BY AUTHORITY

ORDINANCE NO. _____ COUNCIL BILL NO. CB23-0536

SERIES OF 2023 COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE:

Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure

A BILL

For an ordinance designating the La Raza Park Historic District as a district for preservation.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 30-4, Denver Revised Municipal Code, the Landmark Preservation Commission has transmitted to City Council a proposed designation of a structure for preservation; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board has recommended approval of the same; and

WHEREAS, based upon evidence received by the Landmark Preservation Commission at a hearing on May 2, 2023, the staff report, and evidence received at the hearing before City Council on June 26, 2023, the La Raza Park Historic District ("District") meets the criteria for designation as a district for preservation as set out in Section 30-3, Denver Revised Municipal Code, as amended, by maintaining its integrity; being more than 30 years old and having exceptional significance; and meeting the criteria in the following four categories from Section 30-3(3):

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

The District has a direct association with historical events and the historical development of northwest Denver. In 1906 the city acquired the land and turned the site into a playground. The acquisition of dedicated parks and parkland in urban environments was a cornerstone of the urban planning philosophy known as the "City Beautiful Movement". The playground in the park was designed to teach immigrant children American values and social mores, as part of the wider Progressive Movement which influenced the design of cities across America. In 1931, the name of the park was changed to Columbus Park to honor the Italian residents who called the area home.

The District continued to serve as a focal point for the community, even as the demographics of the surrounding area changed, with the Latino population steadily growing between 1945 and 1990. In Denver, the District served as an important location for the nascent Chicano Movement (El Movimiento), to advocate for civil rights causes. It was also where El Movimiento promoted a distinctly Chicano culture by enjoying public space, practicing the arts, religion, and its traditions. The community solidified control of La Raza Park in 1970.

In 1981, police harassment of the Latino community in the area reached a boiling point. On June 28, 1981, the community gathered in La Raza Park to 'open' the park for the summer. An estimated 400 - 800 people, including families with small children, gathered in the park that day for festivities. Around 2 pm, the Denver Police shut down the event. As families slowly dispersed from the park, police moved in, armed with batons and tear gas. In 1984, three years after the police attack at the park, the City of Denver closed La Raza Pool, and filled it in.

In the late 1980s, Denver Parks and Recreation engaged residents to design a new community space for the park. The Kiosko and Plaza de la Raza were dedicated on May 5, 1990. La Raza Park became a different kind of gathering place for the Latino community, hosting more large-scale, organized events rather than being an area for informal events and gathering. Ceremonial danza, Dia de los Muertos memorials, and La Raza Park Day illustrate the contemporary events that connect the community to their culture.

f. Representing an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood, community, or contemporary city, due to its prominent location or physical characteristics;

The District, occupying a full city block between Osage and Navajo Street, and West 38th and 39th Avenue, is an established and familiar feature of the Sunnyside and Highland neighborhoods. It is the second largest park in the Sunnyside neighborhood. The prominent Kiosko is visible from 38th Avenue – a major thoroughfare of the area. This is the only Kiosko in the City of Denver and its unique physical characteristics and cultural importance make it an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood and the contemporary city.

i. Being a physical attribute of a neighborhood, community, or the city that is a source of pride or cultural understanding;

The District is a physical attribute of the neighborhood and Denver's Latino/Chicano community that serves as a source of pride and cultural understanding. The park was often the site of Chicano Movement actions – including the 1969/1970 take over or liberation of the park. By hiring local community members and activists to staff the pool, the community created a safe space for children, young adults, and elders. This era in the park's history was marked by a decrease in gang violence. The role the park played as a 'liberated' area, under community control is a source of pride for the community today, as it was in the 1970s.

La Raza Park's continued role as a space for cultural events allows the Chicano/Latino community to connect to their culture, and invites the wider Denver community to understand Chicano/Latino cultural practices.

The renaming of the park in 2020 serves as a point of pride for the Chicano/Latino community, as it had been colloquially known as La Raza Park for over 50 years before its official renaming. Removing the name of Columbus – a man associated with the colonization and genocide of indigenous peoples in the Americas – from the park, represents a reclaiming of the land by indigenous voices. The Kiosko, murals, and sculpture in the park all celebrate indigenous arts and culture, a source of pride for the community.

j. Being 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 District is associated with El Movimiento, a civil rights movement from the 1960s that contributed significantly to the culture of the area, in addition to Colorado and the nation as a whole. The Chicano movement encouraged the embrace of a distinctly Chicano identity, in opposition to the ideal of assimilation into wider American culture. While the Chicano Movement had distinct historic events (see above, Criterion A), it had a tremendous influence on the culture of the area. La Raza Park served as a site of direct action through marches and protests, but it also served as an incubator for Chicano and Latino culture.

The District was also home to early murals by local Chicano artists that represented Chicano culture as a unique artistic practice, a visual retelling of important cultural beliefs and traditions, and a visual claiming of the park. Muralist David Ocelotl Garcia, who designed and painted El Viaje within the Kiosko in 2016, continued this practice. The District also serves as the center of many contemporary cultural activities, such as the ceremonial danza, Dia de Los Muertos event, and La Raza Park Day. This culminated with the renaming to La Raza Park and the 2021 rededication of the park with installation of Emanuel Martinez's La Raza Unida sculpture.

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

Section 1. That based upon the analysis referenced above, and the evidence received at the public hearings, certain property, herein called the La Raza Park Historic District ("District"), and legally described as follows, together with all improvements situated and located thereon, be and the same is hereby designated as a district for preservation:

Lots 1-30, inclusive, and the vacated alley,

Block 23,

Downing's addition to North Denver,

City and County of Denver,

State of Colorado.

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

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

Section 4. The period of significance for the District is established as being prior to and including 2021.

Section 5. The Kiosko, Plaza del Raza, and the La Raza Unida sculpture are contributing structures to the District.

Section 6. This ordinance will be recorded among the records of the Clerk and Recorder of the City and County of Denver.

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COMMITTEE APPROVAL DATE: May 9, 2023

MAYOR-COUNCIL DATE: May 16, 2023

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL: _____

_____ - PRESIDENT

APPROVED: _____ - MAYOR _____

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

NOTICE PUBLISHED IN THE DAILY JOURNAL: _____; _____

PREPARED BY: Adam C. Hernandez, Assistant City Attorney DATE: May 18, 2023

Pursuant to section 13-9, D.R.M.C., this proposed ordinance has been reviewed by the office of the City Attorney. We find no irregularity as to form and have no legal objection to the proposed ordinance. The proposed ordinance is not submitted to the City Council for approval pursuant to §3.2.6 of the Charter.

Kerry Tipper, Denver City Attorney

BY: _____, Assistant City Attorney DATE: _____