



**To:** Denver City Council  
**From:** Kara Hahn, Principal Planner, Community Planning & Development (CPD)  
**Date:** December 12, 2019  
**RE:** Landmark Designation for Tilden School for Teaching Health Historic District

**Staff Recommendation:**

Based on the ordinance designation criteria, on the findings of the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) that the application meets the criteria for designation of a district, and on the findings of the Denver Planning Board that the designation is consistent with applicable plans and will have minimal impact or effect on the surrounding neighborhoods, staff recommends approval of the application.

**Request to Designate a District:**

**Application:** #2019L-006  
**Address(es):** 3209 West Fairview Place, 3249 West Fairview Place, and 3279 Grove Street  
**Zoning:** U-SU-B and PDU 551  
**Council:** Council District #1, Amanda Sandoval  
**Blueprint Denver:** Urban Neighborhood Context and Low Residential Future Place  
**Owner:** Multiple  
**Applicant(s):** Former City Councilmember Rafael Espinoza

**Case Summary:**

Community members and residents of the proposed historic district have worked for the past 18 months on outreach to the residents and neighbors and on research for the designation application. The proposed historic district encompasses three primary structures - the Administration Building/Bosler House (3209 West Fairview Place), the Patient Apartment Building (3279 Grove Street), and the Main Building (3249 Fairview Place) - as well as three accessory structures. The owners of the Administration Building/Bosler House and the Patients Apartment Building as well as the President of the HOA for the Main Building have signed consent forms for designation. Former City Councilmember Rafael Espinoza formally submitted the Landmark Designation application for the Tilden School for Teaching Health Historic District to CPD.

As this application was submitted prior to October 31, 2019, the designation was reviewed under the previous Landmark designation criteria. Staff reviewed the application and found it to be complete and to meet the criteria. Landmark staff hosted a community meeting to provide information on landmark designation and to answer community and resident questions. After the community meeting, staff set the public hearing before the Landmark Preservation Commission.

On November 5, 2019, the LPC found the application met the criteria for designation and unanimously recommended approval and forwarded the application. On November 6, 2019, Denver Planning Board reviewed the designation application for consistency with approved plans and for the district's effect on surrounding neighborhoods. Denver Planning Board unanimously recommended approval and forwarded the designation to City Council.

On November 19, 2019, the Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure Committee forwarded the case to the full City Council. At first reading, Denver City Council ordered the bill published and the public hearing is set for December 16, 2019.

### **Designation Criteria and Evaluation, Chapter 30, Denver Revised Municipal Code:**

To meet landmark designation criteria, in accordance with Chapter 30-4, Denver Revised Municipal Code, a district must meet the following criteria:

1. Meet one designation criteria in two or more of the following categories:
  - History
  - Architecture
  - Geography
2. Maintain its physical or historical integrity
3. Relate to a context or theme (considered by LPC)

### **Criteria Evaluation:**

Landmark staff found that the district application meets History Criteria 1a and 1c, Architecture Criteria 2a, 2b, and 2d, and Geography Criteria 3a and 3b.

#### **1. Historical Significance**

**To have historical significance, the structure or district shall be thirty (30) or more years old or have extraordinary importance to the historical development of Denver, and shall:**

*a) Have direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;*

The Tilden School for Teaching Health Historic District is significant for its association with the development of Denver as it became a center for sanitariums and health rehabilitation facilities. Physicians from across the country believed that Colorado's climate and altitude were beneficial to those suffering from illnesses, often tuberculosis. By the early 1900s, Denver had become a key location for the development of treatment facilities, and the operation of medical sanitariums had become a major component of the local economy.

The school was developed by John Henry Tilden, a physician and surgeon, in 1915 and 1916. Dr. Tilden's methods were described in 1918 as "... unique and original and, what is more, they are effective. He teaches his patients how to cure themselves. He protests that doctors can't cure disease; that disease is caused by wrong life and the doctor's prerogative is to teach the patient how to get well, and the patient must cure himself. He has fearlessly combated medical error and is still at it. ... His methods are strictly dietetics and hygiene." The Tilden School for Teaching Health is significant as representative of this era of the city's history, reflecting the popularity of private medical institutions which used both traditional methods and developed non-traditional regimens for their patients.

*c) Have direct and substantial association with a person or group of persons who had influence on society;*

While the district is associated with multiple people, it is primarily significant for its association with one individual who had influence on society. It holds direct and substantial association with its founder, Dr. John Henry Tilden, who developed and extensively wrote about his treatment theories and who was affiliated with the facility from 1915 to 1924. Dr. Tilden's non-traditional theories and methods became well-known for those seeking alternative medical options. A 1918 description of Dr. Tilden's influence noted "He has fought a successful fight for his ideas are being adopted by lay and professional people all over the world, which certainly proves the truth of his theories". The Rocky Mountain News wrote on December 18, 1924, that his "theory with reference to proper treatment of disease... has become famous."



