



**DENVER**  
THE MILE HIGH CITY

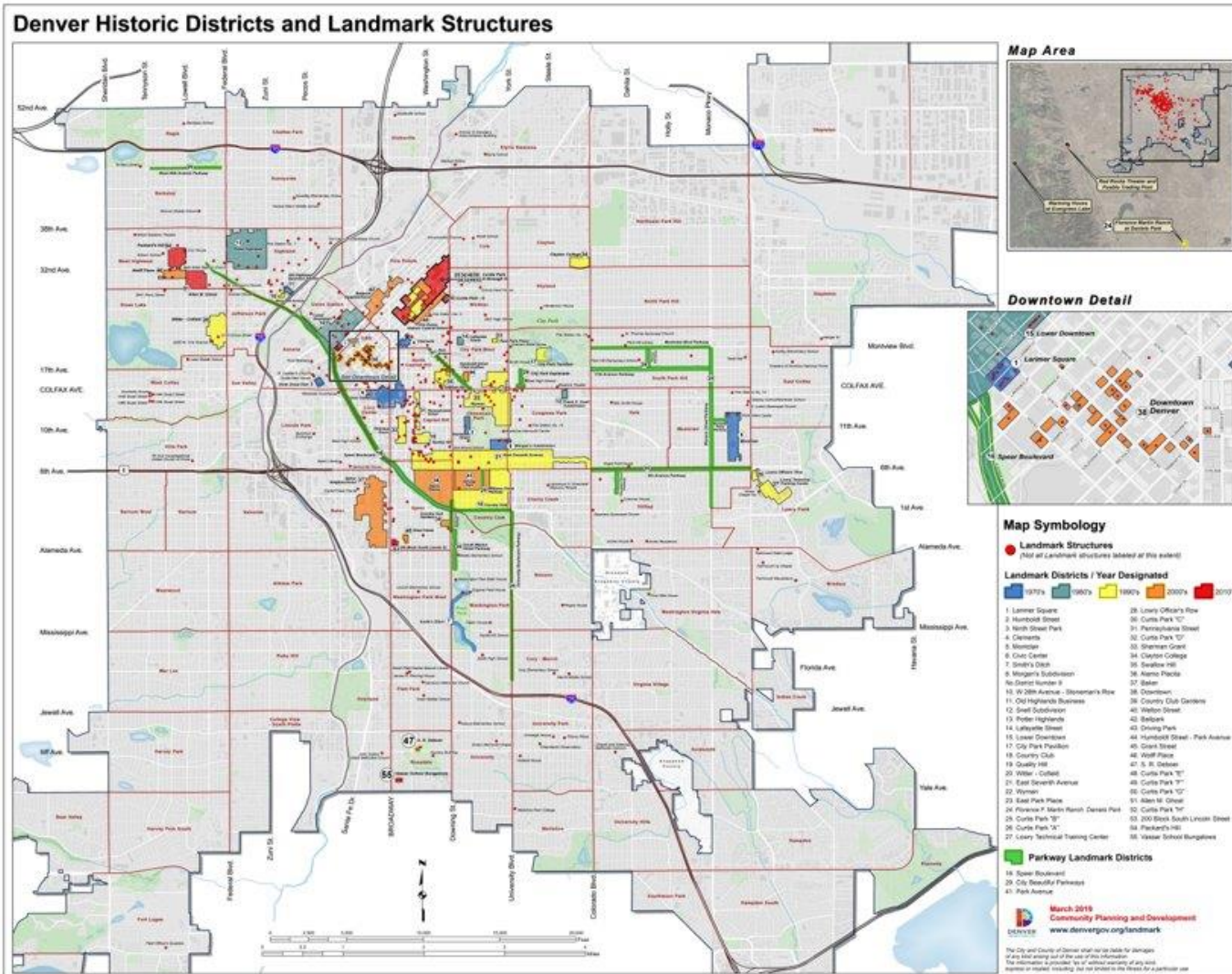
# **River Drive Historic District**

#2019L-002 – Landmark Designation Application

Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

Denver City Council

June 4, 2019



## 1967 Landmark Preservation Ordinance

- Purpose
  - Designate, preserve, and protect
  - Foster civic pride
  - Stabilize and improve aesthetic and economic vitality
  - Promote good urban design
- “It is the sense of the council that the economic, cultural and aesthetic standing of this city cannot be maintained or enhanced by disregarding the historical, architectural and geographic heritage of the city and ignoring the destruction or defacement of such cultural assets.”

