



To: Denver City Council
From: Kara Hahn, Landmark Planning & Regulatory Supervisor, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: May 28, 2026
RE: Landmark Designation for Harris-Cousins House at 3535 East 26th Ave. Pkwy.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the ordinance designation criteria and on the findings of the Landmark Preservation commission (LPC) that the application meets the criteria for designation of a structure, staff recommends approval of the application.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2026L-002
Address: 3535 East 26th Ave. Pkwy.
Zoning: E-SU-DX
Council: #9 - Darrell Watson
Owner: Dr. Renee Cousins-King (Renee C. King Rev Trust)
Applicant(s): Dr. Renne Cousins-King

Case Summary:

The applicant, and owner, submitted a Landmark Designation application for the Harris-Cousins House to CPD. 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 April 21, 2026. At the LPC public hearing, the commission voted unanimously (6-0-0) to recommend approval and forward to City Council. On May 5, 2026, the CPH Committee forwarded the case to the full City Council. At first reading, Denver City Council ordered the bill published and the public hearing is set for June 1, 2026.

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 for designation demonstrates that the structure meets the following criteria.

B. It has direct and substantial association with a recognized person or group of persons who had influence on society;

The property at 3535 East 26th Ave. Pkwy. is significant for its association with two prominent Black families in Denver – Nora and Frank Harris and Dorothy and Charles R. Cousins – who had substantial

influence on society. The residence was built for Nora and Frank Harris in 1958, with Frank designing and installing the landscape for the property. Frank Harris, who is the first recognized Black landscape designer in Denver, began work as a gardener in the mid-1920s and over four decades grew his business to become a sought-after horticulturalist and landscape design firm. In addition to the landscape at this property, he designed for numerous well-known commercial, institutional, and private entities in the area. Nora worked as claims department manager at the American Woodmen Association and served on the board of directors of the Denver NAACP chapter. Both Nora and Frank were influential members of the community through their work as a department manager at a well-known and respected Black organization and as Denver's first recognized Black landscape designer as well as their service work with the Cosmopolitan Club of Denver and the NAACP.

Similarly, Dorothy and Charles R. Cousins were active in the community through both business and volunteer work. While Charles was often more visible in the business world, Dorothy was his partner in many of those endeavors and according to their daughter Renee, "much of the success he attained in business would not have been possible without Dorothy's conscientious assistance." Once they purchased the house in 1966, it served as the primary office for this work. Charles established and ran multiple businesses in Five Points, including The 715 Club and the Cue and Cushion Billard Parlor, and after the death of his father managed the family's real estate business. Both Dorothy and Charles were active in the civic realm and were leaders in Denver's Black community; they were actively involved in the Owl Club of Denver, worked with students at Manual High School and Cole Junior High School, and with the American Red Cross, Friends of the Denver Public Library, and the Church of the Holy Redeemer.

The Harris and Cousins families are the only two families to have owned and resided in the house. Both built strong businesses and were respected leaders in Denver.



Front elevation of The 715 Club, photo ca. 1999

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

The Harris-Cousins House is an excellent example of a high-quality, custom-designed 1950s Ranch Style residence. The modern Ranch Style originated in California by 1940 and then spread across the country during the post-World War II building boom. Distinctive characteristics of the style seen in the Harris-Cousins House include its one-story height, low horizontal profile, brick construction, low-pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves, elongated asymmetrical façade with a minimal front porch, attached two-car garage, and large picture windows. On the interior, the house's Ranch Style includes the placement of its living room, dining room and kitchen so they flow from one to the other. Its basement recreation room is another amenity common to the style. The property is significant for embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Ranch Style of architecture as they were applied to this custom-designed house.



