

To: Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee
From: Abigail Christman, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)
Date: March 14, 2024
RE: Landmark Designation for the Hegner/Lorie House

Staff Recommendation:

Based on ordinance designation criteria and on the recommendations of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) and Denver Planning Board, staff recommends forwarding the application to the full council.

Request to Designate a Structure:

Application: #2024L-001
Address: 2323 E Dakota Ave.
Zoning: U-SU-C
Council: District #6: Paul Kashmann
Owner: Thomas J. Amy and Carol B. Amy
Applicant(s): Councilmember Paul Kashmann for Thomas J. Amy and Carol B. Amy

Case Summary:

The owners submitted a Landmark Designation application for 2323 E. Dakota Avenue to CPD. The application was prepared by Thomas H. Simmons and R. Laurie Simmons, Front Range Research Associates, Inc., for the owners. 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 February 20, 2024. The LPC unanimously recommends approval (5-0-0).

2323 E. Dakota Ave. was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 31, 2023, as the Casper Forman and Nancy Lee Hegner House. The criteria for designation in the National Register of Historic Places are different than the criteria for designation as a Denver Landmark. The National Register application focused on the architectural significance of the property, and it was designated under Criterion C for Architecture with a period of significance of 1936-1949, encompassing the construction of the house in 1936 to the construction of the north addition in 1949. For the Landmark application, the areas and period of significance were expanded to include the contributions of Barry Lorie, who lived at 2323 E. Dakota Ave. from 1965-1985.

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: B, C, D and G. Criteria C, D, and G are associated with the construction and design of the house, recognizing the significance of the architect Casper Hegner and his early International Style design. Criteria B is associated with Barry Lorrie, a later owner/resident, who played a significant role in the entertainment industry. Hegner is associated with 2323 E. Dakota Ave from 1936-1962 and Lorrie is associated with 2323 E. Dakota Ave. from 1965-1985.

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

2323 E. Dakota Ave. is significant under Criteria B for its association with actor, producer, and public relations professional Barry Lorrie who lived here from 1965-1985. Lorrie was born in 1927 in Denver, where he attended the Denver Hebrew School and East High School and was a member of the Beth HaMedrosh Hagodol (B.M.H.) Synagogue, an Orthodox Jewish congregation. As a youth, Lorrie displayed an interest in dramatic readings and narration, and by 1950 he was scheduling appearances for performing arts groups, as well as performing himself. In association with Robert F. Lotito, Lorrie established a Denver public relations firm active from the 1950s to mid-1970s. *Boxoffice* reported in 1976 that the “company specialized in servicing such accounts as motion picture companies, theatrical productions, financial firms and a variety of leisure-time enterprises.”

After handling special events nationally for Columbia Pictures in the 1960s-early 1970s, Lorrie became a significant player in the Hollywood film production industry, serving in senior executive-level publicity and marketing positions for such major film studios as Columbia, Fox, Universal, MGM, and Disney. Lorrie orchestrated film premieres, traveled to attend premieres, and frequently served as a spokesman for studios. Lorrie’s observations on how films were faring appeared in a variety of newspapers across the nation. He was a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Lorrie and his wife, Elinor T. “Bubbles” Lorrie, owned and lived at 2323 E. Dakota Ave. from 1965 through 1985. Online city directories show listings for Lorrie in Venice, California, starting in 1987, but not before that date. He retired from film production in 1993 and died in 2012. Reporting his death, the *Hollywood Reporter* observed that Lorrie was responsible for “shepherding more than 200 films during his career, including *Funny Lady*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Thelma & Louise*, *The Russia House*, *A Fish Called Wanda*, *Willow*, and *Rocky V*.”

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

2323 E. Dakota Ave. is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the earliest example of an International-style residence in Denver (and possibly in the state of Colorado). Designed by architect Casper Forman Hegner for his family home, the house is an exemplary example of the International Style. Key features include the residence’s horizontality, asymmetry, ribbon windows, cubist conception of building volumes, rectilinear forms, parapets, lack of ornamentation, and flat roof.

Originating at the Bauhaus School in Germany, the International Style was brought to the United States in the early 1930s by architects emigrating to escape political chaos in Europe. These architects brought experience with architecture designed to exploit modern materials and technology. Their designs

emphasized building functionalism and the elimination of decorative features. The International Style was introduced to the United States through the Museum of Modern Art's 1932 International Exhibition of Modern Architecture (from which the style gets its name). The exhibit laid out the key tenets of the style: regularity and balance without symmetry; aversion to applied ornament, stressing composition instead; and volume rather than mass with thin surface materials able to give buildings a lighter appearance. Initially an Avant Garde style, the majority of International Style residences from the 1930s were built in the Northeast or in California.

The influence of the International Style can be found in other Denver residences from the 1930s, but there are few pure expressions of the 1930s International Style in Denver (or Colorado). Denver examples were often less stark, incorporating some elements of the Streamline Moderne Style, such as circular volumes and curving corners. The significance of 2323 E. Dakota Ave. was recognized by local and national publications. *The Rocky Mountain News* in September 1936 included photographs of the exterior and interior of the house, describing it as "A Very Modern and Charming Denver Residence." The April 1937 issue of *Architectural Form* published drawings and photographs of the Hegner House, featuring it as one of "Fifty New Houses", from around the country. It was the only design included from Colorado or surrounding Rocky Mountain states, with most designs located on the East and West Coasts. Architectural critic Douglas Haskell noted the house in a May 1937 *Architectural Record* article on his road trip across the United States.