# Denver Landmarks and Districts

~4% of the city,  
or 1 in 25 structures,  
are designated Landmarks





# Designation Applications



## Community-driven process

- Owner(s) of the property
- Manager of Community Planning and Development
- Member(s) of City Council
- Three people who are
  - Residents,
  - Property owners, or
  - Have a place of business in Denver

# Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts

- Properties designated “as is”
  - No required improvements
- Design Guidelines
  - Preserve historic character of the property
  - Provide clear and predictable regulations
  - Address wide range of topics
- ONLY apply to exterior work that requires a building or zoning permit
- Demolition of contributing features highly discouraged





Landmark **does not** review:

- x Paint colors
- x Repairs and maintenance
- x Storm windows
- x Plantings
- x Interior alterations



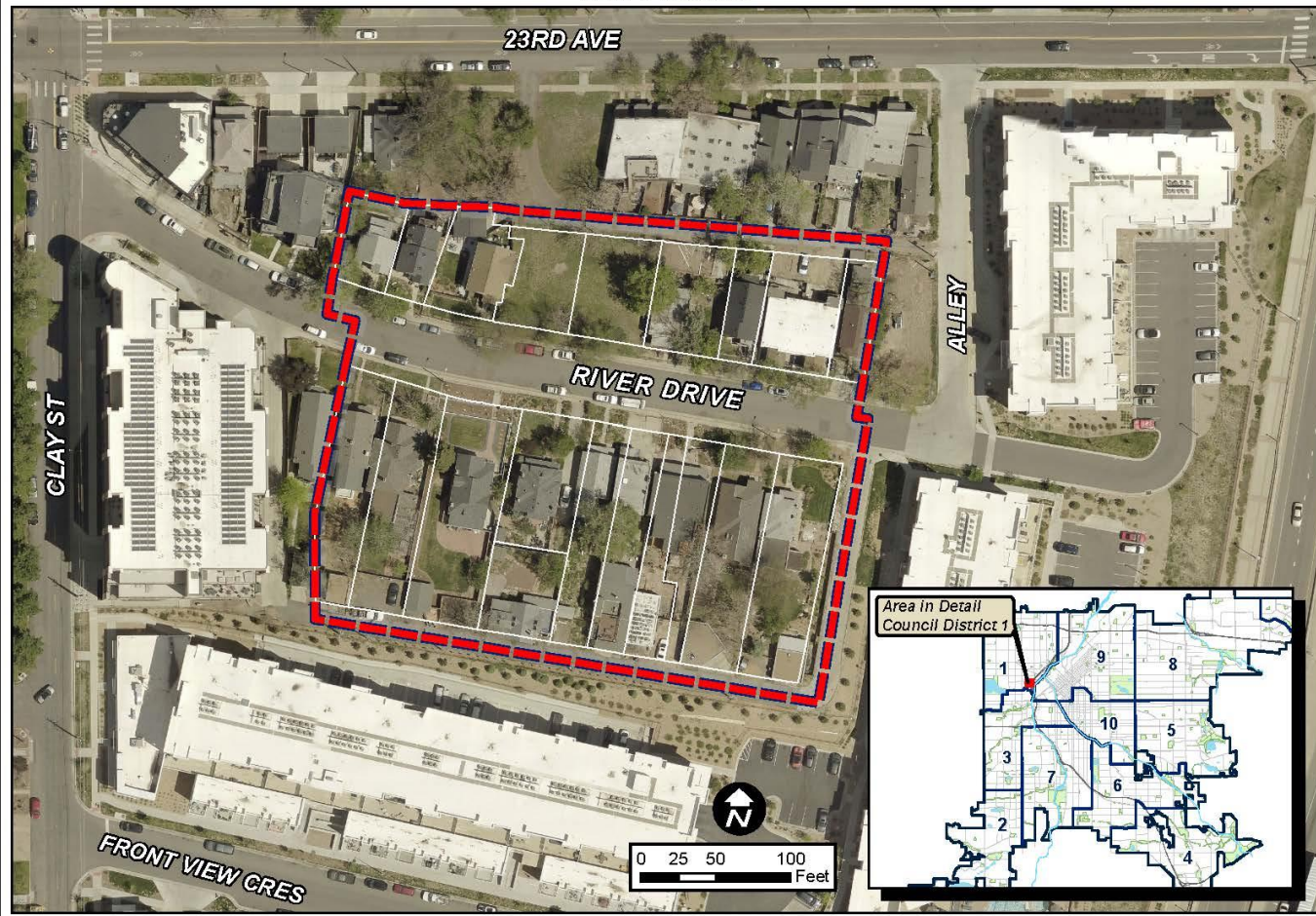
Landmark **does** review:

