

BY AUTHORITY

ORDINANCE NO. _____
SERIES OF 2018

COUNCIL BILL NO. CB18-1072
COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE:
Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure

A BILL

For an ordinance designating the Vassar School Bungalows Historic District as a district for preservation.

WHEREAS, pursuant to D.R.M.C. Section 30-4, the Landmark Preservation Commission has transmitted to the Council a proposed designation of a district for preservation; and

WHEREAS, based upon the August 21, 2018 Landmark Preservation Commission recommendation, the staff report, and other evidence received at the hearing before City Council on October 22, 2018, the Vassar School Bungalows Historic District meets the criteria for designation as a district for preservation as set out in D.R.M.C. Section 30-3 by maintaining its historical and physical integrity, and meeting criteria in the following three categories:

(1) History.

a. Having a direct association with the historical development of the city, state or nation;

Situated one block east of South Broadway in the Rosedale neighborhood, the Vassar School Bungalows Historic District is directly associated with the growth of south Denver in the pre-Great Depression era. The development of the Vassar School bungalows between 1925 and 1926 was influenced by the overall growth trends occurring along the historic transportation route of South Broadway. Several businesses and major companies operated along the route at the time the bungalows were constructed, making nearby residential developments attractive to workers/residents.

Uniquely, the bungalows are directly tied to the former Vassar School that occupied the six parcels upon which the houses are now located. When the school was built in 1892, it and the surrounding neighborhood were part of the Town of South Denver, an area annexed by the city of Denver two years later. Vassar School served children from the Rosedale and Overland neighborhoods from kindergarten through eighth grade. In 1924, the larger, more modern Rosedale School was built nearby to accommodate the increased population in the neighborhood and the growing enrollment at Vassar School and its sister Milton School. The school district determined that Vassar School was no longer needed, and in December 1924, the property was purchased by Albert L. Franz.

1 Franz was an Ohio native whose occupation at the time was building contractor. He applied for a
2 permit to demolish the school on February 16, 1925, and ten days later filed six identical building
3 permits for one-story brick bungalows with full basements and garages. Franz worked with the
4 existing topography, facing the houses south like the former Vassar School, and re-used materials
5 from the school in the construction of the Spanish Revival houses and their lots.

6 Franz's development illustrates the growth trends of south Denver along the South Broadway
7 corridor during the pre-Great Depression era.

8 (2) Architecture.

9 *a. Embodying distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type;*

10 The Vassar School Bungalows Historic District exhibits a high level of physical integrity that
11 successfully conveys the distinguishing characteristics of the Spanish Revival architectural style.
12 The six primary structures are contributing to the district and were constructed during the period of
13 significance from 1925 to 1926.

14 There are minor differences between the houses, but the Spanish Revival elements are easily
15 recognizable. Such features include stucco-over-brick construction, parapets with brick coping,
16 small shed roofs over windows and entryways, red clay barrel tiles, arches beneath porch roofs, and
17 decorative downspouts. Each of the houses has a flat roof, a feature found in only around 10 percent
18 of this style in the country overall. Additionally, there is evidence of vigas on some of the houses.

19 In an innovative move, materials from the former Vassar School were incorporated into the
20 properties. Landscape features such as the sandstone wall and flagstone sidewalk that run along
21 the west, south, and east property lines were left intact and tie in with the design of the lots, giving
22 the district a cohesive appearance. Additionally, sandstone from the school building and other
23 masonry materials are present in the building foundations.

24 (3) Geography.

25 *b. Promoting understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of*
26 *distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;*

27 The Vassar School Bungalows Historic District promotes the understanding and appreciation of the
28 urban environment by means of its distinctive physical characteristics and rarity due to its unique,

1 uniform grouping of Spanish Revival Style architecture and direct association with the design and
2 layout of the former Vassar School.

3 Although small, the historic district is a distinctive grouping of Spanish Revival style architecture
4 unlike surrounding properties. The occasional house built before 1920 can be found in the
5 neighborhood, and two closer examples are a two-story brick Cottage and a two-story brick
6 Foursquare. Most nearby residential properties are Craftsman-style bungalows built during the
7 1920s, modest Minimal Traditional houses built after World War II, or newly constructed houses that
8 are noticeably larger in scale and do not exhibit any specific style.

