cottage's history tells the stories of the newcomers' struggles to build better lives in Denver by finding safe, conveniently located, and affordable homes from which to embark on their quest.

The cottage also represents the second property owners' (the Dryers) welcoming attitude toward human diversity, even during an era in Denver when nativists and the Ku Klux Klan actively opposed the acceptance of people with certain national origins, races, and religious beliefs. In this instance, the house's history illuminates the story of a patriotic Catholic family with Czechoslovakian roots renting the cottage to a Russian Jewish immigrant who ran for office as a Socialist at a time when campaigns of opposition, discrimination, and intimidation against immigrants, Catholics, Jews, and left-leaning political philosophies were common. The Dryer family continued to rent to a diverse group of tenants throughout their ownership.

Integrity:

Chapter 30 requires that a landmark designated property maintain its integrity. Integrity is defined as "the ability of a structure or district to convey its historic, geographic, architectural, or cultural significance...recognized as belonging to its particular time and place in Denver's history." The seven qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Currie/Dryer Cottage retains a significant degree of historic integrity. The cottage is in its original location. The integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is good, with only a few alterations. The rear porch was enclosed within the period of significance and maintains its integrity. While some of the wood windows were replaced with vinyl windows, the cottage retains its historic fenestration pattern. Some elements of the porch were replaced with simpler wood features. Overall, these alterations are minor, and the design, materials, and workmanship of Currie is still readily visible. There have been large-scale changes to the surrounding neighborhood, altering the historic setting, but due to its continued residential use and relationship to Tennyson St., the cottage retains integrity of feeling and association.

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

As is appropriate for a property proposed for designation, the historic context is strongly interrelated to both the areas of significance and period of significance. The development of the area from the “Berkeley Farm” to the mixed-use Tennyson St. corridor aligns with the construction of the alley house. The owners and residents of the alley house reflect the historical development of the area and tell the story of the Dryer family and their stand against discrimination. The period of significance corresponds to this history and begins with the construction of the property in 1909 and extends to the end of the Dryer family’s ownership in 1992.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

FIRST ADD TO BERKELEY B8 PT OF L11 & 12, BEG SW COR L12 NLY19.15FT ELY 73.43FT NLY 4.65FT ELY 9.15FT NLY 2FT ELY 52.44FT SLY TO SE COR L12 WLY 135.02FT TO TPOB

Public Review Process:

Community Planning & Development has met all posting and notification requirements delineated in Chapter 12 (Article III, Section 12-96) and Chapter 30 of the DRMC.

Notifications:

- Owner notification letters regarding the LPC public hearing
- City Council and Community Planning and Development email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications

- Berkely Regis United Neighbors
 - Strong Denver
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
 - Historic Denver, Inc
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - History Colorado
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments:

As of 11:00 am on December 5, 2024, CPD has received 3 comment letters regarding the 4450 Tennyson St. application, all in support.

- Historic Denver on 12/4/2024
- Historic Berkeley Regis on 11/4/2024
- daphne salone (Casas Felices, LLC) on 10/24/2024

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation
- Public comments received