- ✓ Exterior work that requires a building or zoning permit
  - ✓ Curb cuts
  - ✓ Window and door replacement
  - ✓ Additions



## Proposed River Drive Historic Landmark District

Part of Blocks 2 and 3 of the River Front Addition  
Town of Highlands



## Owners

- 19

## Location

- Multiple addresses on West River Drive (Jefferson Park Neighborhood)

## Council District

- #1, Rafael Espinoza

## Blueprint Denver

- Urban Neighborhood Context
- Low Residential Area Future Place

## Current Zoning

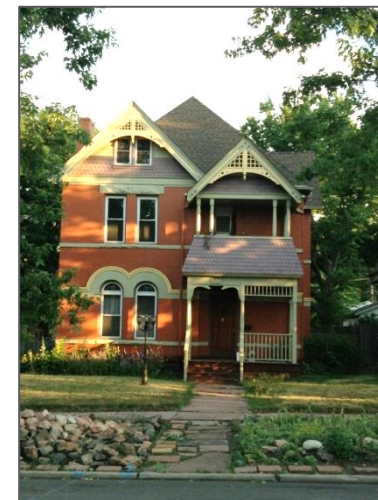
- U-TU-B, UO-3



## Property required to\*:

- ✓ Meet a designation criterion in at least two of the following categories:
  1. History
  2. Architecture
  3. Geography
- ✓ Maintain historic and physical integrity
- ✓ Be considered by LPC for its relation to a historic context or theme

\* Per Landmark Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code)





# River Drive Historic District

## Designation Criterion

1. History – 30 or more years old, and shall:
  - A. Have direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation



Advertisement for River Front Addition lots  
(Source: *The Daily News*, October 9, 1881)



1933 aerial with district boundary in blue (Source: *DPL Genealogy*, *African & American*, and *Western History*)

