

To: Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of Denver City Council
From: Abigail Christman, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: June 24, 2025
RE: Landmark Designation for 510 S Garfield 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: #2025L-002
Address: 510 S Garfield St
Zoning: S-SU-F
Council: #6 - Paul Kashmann
Owner: The Estate of Betty T. Kulish
Applicant(s): Thomas M. Kulish, Personal Representative of the Estate of Betty T. Kulish

Case Summary:

The applicant submitted a Landmark Designation application for 510 S Garfield St to CPD on April 8, 2025. Staff reviewed the application and found it to be complete and to meet Denver Landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set the public hearing at the Landmark Preservation Commission for May 6, 2025. The LPC unanimously recommended approval.

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.

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

The McCallin-Kulish House is significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of the Usonian style. Developed by Frank Lloyd Wright beginning in the 1930s, the Usonian style was designed to be democratic and accessible to the middle class. It reflected Wright's interest in simplicity, connection to the land, and efficiency. Wright specified three requirements for his modern Usonian house:

- a transparent wall of glass to connect the living area with a small, enclosed garden, blending the indoors with the outdoors and making a small home feel more spacious
- a compact central kitchen work area at the core, replacing the central hearth which was the

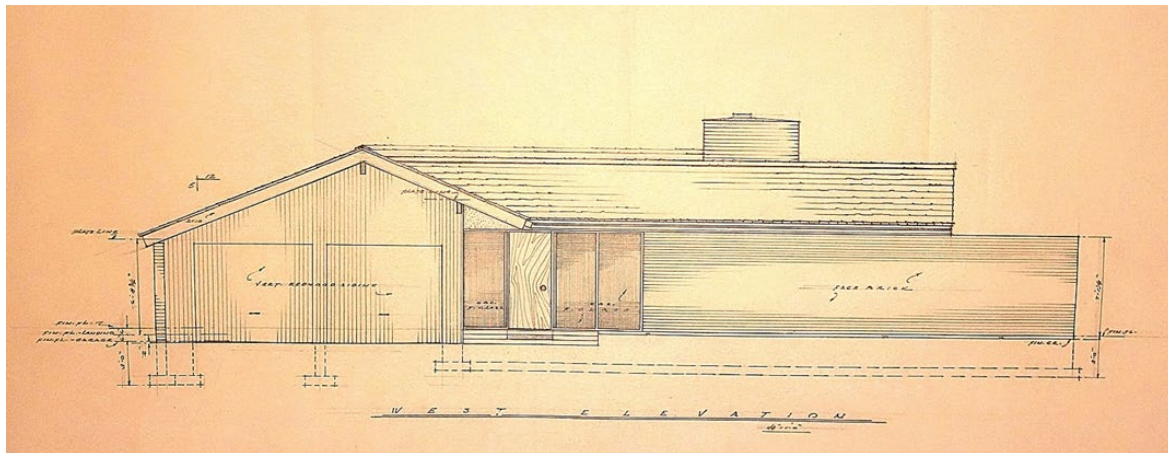
focal element in Frank Lloyd Wright's earlier Prairie style

- a carport, an acknowledgment of the increasing importance of the automobile in modern suburban life

With his Usonian designs, Wright aimed to provide a middle-class clientele with single-level homes combining both simplicity and refinement. Key features of Wright's Usonian style seen in the design of 510 S Garfield St include:

- Single-story structure set on a concrete slab with radiant heating
- Open, roughly L-shaped floor plan with connected living and dining areas
- Blend inside and outside with large windows and doors opening onto private patios/gardens
- Lighting integrated into walls and ceilings
- Use of natural materials (brick, redwood siding, Philippine mahogany paneling)
- Dramatic interior spaces
- Closed off to the street, with few street-facing windows
- Strong horizontal lines with flat or low-pitched roofs and deep overhangs
- Lots of natural light with clerestory windows, sliding doors, and skylights

Wright's Usonian style was one that Joseph (Gerry) Dion, the architect of 510 S Garfield St, was very familiar with. A recent graduate of the University of Denver School of Architecture and Planning, Dion had studied Wright's work and had an opportunity to meet him during his visit to the school. And in 1951, Dion was hired by Edward Hawkins, who was developing the Arapahoe Acres subdivision in Englewood, to assist with designing houses for that development. The design of Arapahoe Acres was strongly influenced by the Usonian style and Dion was still working on Arapahoe Acres when he was hired to design 510 S Garfield St. Many of the Usonian style features found at 510 S Garfield can also be found in Contemporary style homes of the 1950s and early 1960s such as those found in Denver's Krisana Park and Harvey Park. These homes pulled many influences from the Usonian style such as sliding doors opening onto patios and open plan layouts. But those homes were mass produced developments without the level of craft and detail seen in Dion's design for 510 S Garfield.



