

Highland United Neighbors, Inc.

P.O. Box 11235, Denver, Colorado 80211

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Authorized by the Board of Directors to represent HUNI in all zoning and planning matters.

June 23, 2017

Denver City Council
City and County of Denver
City and County Building
1437 Bannock Street, Room 451
Denver, CO 80202

Re: 1940-46 West 33rd Avenue
Council Bill No. 17-0613
Landmark Boundary Amendment

Dear Council Members:

The Planning and Community Development (PCD) Committee of Highland United Neighbors, Inc. (HUNI), met with the Applicant previously and voted 6-0 on June 13, 2017, to urge City Council to reject this application to reduce the size of the Landmark Boundary for 1940-46 West 33rd Avenue.

The PCD Committee is authorized by the HUNI Board of Directors to represent HUNI in all zoning, land use, and planning matters, including Landmark issues. Membership in HUNI is open to all residents and businesses in the Highland Neighborhood, which is bounded by West 38th Avenue, Federal Boulevard, Speer Boulevard, and Interstate 25. There are approximately 7000 households within the HUNI boundaries and roughly 300 paying members of HUNI. 3-6 mailings go out per year to these households and email newsletters are sent out twice a month to those who have opted in. These emails and many of the mailings contain information regarding notices of meetings with detailed agendas.

Our committee did not come to this conclusion quickly or easily. Rather, we looked around our beloved Highland Neighborhood and recognized what has happened to Landmark properties and Landmark-eligible properties when the Landmark Preservation Commission and Highland United Neighbors, Inc., do not have the opportunity to review the design of new structures adjacent to these important properties. Without the design review dialogue that happens when landmarked properties come before the LPC, new buildings often show little regard for the historic buildings that are so important to the fabric of early Denver neighborhoods. This is not a reaction to the construction of new buildings on adjacent parcels, but to the construction of new structures on the larger lots where historic structures reside. In the cases described below, larger historic sites have been subdivided to allow for new construction.

Here are three examples of this situation that have occurred in Highland within the past 2 to 3 years:

1. 3225 Quivas Street—this home of a mystic was landmarked by the property owner. Without any notice to neighbors or the local RNO, permits were issued to allow construction of a 4-story multi-family structure immediately behind the house, forever altering the context of the landmark and reducing the historic significance of the home.
2. 3744 Navajo Street—this important home built by an Italian builder for an Italian immigrant in the midst of North Denver’s Little Italy was slated for demolition. Because it was eligible for landmarking, HUNI and Councilman Espinoza were able to convince the developer to save the house in exchange for NOT landmarking the property. The compromise allowed for two new homes and an ADU to be added to the property. Without LPC and Neighborhood design review, the resulting new houses clash with the historic one, and the original brick and stone was painted for the first time, something that would not have been allowed by the LPC.
3. 3505 Navajo Street—the Dr. Daniel Lucy home and office was also threatened with demolition. An extraordinary structure on a corner lot with gardens surrounding it, this jewel was saved by similar means, an agreement to avoid landmarking in exchange for not demolishing the house. Unbeknownst to the neighborhood in advance, the developer subdivided the parcel and constructed a new house directly on the corner, destroying the relationship of the historic house to the site and to the neighborhood.

In this case, the Applicant is subdividing the landmarked property to allow redevelopment of the vacant part of the site. Originally the townhouse building extended further to the west and had a commercial area facing Tejon Street. This portion of the building was lost prior to the property being landmarked.

We don’t object to this redevelopment, as we believe infill development can add to the vibrancy of our neighborhood. But, we are concerned with the quality of what is developed and how the new construction will coordinate with the landmarked structure. We are concerned that without Landmark design review and Neighborhood design review, the new structure could have impacts similar to those cited above—something that is jarringly modern and out of scale with the historic structure.

It is important to note that maintaining Landmark status on this property is NOT a taking of property rights. The entire property was landmarked by the property owner originally to protect the property. Not allowing the property owner to carve out and remove a portion of the property from the existing landmark protection does not change the property rights that currently exist.

For the reasons cited above, we urge Council to reject this request to remove landmark designation from the vacant portion of this landmark property. To remove landmark protection from a portion of this property would set a dangerous precedent for other Denver Landmark properties city-wide that may have open space remaining.

Thank you for considering our position on this matter.

Sincerely,

HIGHLAND UNITED NEIGHBORS, INC.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy C Boers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'T' and 'B'.

Timothy C. Boers, AIA
Chair, Planning and Community Development Committee

Cc: Denver Landmark Preservation Commission
HUNI Board President
Committee Members
Historic Denver, Inc.

Denver Landmark House with new 4-level multi-family building added in back yard



House eligible for Landmark status, no design review



Before



After

3744 Navajo Street--Eligible Highland Landmark House, not landmarked, no LPC oversight

House eligible for Landmark status, no design review



Before



After

3505 Navajo Street--Eligible Highland Landmark House, not landmarked, no LPC oversight

Denver Landmark, 1940-1946 West 33rd Avenue



Highland Landmark – adjacent development site needs LPC & Neighborhood design review