Photos: Administration Building/Bosler House ca. 1924-25 and 2018.

## 2. Architectural Significance

**To have architectural importance, the structure or district shall have design quality and integrity, and shall:**

*a) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type;*

The district is significant for the architectural style of two of its primary buildings and reflects the medical theories of the period. The Administration Building/Bosler House provides an example of late Victorian Italianate style. It is a rare remaining example of a large residence in this style in the West Highland neighborhood. The Italianate style is seen in the asymmetrical composition with gabled and hipped projections, the reconstructed third-story square tower, the narrow one-over-one-light, double-hung windows with segmental arches and tooled stone sills, as well as the front and side porches. The Patient Apartments Building portray the Classical or Colonial Revival style in the symmetrical building features, hipped tile roof, brick quoins at the corners of the front façade, door surrounds and pilasters, and multi-light double-hung windows. The building is dominated by a central, circular, two story entry portico composed of smooth columns with Corinthian capitals that support a third story uncovered balcony.

The Patient Apartment Building and the Main Building, which contains Craftsman elements, reflect the attempt to create medical buildings which incorporated popular elements of residential architecture. As many patients stayed for extended periods at the school, the buildings were designed to invoke a feeling found in the solid apartment buildings and well-crafted homes of the era.

*b) Be a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;*

The district is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect. The district presents a collection of buildings reflecting the work of prominent Denver architect Harry W. J. Edbrooke. He was the only architect involved in the construction of the 'new' buildings for the Tilden School for Teaching Health. Harry W. J. Edbrooke studied architecture and engineering in his home town of Chicago at the University of Illinois and the Armour Institute of Technology. After establishing a practice in Chicago, Harry W. J. Edbrooke was invited to join the firm of his uncle, Frank Edbrooke, who was one of Denver's most successful nineteenth century architects. Harry Edbrooke was associated with Edbrooke and Company from 1908 until his uncle retired in 1913. Harry Edbrooke then established his own practice and continued designing until his death in 1946. The buildings in the district were designed early in the life of the new firm and are a strong collection of Edbrooke's work. Historian Wilbur Fiske Stone cited the Patient Apartments among Architect Edbrooke's notable building designs.

*d) Portray the environment of a group of people or physical development of an area in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.*

The district is significant for portraying the environment of a group of people – the patients the school served. The patients were housed and educated on a campus with unifying architectural elements. The Tilden School for Teaching Health is an example of an intact campus for patients of an early twentieth century sanitarium to restore and maintain health. The substantial raised porches and bright sunrooms were also utilized in medical treatment to provide access to the fresh air and sunshine which were considered vital components of a healthy lifestyle and keys to recovery from disease. The abundant use of large windows in the design of the buildings also reflected the importance of ventilation and light in

medical theories of the time. The Tilden School for Teaching Health is significant for the type and methods of construction displayed, which represent early twentieth century theories regarding patient treatment and building techniques integral to medical facilities of the period and their adaptation utilizing popular architectural styles of the early twentieth century.



Photos: Patients Building ca. 1924-25 and 2018.

### 3. Geographic Significance

To have geographic importance, the structure or district shall have design quality and integrity, and shall:

a) *Have a prominent location or be an established, familiar, and orienting visual feature of the contemporary city;*

The historic district is geographically significant as an established visual feature of the city. The Tilden School for Teaching Health sits within the far west portion of the Highland Park subdivision and just across from a city park also named Highland Park. The campus provides a grouping of large institutional buildings situated in a residential area of comparatively small houses. From the south, the Main Building's near 300 feet length, footprint of more than 13,000 square feet and rising three and a half stories has visually dominated this block of West Fairview Place since its completion in the early 1920s. Generous sized front lawns tie the Administration Building/Bosler House, Patient Apartments and the Main Building to the neighborhood streetscape. The setting provides a broad expansive view of the campus from the open public space of the Highland Park on the east, inherently creating an established, familiar, and orienting visual feature.



Photo: Main Building ca. 1946

b) *Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;*

The district is significant under geography for its distinctive characteristics and rarity. Highland Park subdivision, which is the home of the Tilden School for Teaching Health campus, was platted by the Highland Park Company in 1875. The Highland Park Company developed street layout to follow the natural contours of the land allowing an appreciation of the urban environment's topography. The

president of the Highland Park Company, Dr. William A. Bell, was particularly concerned with the design. Dr. Bell, wanting the area to suggest something of his Scottish heritage, applied street names such as Roxburgh Court (now Grove St.) and Inverness Drive (now west 34th Avenue). The organic design was based on Riverside, an elite subdivision development located north of Chicago, Illinois. This subdivision features a distinctive physical characteristic with a unique curvilinear layout diverging from the typical development pattern of streets following the Platte River or the traditional north-south east-west grid. The streetscape is defined by the geography of the site and follows a natural hill slope. The Highland Park subdivision is cited as one of the few examples of nineteenth century picturesque community planning in the area. The grouping of buildings that formed the Tilden School for Teaching Health district, which provides a prominent gateway to the West Highland neighborhood, remains as a rare remaining example of sanitarium health campuses of this scale and age in Denver.

### **Integrity:**

Chapter 30, DRMC requires that a landmark designated property maintain its historic or physical integrity, defined as “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.” The seven qualities that define integrity are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Tilden School for Teaching Health Historic District retains good integrity. The buildings in the district maintain their original location and residential setting. As the school was intended for longer-term stays by the patients, the conversion to residential use helps retain the integrity of feeling and association. There were alterations to the Main Building in the conversion to condos in the 1990s - the replacement of the asbestos cement roof tiles, addition of dormers on the third floor, original windows replaced, stair and elevator tower added, windows and doors reconfigured on sunrooms, balconies added, and garden level windows added; however, the historic ‘E’ form massing, proportion and the bulk of the original hip roof with wide eaves, as well as the south and east lawn remain. The overall integrity of materials and workmanship are evident in original brickwork and stonework. The design of the Administration Building/Bosler House as well as the Edbrooke designed Main Building and Patients building are retained.

### **Relate to a Historic Context/Theme and Period of Significance:**

By the early 1900s, the operation of medical sanitariums had become a major component of the Denver economy. These facilities provided care for thousands of patients from across the country, as doctors believed that state’s climate and altitude were beneficial to those suffering from illness. While Dr. Tilden had significant differences with the mainstream medical world, he shared in common the belief in the beneficial effect on the fresh air and sunny climate of Denver. The Tilden School for Teaching Health is representative of this era of the city's history, reflecting the popularity of private medical institutions which developed innovative medical regimens for their patients. Even after the Tilden School closed, the campus buildings, owned separately, operated as private facilities for clients with diverse medical needs.

**Planning Board Considerations, per Chapter 30-4.6, DRMC:**

The Landmark ordinance provides the opportunity for the Planning Board to make a recommendation to City Council regarding designation of districts. The ordinance specifically directs the 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 Context:**

The District is zoned U-SU-B and PDU 551.



Zoning: PUD 551 and U-SU-B (proposed district noted in blue, red and brown indicate existing Denver landmarks)

**Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan 2040 and Blueprint Denver (2019)**

The proposed district is consistent with both the Comprehensive Plan and Blueprint Denver. There is no small area plan.

**Comprehensive Plan**

The proposal is most directly consistent with the Comprehensive Plan 2040 vision element for Strong and Authentic Neighborhoods. It also meets a goal under Environmentally Resilient. The most applicable goals and strategies are noted below.



**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 of 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

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 benefits of historic preservation through education and outreach

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

**Vision Element: Environmentally Resilient**

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

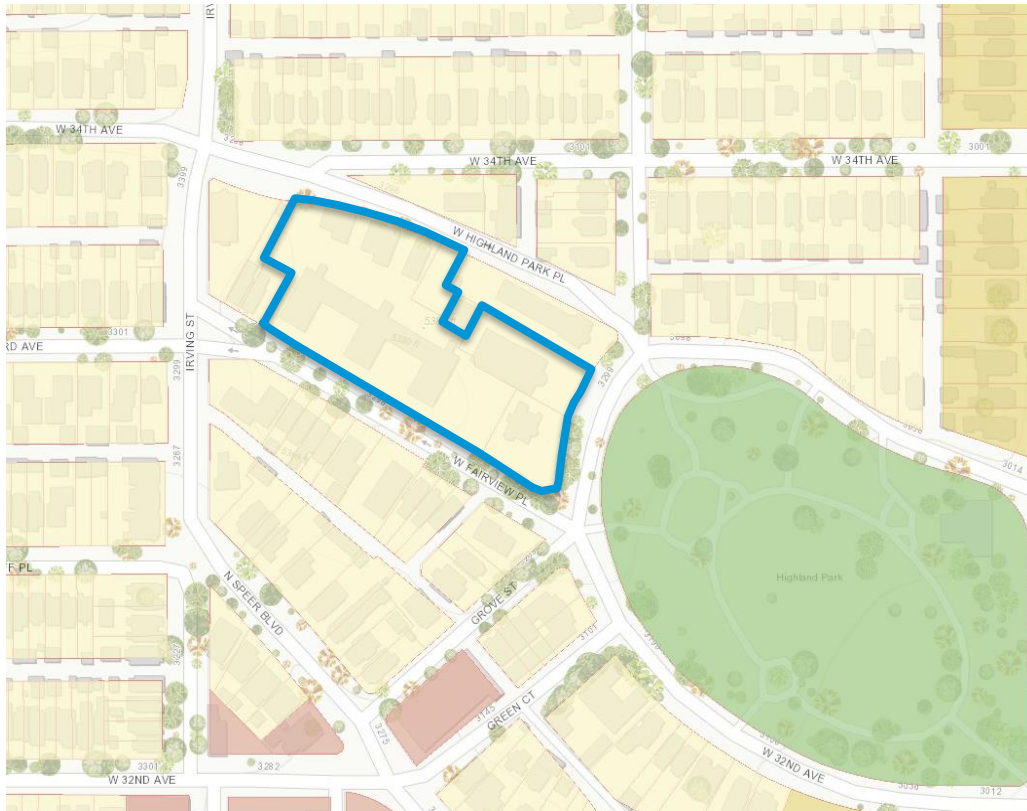
The proposed Tilden School for Teaching Health Historic District reinforces the vision of Comprehensive Plan 2040 through the preservation of a community cultural asset in the West Highland neighborhood. It preserves the city’s authentic historic character, enhances design excellence, contributes to a strong sense of community identity, and supports environmental conservation. Designation of the Tilden School Historic District advances these attributes in various ways, including reduction of building demolition and resulting landfill waste, and increased quality design through design review of new infill and alterations to properties requiring a building or zoning permit.

**Blueprint Denver**

According to Blueprint Denver, the district’s neighborhood context is urban, and the future place is low residential. The plan states that the urban neighborhood context is found broadly throughout the city and any development within it should be sensitive to the existing neighborhood character. It includes a mix of uses with good street activation and connectivity. Low residential areas include predominately single- and two-unit uses with some higher-intensity residential uses. The character of the proposed historic district is combination of multi-family and single-family residential and aligns with the neighborhood context and future places map.

The proposed designation will help preserve the unique character of the block and would allow for alterations or infill that is compatible with the existing neighborhood character per the *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts*. This meets Strategy 2A within Blueprint Denver under Land Use & Built Form that recommends using historic designation to ensure residential neighborhoods retain their unique historic character (p. 99). Designation of the historic district is also consistent with Blueprint’s vision to improve quality of design that preserves and creates authentic

places (p. 94). It also helps advance the Blueprint Denver metric related to increasing the percent of the city subject to design-focused standards including the *Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts*. The proposed designation is consistent with Blueprint Denver recommendations and reinforces the plan’s policies.



Blueprint Denver: Future places low residential (proposed district noted in blue)

**Effect on Surrounding Neighborhoods:**

The Tilden School for Teaching Health Historic District designation ordinance will help preserve the character defining features of the district and will have little impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. LPC only has purview for the area located within the designation boundary. The 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. This will allow for the area to meet the goals within Blueprint Denver as well as the goals found in the Comprehensive Plan.

**Boundary:**

The proposed historic district encompasses three primary structures and parcels associated with them - the Administration Building/Bosler House (3209 West Fairview Place), the Patient Apartments (3279

Grove Street), and the Main Building (3249 Fairview Place) - as well as three accessory structures associated with the Main Building. The accessory structure associated with the Patient Apartment Building is excluded from the boundary.

#### **Public Review Process:**

Community Planning & Development has met 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 and City Council public hearings
- City Council, Planning Board, and Building Inspection email notifications
- Registered Neighborhood Organization and courtesy email notifications
  - Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
  - West Highland Neighborhood Association
  - Federal Boulevard Corridor Improvement Partnership Historic Denver, Inc
  - Colorado Preservation, Inc
  - National Trust for Historic Preservation
  - State of Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Posted signage for Landmark Preservation Commission public hearing

#### **Public Comments:**

As of the date of the staff report, CPD has received 25 comments regarding the designation application.

- Organization comment
  - Historic Denver, Historic Berkeley Regis, National Scenic Byway Foundation, and Front Range Research Associates in support
- Public Comments from individuals
  - 18 individuals in support
- LPC Public Hearing
  - 3 individuals in support
- Planning Board
  - No public comment

#### **Attachments Provided by CPD:**

- Designation Application
- Map of proposed district
- Public comments received