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

2323 E. Dakota Ave. meets Criterion D as a significant examples of the work of Denver architect Casper Forman Hegner. It is both Hegner's earliest Denver work and the most intact example of his early International-style dwellings. Hegner (1909-1991) was born in Ohio and came with his parents to Denver in 1913. He attended Princeton University, receiving a BA (1930) and a MFAA in (1933), as well as a BFA from Yale (1932). In 1931 he traveled to Europe and studied at the summer program of the American School of Fine Arts (Fontainebleau, France). He also visited family in Germany and likely gained exposure to recent trends in design, later adapting features he saw there to his Denver home and other designs.

Following service in World War II, Hegner returned to Denver to practice architecture, working in association with Dudley T. Smith and Thomas Moore (Smith, Hegner, and Moore and, later, Smith and Hegner). Hegner was a strong proponent of the International style, as reflected in the 1949 University of Denver Classroom Building (later City and County of Denver Annex I), designed in collaboration with other architects, and several Denver Public Schools buildings, representing the Smith and Hegner partnership.

Hegner was active in the Denver architectural community, including serving as President of the Colorado chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), a member of the Denver Board of Adjustment, and as Chair of a national urban development conference held in Denver in 1959. In 1962, Hegner was selected to head the Veterans Administration (VA) architectural-structural service and moved to Washington, D.C. In this role he supervised a \$10-15 million program for VA hospital construction and renovation. In 1965, he was appointed commissioner of public buildings for the General Services Administration (GSA), directing the work of the Public Buildings Service.

G. It promotes understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity.

2323 E. Dakota Ave. qualifies under criteria G as a rare, early example of the International Style in Denver (as well as Colorado). There are few examples of early International-style residences in the state, as revealed by a History Colorado (HC) architectural database file search. Two other 1930s Denver International-style examples have modifications: the Chapman and Mary H. Young, Jr. House (1937) by Hegner and the Alexander and Sadie Stoddard House (1936) by Lester C. Jones. The only International-style residence presently listed in the National Register in Colorado is the post-World War II Lloyd M. Joshel House (NRIS.95001456) in Denver, completed in 1951.

The significance of this residence as a rare example of 1930s Modernism in Denver has been widely acknowledged in the architectural community. For a 2001 *Rocky Mountain News* feature “Exploring Colorado’s Five Best Digs We Asked Five,” architect Steven Chucovich selected 2323 E. Dakota Avenue: “Basically this house was done at a time when modern architecture had not taken hold in this country,” Chucovich says. “This is a real mature example sitting in the middle of Denver. . . . It has a good balance of light. It is very simply done, very restrained at a time when Jacques Benedict was running around doing Italianate villas. There was a lot of pressure then like there is today to do historical kinds of fantasies.” A *Rocky Mountain News* article on architectural styles from 2009 used 2323 E. Dakota as its example of the International Style: “The Casper Hegner house, in the 2300 block of East Dakota Avenue, is as sleek as a speeding train, with ribbon windows on the front facade and no ornamentation.” A *5280 Magazine* feature, “Mid-Mod Makes a Comeback,” also acknowledges Hegner’s significance: “Midcentury modern architecture flourished from 1945 to 1975—but Denver was ahead of the trend. The Mile High City got its first mid-mod home in 1935, when Casper Hegner, fresh from studying in Europe, built his International House in Wash Park.”



2323 E. Dakota Ave. c.1936-1937

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 house exhibits few changes since its 1936 original construction and completion of the 1949 addition (also designed by Hegner). The current landscaping supports the house design and broadly retains elements of the 1936 landscape plan developed by Irvin J. McCrary. The dwelling’s design displays a high level of integrity, reflecting the character defining features of the early International style: lack of ornamentation, horizontality, flat roof, bands of windows, asymmetrical composition, and cubist composition. The original footprint is modified only by a 1949 rear addition by the same architect. The restored stucco and brick material composing the walls are intact; the brick was originally unpainted, but Casper Hegner painted all of the brick at the time of the 1949 addition because he was unable to match the color of the new brick with the original brick. The integrity of workmanship is evidenced principally in the smooth stucco walls, custom light fixtures, careful brickwork, and bands of steel casement windows. As befits an International-style house, there is little ornamentation. The house continues its association as a single family residence. The Hegners lived here until 1962, and the current owners have resided here more than three decades. The Hegner House retains a very high level of integrity of feeling, standing on a large, landscaped corner lot, set back from adjoining streets, with a view of the Rocky Mountains available from its rooftop terrace.



2323 E. Dakota Ave. c.2022

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 property is directly related to the development of Modern architectural styles in Denver as an early example of the International Style designed by locally prominent architect Casper Hegner. 2323 E. Dakota Ave. provided a model for the International Style in Colorado. The property is also related to the local and national development of the entertainment industry through its association with publicist and producer Barry Lorie.

The period of significance for the property is 1936-1985. This period of significance includes the original construction of the house (1935-36) and its 1949 addition (also designed by Hegner) as well as his continued residence at 2323 E. Dakota Ave until 1962. The period of significance has been extended to 1985 to encompass the ownership and occupation by publicist and producer Barry Lorie (1965-85).

Boundary:

The designation application proposes to designate the legal description below: Lots 25, 26, 27 and 28, Block 1, Broadway Heights Second Filing, 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
 - Washington Park East Neighborhood Association

- Polo Club Place Homeowners Association
 - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
 - Strong Denver
 - Historic Denver, Inc
 - Colorado Preservation, Inc
 - History Colorado
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

Public Comments:

As of 11:00am March 14, 2024, CPD has received 1 public comment letter in support of the application.

Attachments Provided by CPD:

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