

To: Denver City Council
From: Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: August 11, 2022
RE: Landmark Designation Application for the Cadillac Lofts at 1090 Cherokee St.

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, CPD staff recommends approval of the application.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2021L-009
Address: 1090 N Cherokee St.
Zoning: D-GT
Council: Council District 10, Chris Hinds
Owner(s): Condominium building, multiple owners
Applicant(s): Dennis Humphries, Katherine Avery, and Douglas Marts

Case Summary:

The three applicants, who are both owners and residents of the building, submitted a Landmark Designation application for the Cadillac Lofts condominium building at 1090 Cherokee St. to CPD. This spring, Landmark Preservation staff, in conjunction with Historic Denver and History Colorado staff, held a virtual community meeting with the owners to provide information on designation and design review as well as to answer any questions owners may have.

Landmark staff also performed an investigation and found the application to be complete and to meet Denver Landmark designation criteria. As such, staff set the public hearing at the Landmark Preservation Commission for June 21, 2022. At the public hearing, the LPC voted (8-0-0) to recommend approval and forward the designation application to City Council.

On July 12, 2022, the Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee forwarded the case to the full City Council. At first reading, City Council ordered the bill published and the public hearing is set for August 15, 2022.

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 considered the structure's historic context

Criteria Evaluation:

The LPC and CPD staff found that the structure application 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 Cadillac Lofts, at 1090 Cherokee St., have direct association with the development of the city. This building is significant both for its role as a support facility to nearby Automobile Row beginning in the 1920s and for its reuse as the first new residential building in the redevelopment of Golden Triangle in the 1980s.

Coinciding with the rising popularity of the car, the stretches of Broadway and Lincoln between 14th Ave. and Speer Blvd. served as the focal point of Denver's automobile industry. Often the surrounding streets contained auto related businesses and services buildings, with the area referred to as Gasoline Alley or Automobile Row. The auto industry employed at least 1,500 workers in Denver by the end of 1910.

This building was originally associated with Cadillac, a major company in the early days of the automobile that remains a household name today. It was the service building constructed to compliment the R.R. Hall's Cadillac dealership that was located at 1376 Broadway (no longer extant). The 1921 service building was state-of-the-art and offered a comprehensive service menu for Cadillac customers, including a salesroom and departments for quick service, repairs, painting, trimming, and washing. Customers could enter through electric drive-in doors (via a doorman), while another entrance allowed access by foot, and an electric automatic elevator provided customer access to all floors. Separate from these, there was a large elevator in the center of the building that was dedicated to cars being repaired that needed to be test driven and exit the building without going through the salesroom or in sight of the customers.

The building was also intended to provide good working conditions for employees. It had a club room, lunchroom with cafeteria style meals, and a library with technical books for employees. Every work stall had an outside exhaust pipe so that gas fumes from the engines would not fill the interior, and some of these are still visible today on the building's exterior. And, an internal phone system, gravity tubes, and speaking tubes connected various departments. As a support building, it reflects the important component of the numerous service businesses that accompanied and fueled the growth and development of Denver's automobile industry along Gasoline Alley.

Additionally, the property is significant as the first new residential development in the Golden Triangle in the 1980s. Founded in 1972 by Mickey Zeppelin, Zeppelin Development has been instrumental in helping transform Denver neighborhoods. Zeppelin worked with the area to assemble a community organization and a neighborhood plan. He acquired the building, which had been vacant for decades, and rehabilitated it into residential lofts while honoring its original design and embracing its external character defining features. Cadillac Lofts became a catalyst in jump-starting investment and revitalization of the once more vibrant neighborhood. The property remains in its residential use today.



Cadillac Service Building (1981)
(Source: DPL Digital Collections, Z-10662)

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

The structure at 1090 Cherokee St. is an example of Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Chicago style architecture. The 1921 three-story reinforced concrete, steel, and brick building embraces a style that was developed between 1879 and 1910. Distinguishing features of the style include the use of a steel-frame, masonry cladding, and little ornamental detail, and which are all seen in this building.