D. It is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;

The McCallin-Kulish House is significant under criterion D as an outstanding example of the work of Joseph G. (Gerry) Dion. Born May 21, 1921, in Lowell, Massachusetts, Dion graduated high school in 1939 at the beginning of World War II. He joined the military, serving in the 10th Mountain Division and the Army Corps of Engineers. After the war, Dion came to Denver to study at the new University of Denver School of Architecture and Planning under noted local architect Eugene Sternberg. After graduating in 1951, Dion went to work for Edward Hawkins, the developer of Arapahoe Acres. Sternberg had originally worked with Hawkins on the development (which began in 1949) but after he fell out with Hawkins over the price of the homes, Hawkins brought in Sternberg's student Dion to assist. Dion worked on Arapahoe Acres from 1951 to 1957, when it was completed. Dion, under Hawkins' employ, designed approximately 35 (or about one quarter) of the homes in Arapahoe Acres, while Hawkins himself designed about 70 of the homes. The homes Hawkins and Dion designed followed Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian style. In 1998, Arapahoe Acres became the first post-World War II residential district to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1955-56, as Arapahoe Acres construction was nearing a close, Paul and Irene McCallin, residents of Arapahoe Acres, purchased a lot in the Stokes Place division of Denver just south of Cherry Creek. The McCallins hired Dion (who was also an Arapahoe Acres resident) to design a home for them at 510 South Garfield Street. In designing the home, Dion was free to design for a larger lot than typical in Arapahoe Acres. He introduced into the Usonian mix a gabled roof and vaulted ceiling design generally not used in his and Hawkins' Usonian homes in Arapahoe Acres, but sometimes used by Wright himself in his Usonian designs, and he included a redwood-paneled two-car garage. Dion otherwise adhered to Usonian orthodoxy, creating a unique, aesthetically pleasing, nature-blending home which distinctly contrasted, but did not clash, with the more conventional Ranch style homes then typical of the Stokes Place neighborhood. The McCallin-Kulish House (1956) is the only known extant residence by Dion in Denver.

Dion's residential career in Denver was relatively short since he focused on educational and institutional designs after forming a partnership with Stanley Morse and William Champion (also an alumnus of the University of Denver School of Architecture and Planning) in 1963. Dion's principal works during the 1960s included Everitt Jr. High School in Wheatridge, Goddard Middle School in Littleton, Dunston Jr. High School in Lakewood, the Houston Fine Arts Center for the University of Denver, and the Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist in Denver. In 1969, Dion moved back to his native Massachusetts, where he joined the firm of Perley F. Gilbert Assocs. Inc. in Lowell which also specialized in educational designs.

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

The McCallin-Kulish House is significant under Criterion H for the changing domestic ideals and lifestyles represented in its Usonian design. The Usonian Style, as conceived and practiced by Frank Lloyd Wright from the mid-1930s to the late 1950s, constituted not only a style of residential design but also, and integrally, an invitation to a particular way of residential living. Said Wright, "The architect should strive continually to simplify; the ensemble of the rooms should then be carefully considered that comfort and utility may go hand in hand with beauty." The Zimmermans, who hired Wright to design a house for

them in New Hampshire in the late 1940s described their house as “an integrated expression of our personal way of life rather than a coldly efficient building.” A Usonian residence meant living on a single floor, always open to natural surroundings, with an open plan living area, amidst simple and unembellished spaces. Post World War II modernist developers, most notably Joseph Eichler in California’s Bay Area and, in Colorado, the Wolff family in Denver’s Krisana Park neighborhood, took up this Usonian creed and sought to mass produce it. They met with some success, as middle-class homebuyers enjoying heightened prosperity in the 1950s became more discriminating about the types of places they wanted to make home. Eichler helped develop a desire for a new type of domestic environment through his didactic and evangelistic marketing (which the Wolffs would imitate in Denver). Eichler advertised his homes as offering “a new way of life” with “more usable living space, inside and out, than is offered in any other home” offering “rooms and patios as one living space” and nothing “spent for frills and gimmicks.” Eichler made Usonian modesty and simplicity in design, and openness to natural surroundings, a popular virtue. Wright, as he approached the end of his life, also struck a tone of evangelism about the Usonian home as a path to a better and more fulfilled life.

The Arapahoe Acres development also strongly promoted Wright’s vision of a Usonian lifestyle. Advertisements for Arapahoe Acres endorsed its “low-maintenance living” featuring all the comforts of a larger home in a more compact, affordable home; quality materials; radiant heating; and garden views. In 1951, Arapahoe Acres was recognized by the Southwest Research Institute as outstanding for “its good site plan, with consideration for orientation, privacy, and variety; general architectural character, particularly the dramatic use of interior space; and for its excellent value.” The McCallin family first experienced this Usonian way of life while residents of Arapahoe Acres and then hired Dion to create their own personalized Usonian home in the Stokes Place – Green Bowers neighborhood.



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 McCallin-Kulish House retains an exceptional degree of integrity, within minimal changes to both the exterior and interior. The property is still in the same location, and, although there have been some changes to the surrounding neighborhood with some of the mid-20th century homes replaced with new, larger homes, the neighborhood is still residential in nature, retaining integrity of setting. No significant alterations have been made to the home’s design or materials. The lack of interior alterations is noteworthy with an exceptional level of care given to maintaining the home’s historic character. Overall, the integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are excellent and the continued use as a residence helps retain a strong sense 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 period of significance extends from 1956 to 1970. It begins with the design and construction of the house in 1956, representing the house’s significance as an excellent example of the Usonian style and as a significant example of the work of

Joseph G. Dion. The period of significance extends to 1970, encompassing the period in which the simple midcentury modern lifestyle promoted by Usonian style houses, as well as the Contemporary style houses which adapted Wright's design for mass production, was at its height of popularity.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

THE NORTH 55 FEET OF LOT 11 AND THE SOUTH 20 FEET OF LOT 10, BLOCK 1, STOKES PLACE ADDITION,
CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER

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
 - Stokes Place-Green Bowers HOA
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
 - Historic Denver, Inc
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - History Colorado
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments

CPD has received one comment letter regarding the 510 S Garfield St application.

- Anne Wattenberg on 6/9/2025

Attachments Provided by CPD:

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