9 Like the Vassar School, the six houses present a uniform, symmetrical appearance. Rather than
10 divide the property into west- and east-facing parcels like the rest of the surrounding blocks, the
11 developer embraced the unique challenge presented by the remnants of the school and its setting
12 and maintained the south-facing placement of the school with the bungalows. The three
13 westernmost properties are a mirror image of the three easternmost properties in plot size, location
14 of house on each plot, and spacing between them. When facing the two central properties, one can
15 detect the entrance to the school in the space between.

16 The preservation and re-use of materials from the former school that were incorporated into the
17 construction of the houses lends an additional degree of distinctiveness and rarity. A low sandstone
18 wall with a simple metal railing attached at the top with a series of Roman numerals etched into the
19 horizontal sections surrounds the west, south, and east sides of the district, likely denoting the school
20 property boundary. The sunken backyard of the property at 141 East Vassar Avenue was reportedly
21 the location of the playground. Additionally, the original flagstone sidewalk remains around most of
22 the properties.

23 The Vassar School Bungalows are a physically distinctive and rare piece of Denver’s urban
24 environment.

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF**
26 **DENVER:**

27 **Section 1.** That based upon the findings referenced above, and the evidence received at the
28 public hearings, certain property, herein called the Vassar School Bungalows Historic District, and
29 legally described as follows, together with all improvements situated and located thereon, be and the
30 same is hereby designated as a district for preservation:

1 **Vassar School Bungalows Historic District**
2 **Legal Boundary**

3 Plots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Vassar Resubdivision of part of Block 2,
4 Broadway Highlands,
5 City and County of Denver,
6 State of Colorado
7 Together with the adjoining public rights-of-way but only to the centerline thereof.

8 **Section 2.** The Landmark Preservation Commission shall utilize the Design Guidelines for
9 Denver Landmark Structures & Districts in conducting design review for projects in the District. The
10 Commission may adopt further district-specific guidelines utilizing the application for landmark
11 district status, the Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts and Chapter 30,
12 Denver Revised Municipal Code (Landmark Preservation) in formulating said district-specific
13 guidelines. Such district-specific guidelines must be adopted in open session of the Commission by
14 an affirmative vote of five members of the Commission.

15 **Section 3.** The effect of this designation may enhance the value of the property and of the
16 structure, but may delay or require denial of building permits found unacceptable by the Landmark
17 Preservation Commission under the criteria contained in the Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark
18 Structures & Districts and Section 30-6 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code.

19 **Section 4.** The period of significance for the District is established as being from 1925-1926.

20 **Section 5.** The primary structures listed below shall be considered contributing structures to
21 the District:

22 105, 115, 119, 127, 135, and 141 East Vassar Avenue.

23 **Section 6.** This ordinance shall be recorded among the records of the Clerk and Recorder of
24 the City and County of Denver.

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1 COMMITTEE APPROVAL DATE: October 2, 2018.

2 MAYOR-COUNCIL DATE: October 9, 2018.

3 PASSED BY THE COUNCIL _____ October 22, 2018

4 _____ - PRESIDENT

5 APPROVED: _____ - MAYOR _____

6 ATTEST: _____ - CLERK AND RECORDER,
7 EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE
8 CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER

9 NOTICE PUBLISHED IN THE DAILY JOURNAL: _____; _____

10 PREPARED BY: Adam C. Hernandez, Assistant City Attorney DATE: October 11, 2018

11 Pursuant to section 13-12, D.R.M.C., this proposed ordinance has been reviewed by the office of
12 the City Attorney. We find no irregularity as to form, and have no legal objection to the proposed
13 ordinance. The proposed ordinance is not submitted to the City Council for approval pursuant to
14 §3.2.6 of the Charter.

15
16 Kristin M. Bronson, Denver City Attorney

17 BY: *Kristin J. Crawford*, Assistant City Attorney DATE: Oct 10, 2018
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