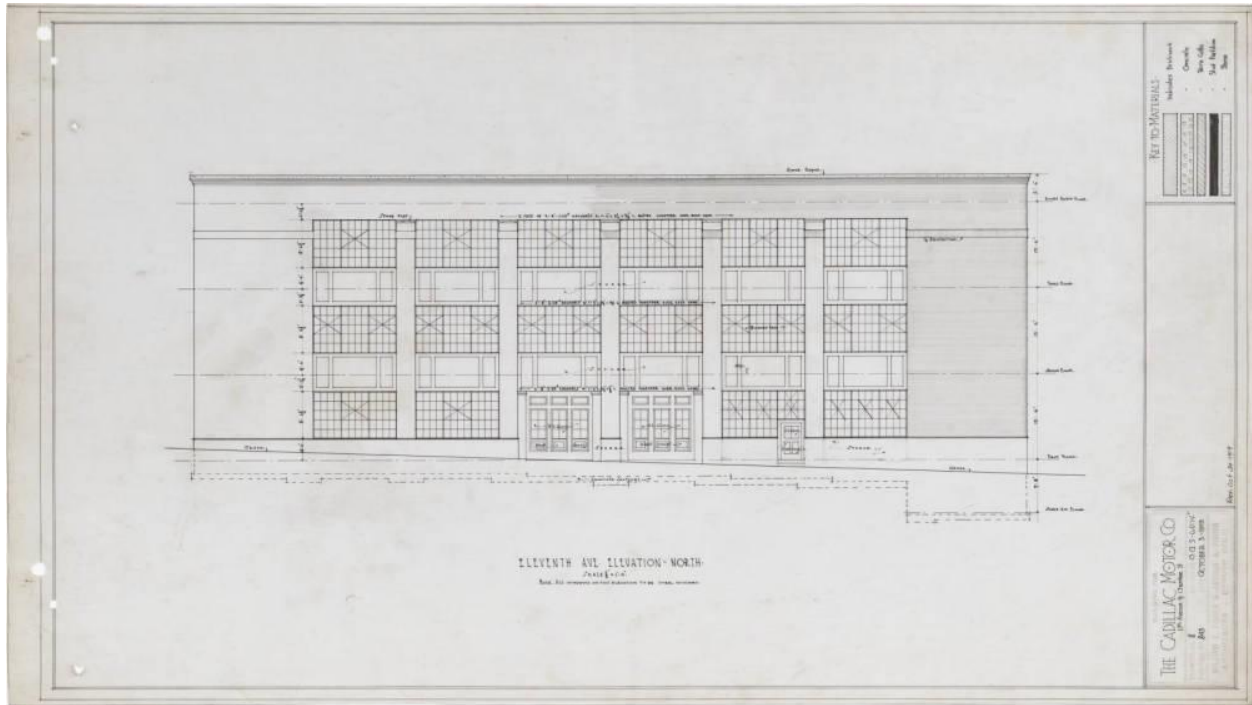
Despite its relationship to more elaborate automobile dealerships, specifically along Broadway, the building is comparatively utilitarian in appearance with its design drawing from its function. The building was not intended to sell Cadillacs, but rather to service them while upholding a certain expectation about what it meant to own one. To that end, the building was architect-designed in a restrained style that had an architectural refinement and upheld the Cadillac standard.



Photo of north and west elevations of Cadillac Service Building (ca 1920 – 1930)
(Source: DPL Digital Collections, X-23849)

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

The building is a significant example of the work of the prominent Denver architecture firm of Fisher & Fisher. During the 1920s, their firm became one of the largest in the Rocky Mountain region. They were responsible for the design of numerous buildings, including residences, churches, hospitals, and municipal properties that varied greatly in style and scale. Despite the diversity of their portfolio, none of Fisher & Fisher's commissions are known to be similar to this automobile-related property. Their identified body of work and archival information do not include examples of any other warehouse or support buildings, making this an uncommon style for the firm. The majority of their commercial designs were for professional office buildings and additions, and much of their work was comparatively high style. The Cadillac Lofts is a strong example of a building adhering to Louis Sullivan's maxim, "form ever follows function," which essentially means that the shape of a building or object should primarily relate to its intended function or purpose. As the only known warehouse or service building designed by Fisher & Fisher this is a significant example of their work.



"Eleventh Ave. elevation North building for the Cadillac Motor Co", October 1919
(Source: DPL Digital Collections, Z-13227)

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 aspects that, in various combinations, define integrity are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. It remains at the location where it was originally constructed. The property retains integrity of design, as the form and plan of the property have not been altered, and many of the exterior elements and features designed by Fisher & Fisher remain intact. Overall, the property retains integrity of materials and workmanship as features dating from the earliest years of the period of significance remain intact. There are few notable impacts to materials including the reconfiguration of the opening at the northwest corner and infill of one of the larger former garage door openings on the north side, both of which were changed prior to 1981 and Zeppelin’s redevelopment a few years later based on historic photographs. As the setting, which consists of large-scale multi-family properties and commercial buildings, has changed significantly since the building was first constructed and the redevelopment in the 1980s, the integrity of setting is not as strong. Since the property was originally built as a service center for a nearby Cadillac dealership and was converted into condominiums in the 1980s, it lacks integrity of association with the earlier history, but retains association as a residential building. The integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association support the property’s integrity of feeling.



Photo of north and west elevations of Cadillac Lofts (2021)

Relates to a Historic Context and Period of Significance:

The Golden Triangle area initially slowly developed in the 1880s and 1890s as a primarily residential neighborhood, but began transforming to more commercial and auto-related in the 1920s and 1930s. Post-War the area became less-desirable and eventually in the 1980s began to a redevelopment. This building is associated with the change to automobile culture in the early twentieth century and the redevelopment of the neighborhood sixty years later. The period of significance (1920 - 1985) reflects the years that the property was constructed and used as an auto service building and extends through its change of use to a residential structure.

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below:

LOT 23, EXCEPT THE SOUTH 16.6 FEET THEROF, LOTS 24, 25 AND 26, BLOCK C. SOUTH SUBDIVISION OF EVANS ADDITION TO DENVER, CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER, STATE OF COLORADO WITH AN EASEMENT (AS GRANTED TO THE DENVER WHOLESALE FLORIST COMPANY BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER BY DOCUMENT RECORDED JANUARY 16, 1952 AS AUTHORIZED BY ORDINANCE NO.266, SERIES OF 1951, AT RECEPTION NO. 49655)

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)
 - Golden Triangle Creative District (DBA CNDC)
 - Historic Denver
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - State Historic Preservation Office
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments:

As of Thursday, August 11, 2022, CPD has received two public comments. At the LPC public hearing, two members of the public spoke in support of the designation application.

Attachments Provided by CPD:

- Designation Application
- Map of structure proposed for preservation