2. Architecture – design quality and integrity, and:
- A. Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type

### Victorian and Arts & Crafts Era

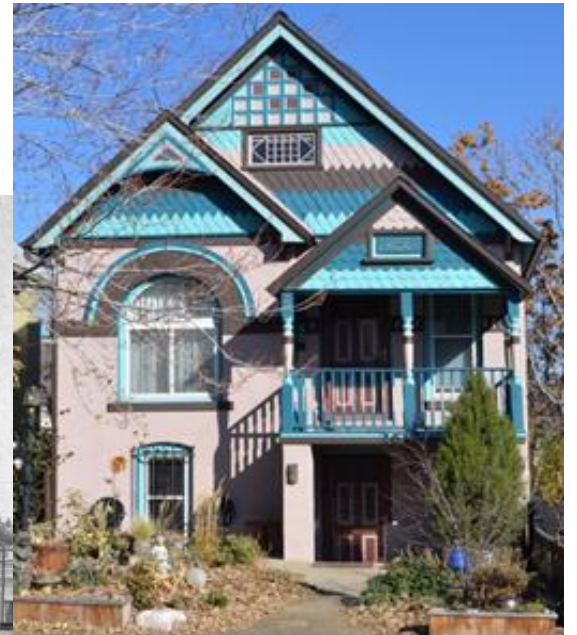
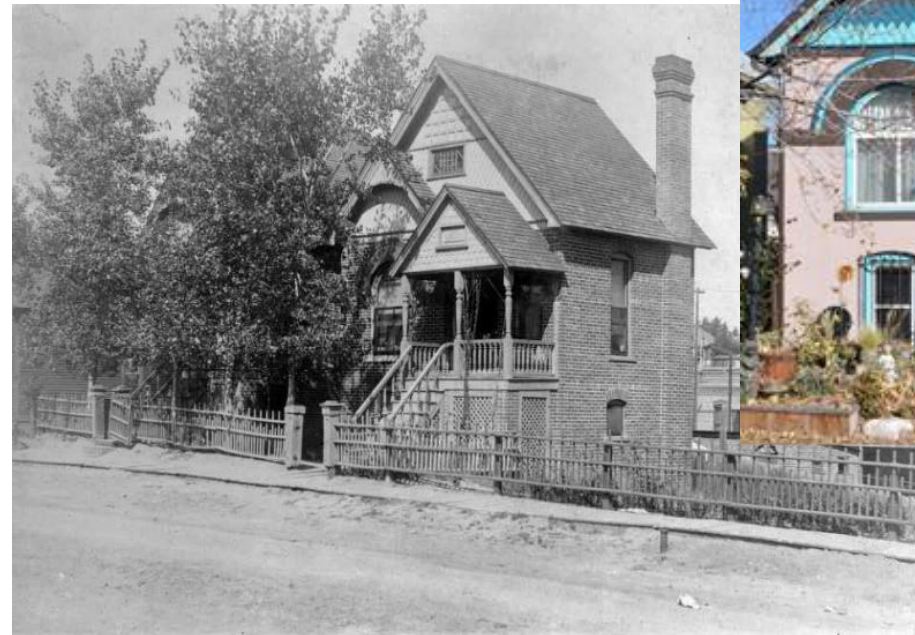
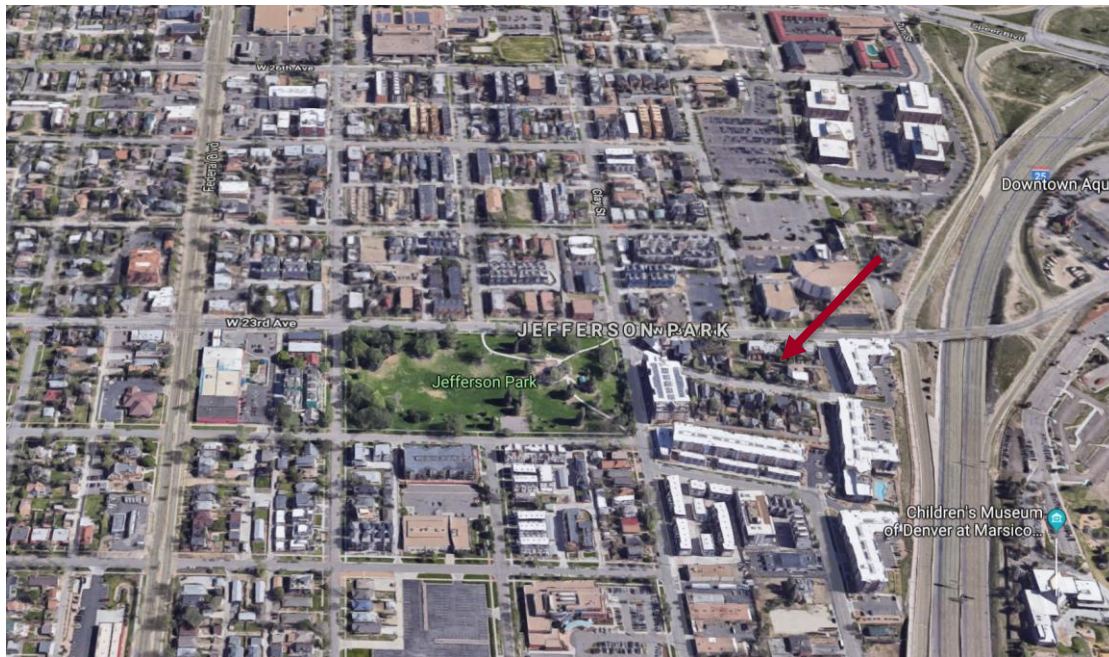
- Queen Anne
- Dutch Colonial Revival
- Foursquare
- Terrace
- Gable Front





### 3. Geography:

B. Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity



2617 W River Dr in 1894 and 2019 with "sunken" front yard



### 3. Geography:

B. Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity



Looking east down West River Drive at Clay Street intersection



Looking northeast at north side of West River Drive block



### Maintain Historic and Physical Integrity

“The ability of a structure or district to convey its historic and architectural significance. ...recognized as belonging to its particular time and place in Denver’s history.”

#### Retains integrity

- Location
- Design
- Workmanship
- Materials
- Setting
- Feeling
- Association

#### Alterations

- Window replacements
- Front porch design
- Rear additions
- New garages

Compatible in size and material  
or non-visible



2613 West River Drive in 1894 and 2019

### Relation to a historic context(s) or theme(s)

- Period of significance: 1885-1923
- Early growth of Denver
- Working-class, some immigrants, that supported nearby industry and commerce



2550 West River Drive – Denery residence  
c. 1920 (Source: District Steering Committee)





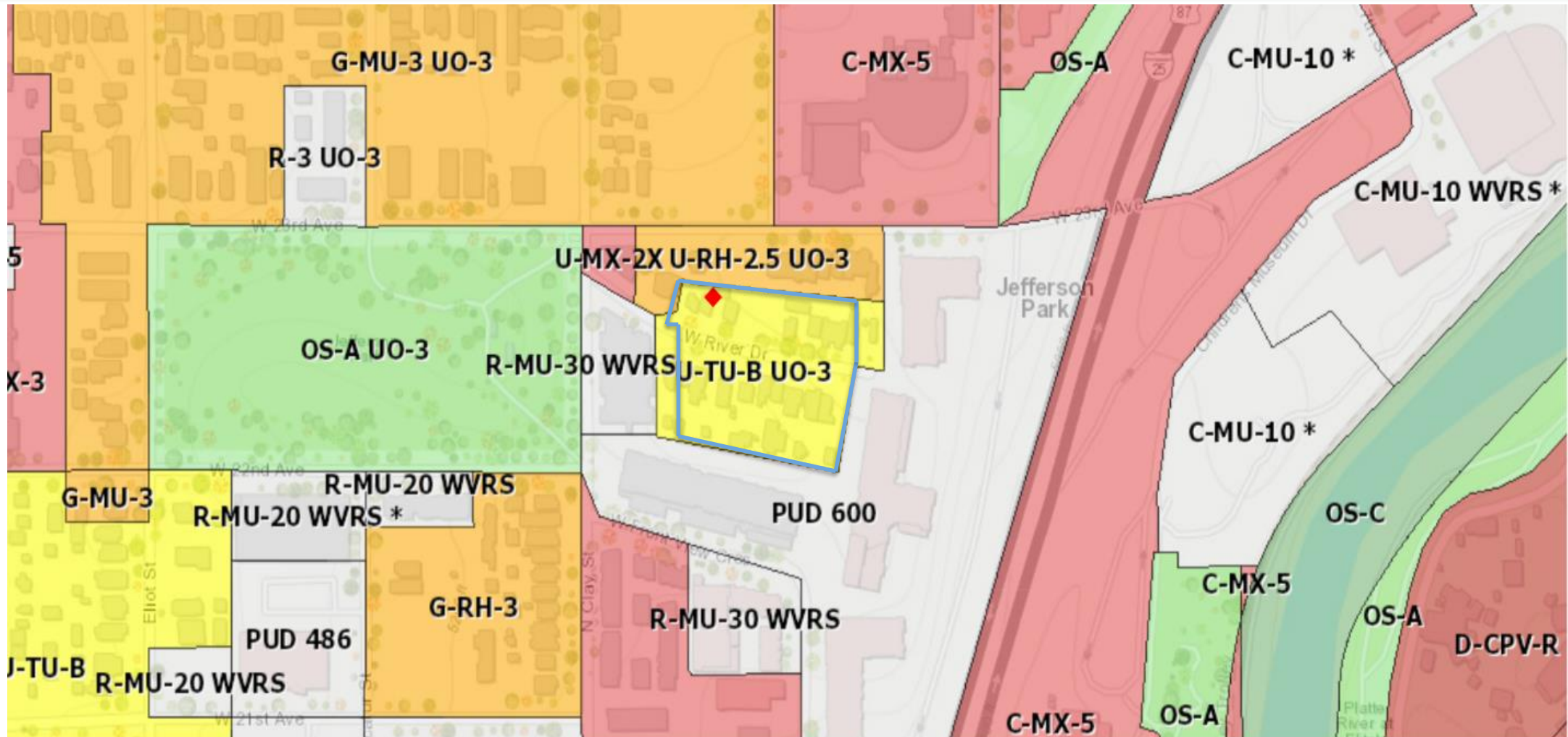
- ✓ Meets one designation criterion in each category
  1. History
    - a. Have direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation
  2. Architecture
    - a. Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type
  3. Geography
    - b. Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity
- ✓ Maintains historic and physical integrity
- ✓ Relates to a historic context or theme

**LPC Vote: 8-0-0**

*“To recommend landmark designation based on History Criterion 1A, Architecture Criterion 2A, and Geography Criterion 3B.”*

- **Per Chapter 30-4.6, DRMC:**
  - Ordinance provides opportunity for Planning Board to make a recommendation to City Council regarding designation of districts
  - Specifically directs Planning Board to consider a proposed designation with respect to:
    1. Its relationship to the Denver Comprehensive Plan,
    2. The effect of the designation upon the surrounding neighborhood, and
    3. Such other planning considerations as may be relevant to the proposed designation or amendments.





Zoning Map

**Vision Element: Equitable, Affordable and Inclusive**

Goal 4: Preserve existing affordable housing

*Strategy C: Incentivize the reuse of existing smaller and affordable homes*

**Vision Element: Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods**

Goal 1: Create a city of complete neighborhoods

*Strategy D: Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood and offers opportunities for increased amenities.*

Goal 2: Enhance Denver's neighborhoods through high-quality urban design

*Strategy B: Establish a scalable, predictable and adaptable approach to improve design quality across the city.*

*Strategy C: Create people-oriented places that embrace community character with thoughtful transitions, aspirational design and an engaging public realm.*

Goal 3: Preserve the authenticity of Denver's neighborhoods and celebrate our history, architecture and culture

*Strategy B: Continue the city's commitment to existing historic districts and landmarks and increase public awareness of the benefits of historic preservation through education and outreach.*

*Strategy C: Ensure city policies and regulations support historic preservation and eliminate barriers in city processes to help all neighborhoods preserve what matters most.*

*Strategy E: Support the stewardship and reuse of existing buildings, including city properties.*

Goal 6: Empower Denverites to be involved and collaborative in city government

*Strategy A: Continue to strengthen trust and communication between the city and all neighborhoods.*

Goal 7: Leverage the arts and support creative placemaking to strengthen community

*Strategy B: Embrace existing communities and their cultural assets.*

**Vision Element: Economically Diverse and Vibrant**

Goal 7: Accelerate Denver's economic vitality through arts, culture and creativity

*Strategy B: Advance cultural tourism and expand the city's diversity of innovative industries.*

**Vision Element: Environmentally Resilient**

Goal 1: Mitigate climate impact by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions

*Strategy B: Reduce energy use by buildings and advance green building design, including green and cool roofs.*

**Implementation Strategy 2: Coordinate implementation actions across departments for effective and collective impact**

- Build partnerships with the community, nonprofits, employers and businesses to help promote and implement the plan.

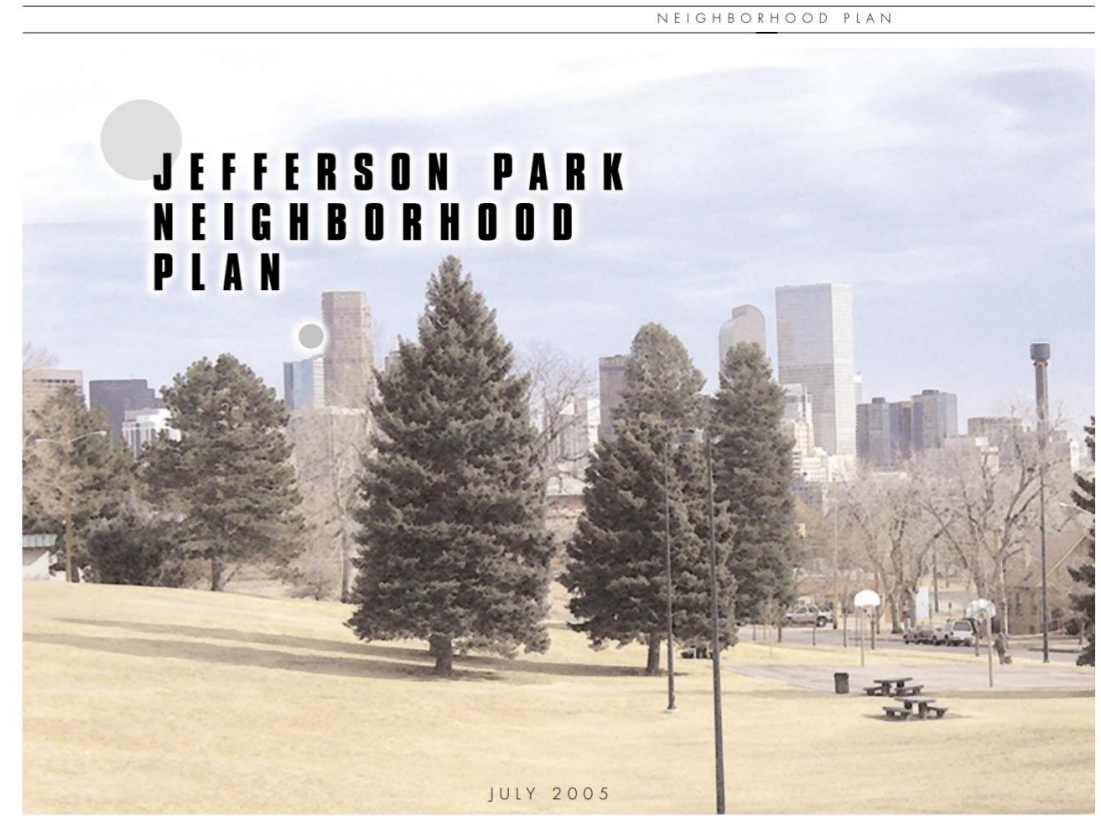


- Urban neighborhood context and Low Residential Future Place
- Development in this context should be sensitive to the existing neighborhood character
- Historic designation:
  - Helps ensure compatible infill and building alterations to maintain character-defining features
  - Preserves and creates authentic places



# Jefferson Park Neighborhood Plan (2005)

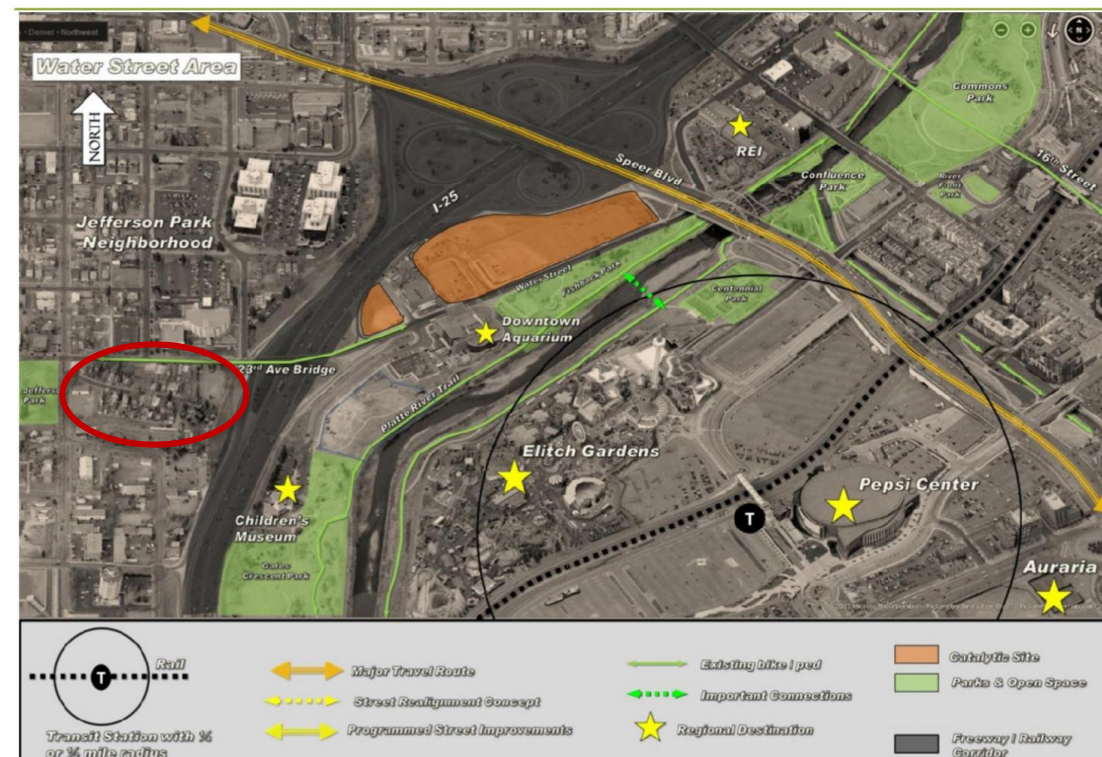
- Protect and enhance the existing character of the neighborhood
- River Drive subarea recommended for potential designation as a local historic district
- River Drive Historic District designation implements plan recommendations





# South Platte Corridor Study (2013)

- Water Street opportunity area
- Water Street historically served as location of jobs for River Drive residents; e.g., Zang Brewery
- Designation retains residential character of block and reinforces potential benefits of better connectivity to South Platte River and a revitalized Water Street



Water Street Opportunity Area, an underutilized site amid Denver's successful riverfront redevelopment efforts in the Central Platte Valley.  
Image Source: Bing Maps

The effect of the designation upon the surrounding neighborhood:

- River Drive Historic District designation would help preserve the character defining features of the district
- Little impact on the surrounding neighborhood
- Intent of the designation is to recognize this unique district, the buildings that define it, and their contribution to the historic fabric of the city



# Planning Board Recommendation

- ✓ Meets the goals of:
  - Denver Comprehensive Plan 2040
  - Blueprint Denver (2019)
  - Jefferson Park Neighborhood Plan (2005)
  - South Platte Corridor Study (2013)
- ✓ Will have little effect on the surrounding neighborhood

Planning Board Vote: 9-0-0  
*Recommend to City Council approval of the proposed Vassar School  
Bungalows Historic District*

- RNO Comment
  - None
- Public comments submitted to CPD from individuals
  - Received by 5:00pm, May 29, 2019
    - 6 individuals in support
    - 0 individuals in opposition
- Public comments at LPC public hearing
  - 3 in support
  - 0 in opposition
- Public comments at Planning Board meeting
  - None





# LUTI Review & Recommendation

Based on ordinance designation criteria, the findings of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) that the application meets the criteria for designation of a district, and the recommendation of approval by the Denver Planning Board, staff recommends approval of the application.