3535 East 26th Ave. Pkwy. front elevation, photo by Ron Sladek

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

The property at 3535 East 26th Ave. Pkwy. is a significant example of the work of two design and construction professionals who were active in the city throughout much of the 20th century. Frank Harris was recognized as one of Denver's most accomplished horticulturists and landscape designers. Notable as Denver's first recognized Black landscape designer, Harris was active from the 1920s to the 1960s. He designed and installed the landscaping on the property, which includes the lawns, trees,

shrubs and rock gardens, all of which remain today. As the design he chose for his residence, this is a significant example of his work.

Architect William J. Boorman, whose career spanned the period from the 1930s to the 1980s, became known in Denver as a designer of high-quality Ranch Style houses during the post-World War II era. By the early 1950s, he was designing large custom Ranch houses for individual clients along with smaller Ranches for developers. The Harris-Cousins House is an excellent example of the quality of Boorman's work, particularly as a custom-designed high-style Ranch residence. Based on available building records, Boorman had previously worked on custom designs in more exclusive, predominantly White neighborhoods such as Wellshire and Belcaro. The Harris-Cousins house is likely one of the first examples of his custom work in the recently desegregated Skyland neighborhoods, and as such, it is a significant example of his work.



3535 East 26th Ave. Pkwy. closeup of front elevation, photo by Ron Sladek

J. It is associated with social movements, institutions, or patterns of growth or change that contributed significantly to the culture of the neighborhood, community, city, state, or nation.

The Harris-Cousins House is directly associated with patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the culture of Denver during the post-World War II era, particularly in the area of Civil Rights advances and racial integration. From the late 1800s through the first half of the 20th century, Denver's Black community was constrained to the Five Points and Whittier neighborhoods due to the

institutionalized racism of redlining and discriminatory zoning and covenants. Because of the work of the Civil Rights movement, which led to legal cases that struck down the enforcement of restrictive covenants and the passage of state anti-discrimination legislation aimed at housing access, urban renewal, and school desegregation, North City Park’s racial character started to evolve in the 1950s and 1960s.

By the mid-1950s, when Nora and Frank Harris purchased the lots for their house, they were among the first Black families to do so. They purchased approximately eight lots to create a corner parcel that is the largest along East 26th Avenue Parkway across from the golf course. Nora and Frank also hired one of Denver’s pre-eminent architects to design a custom high-style Ranch residence. Additionally, they contracted with a master builder to construct the house, and Frank Harris designed the landscaping. As one of the first properties in the neighborhood purchased by a Black family it represents the pattern of change in the neighborhood. Over the following years, the neighborhood became increasingly occupied by Black families and institutions, reflecting the community’s evolution as it spread across the city into new areas.

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 property retains excellent integrity, with almost no exterior changes to the structures. The property remains in the same location across from the golf course, and the neighborhood is still residential, retaining both integrity of location and setting. The integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are excellent, with virtually no alterations. Only two families owned the property, and its continued use as a residence maintains a strong sense of feeling and association.

While Landmark Preservation does not have purview over the landscape, it too has good integrity. There have been minimal changes – removal of a tree and rose beds that became shaded and could no longer survive. These changes are fairly minor and do not impact the integrity of the landscape design.

Relates to a Historic Context and Period of Significance:

This designation application provides an exceptional historic context, with great detail on the development of the neighborhood, histories of the owners and their families, and background on the architect and builder. The context strongly relates to the four criteria for designation. The period of significance begins with the construction of the building in 1958 and ends in 1996 at the 30-year mark.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

Lots 15-21, inclusive, except the westerly 7.5’ to City, Block 12, Walnut Hill Addition, and Lot 2, Block 12, State Addition, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

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
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
 - Opportunity Corridor Coalition of United Residents
 - East Denver Residents Council
 - City Park Friends and Neighbors
 - Skyland Neighborhood Association
 - Denver Neighborhood Association, Inc.
 - Historic Denver, Inc
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - History Colorado
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments:

As of 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 28th, CPD has received no written public comment. Five community members and Historic Denver spoke in favor of the designation at the LPC public hearing.

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation