

**BY AUTHORITY**

ORDINANCE NO.  
SERIES OF 2019

COUNCIL BILL NO. CB19-0547  
COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE:  
Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure

**A BILL**

**For an ordinance designating the River Drive 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 May 21, 2019 Landmark Preservation Commission recommendation, the staff report, and other evidence received at the hearing before City Council on June 24, 2019, the River Drive 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, relating to a historic context or theme, 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;*

The River Drive Historic District is directly associated with the historical development of the city as one of the oldest established residential areas of Denver in what was the Town of Highlands. Established by General William Larimer, Jr. in 1858 and incorporated in 1875, the Town of Highlands was annexed by the city of Denver in 1896. The 17 extant properties within the historic district were part of the 1881 River Front Addition in the Town of Highlands and its continued growth as part of what would become the Jefferson Park neighborhood. This neighborhood was named after nearby Jefferson Park that was established in 1899. Many of the houses were built in the 1880s and represent some of the city's oldest building stock that contributed to the early growth of Denver.

The Gurley Brothers, a real estate investment company active in the area at the time, began developing the River Front Addition in 1881. Set on a bluff overlooking the South Platte River and downtown Denver, the district was originally home to working-class residents, many of whom were employed by some of the city's earliest and most influential industries within walking distance or a short streetcar ride away. The first- and second-generation immigrants who resided in the houses represented the social dynamic within Denver during the district's period of significance (1885 – 1923) and illustrate the diversity of those who played a significant role in building the city. Scottish, English, German, Welsh and Cornish immigrants who lived in the district played a large role in

helping companies like the nearby Zang Brewery, Colorado & Southern Railway and Denver & Rio Grande Railroad thrive.

## (2) Architecture.

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

The River Drive Historic District exemplifies several architectural styles and building types representing the Victorian and Arts & Crafts eras. Each is indicative of the time and location in which it was built. Collectively, they illustrate architectural trends over 38 years in Denver's early history. Some forms are relatively unique to Colorado like the Terrace Type. Other forms and styles related to early Denver development include Queen Anne, Gable Front, Dutch Colonial Revival and Foursquare. Overall, the use of similar materials such as brick and stone, and design elements like arched window openings, brick belt courses and front porches, create cohesion among the properties.

Each structure remains in good condition with impressive retention of character-defining features. The Queen Anne houses retain their symmetrical massing and porches, multiple gables and decorative wood shingles. The Terrace Type buildings are constructed of brick and exhibit flat roofs and corbeled cornices. The one remaining Dutch Colonial Revival house retains its gambrel roof, front porch and dormers and one Foursquare its square plan, hipped roof, broad eaves and full-width front porch. Minor alterations include porch and window replacements as well as rear additions and new garages that are not visible from the street. These changes do not negatively affect the character-defining features of the district. The district provides an excellent snapshot of architectural styles and forms found in Denver in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

## (3) Geography.

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

The River Drive Historic District is a rare, intact portion of the 1881 River Front Addition in the Town of Highlands. The structures and setting represent the most complete portion of the Gurley Brothers original development in a neighborhood that has lost much of its physical integrity due to demolition and construction of residential infill in sharp contrast to the district's historic character. Today, the River Drive Historic District includes a fraction of the original River Front Addition, amounting to 2.5 acres, and is considered a part of the residential core of the Jefferson Park neighborhood.

Jefferson Park neighborhood plans dating to 1976 encouraged local designation of the structures along West River Drive due, in part, to their distinctive physical characteristics. The district has two

unique attributes that lend to its unique character, related to the natural topography in its proximity to the South Platte River. The first is the curving layout of parcels and street as opposed to the grid system commonly found in the neighborhood and throughout much of Denver. The second is the above grade (and with later modifications below grade) front entrances on several of the homes on the north side of the street, designed to accommodate the slope of the street and surrounding topography. When the houses were built, the road was narrower and higher in elevation than it is today; a 1950s regrading of the street developed a configuration closer to its current state. It is these distinctive features and the rare, intact nature of the River Drive Historic District within the larger Jefferson Park neighborhood that meet geographic significance.

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

**Section 1.** That based upon the findings referenced above, and the evidence received at the public hearings, certain property, herein called the River Drive Historic 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:

**River Drive Historic District**

**Legal Boundary**

Lots 9 through 19 south of the alley, Lots 19 through 21 west of the alley, and a portion of Lot 22, all in Block 2 of the River Front Addition in the Town of Highlands, as well as a portion of Lot 8 along with Lots 9 through the east 12.5 feet of Lot 21 all in Block 3 of the River Front Addition in the Town of Highlands, in addition thereto, those portions of all abutting public rights-of-way, but only to the centerline thereof, which are immediately adjacent to the aforesaid specifically described area. Located in the NE 1/4 of Section 32, Township 3 South, Range 68 West of the 6th P.M., City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

Together with the adjoining public rights-of-way but only to the centerline thereof.

**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 and of the structure but may delay or require denial of building permits found unacceptable by the Landmark Preservation Commission under the criteria contained in the Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts and Section 30-6 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code.

**Section 4.** The period of significance for the District is established as being from 1885-1923.

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


2535 West River Drive, 2537-2541 West River Drive, 2543-2545 West River Drive, 2547 West River Drive, 2613 West River Drive, 2617 West River Drive, 2623 West River Drive, 2620 West River Drive, 2614 West River Drive, 2608 West River Drive, 2606 West River Drive, 2572 West River Drive, 2568 West River Drive, 2560-2562 West River Drive, 2556 West River Drive, 2550 West River Drive

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

COMMITTEE APPROVAL DATE: June 4, 2019

MAYOR-COUNCIL DATE: June 11, 2019

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL June 24, 2019

 - 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: June 13, 2019

Pursuant to section 13-12, 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.

Kristin M. Bronson, Denver City Attorney

BY: , Assistant City Attorney DATE: Jun 12, 2019