

## APPENDIX C

### Historic Preservation

#### 1. General Overview of Historic Preservation

As seen elsewhere in this plan, preservation of the historic structures and districts, the feeling and setting of the West Washington Park Neighborhood takes a high priority among the concerns of its residents. Planning for the neighborhood's development should focus on the valuable architectural and landscape characteristics that remain in it. Information is needed about the historic context of the neighborhood, a thorough survey and inventory is a necessity, and the identification and application for designation of worthy properties to the Denver Landmarks Commission and the National Register of Historic Places needs to be accomplished.

#### 2. Denver Landmark Preservation Ordinance

In 1967, the City of Denver made a major commitment to historic preservation in the community by passing the Denver Landmark Preservation Ordinance. The preamble of the ordinance states: "It is hereby declared as a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of structures and districts of historic, architectural, and geographic significance, located within the city, is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the prosperity, civic pride, and general welfare of the people." The City's commitment to preservation was reiterated in the 1989 Denver Comprehensive Plan.

This ordinance establishes, with subsequent amendments, a framework for the orderly planning and development of historic districts in the city. The ordinance contains three main provisions: 1) procedures to designate local historic districts or landmarks, 2) the organization of a Landmarks Commission, 3) review and monitor alterations to local historic properties. The Landmark Preservation Commission is appointed by the Mayor and has specialists with knowledge of or interest in historic preservation. The Commission serves to promote preservation in the City and to assist in the identification and survey of properties and districts worthy of Landmark status.

The landmark ordinance is a protection tool which allows the public and the City a certain flexibility in preservation matters. Property owners can, for example, avail themselves of landmark status without reference to the federal government and the National Register. The local landmark designation procedure can be swifter than listing on the National Register.

Like other historic neighborhoods in Denver, the West Washington Park Neighborhood should request the assistance of the Landmark Commission to help preserve historic resources. The neighborhood and Commission should work together to complete a thorough survey and inventory of the neighborhood, identify significant or exemplary properties, and provide information about preservation options. If desired, an ordinance could be applied to help preserve the character and architecture of a significant historic district.

### **3. National Register of Historic Places**

Besides recommending designation of City Landmarks, the Landmark Commission reviews nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is a federal designation, which lists historic properties worthy of preservation. The process for designation includes review by the Landmark Commission, the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer at the Colorado Historical Society, and the federal Keeper of the National Register. Owner consent must be given before a privately owned historic property can be listed.

The West Washington Park Neighborhood has seven properties on the National Register and has one property eligible for the Register, which to date has only been designated a city Landmark:

- The Smith Ditch, which flows through Washington Park, was listed on the National Register on October 8, 1976. It was built as an early irrigation ditch and later served the City's municipal needs.
- The Eugene Field House was moved to Washington Park and was listed on the National Register November 1, 1974. It commemorates Denver's beloved children's poet and journalist.

- Washington Park was listed on the National Register September 17, 1986. Though the City purchased the land in 1898, Washington Park gained its present configuration during the tenure of Mayor Speer and the "City Beautiful" movement of the early 1900s. The significant parts of the park include the Washington Park Boating Pavilion (1913) designed by the eccentric architect Jules Jacques Benois Benedict; the statue of Wynken, Blynken, and Nod, the children sailing in a wooden shoe in Eugene Field's famous poem; and the designed park landscape.
- Washington Park was listed as part of a thematic nomination of properties associated with the "Denver Parks and Parkway System." These other properties in the neighborhood were listed as part of this system: Hungarian Freedom Park, Speer Boulevard and South Marion Street. All were listed September 17, 1986.
- The Norman Apartment Building at 99 South Downing was listed on the National Register on December 22, 1983. It is representative of early twentieth century apartment houses.
- The Mayan Theater, though not on the National Register, is a designated Denver Landmark. Built in 1930, the Mayan Theater is one of the best remaining examples of the big, elaborate movie houses of the 1920s and 1930s. The theater is adorned with Mayan warriors and has rich details of polychrome terra cotta. Replicas of Aztec images in the interior and a blocky temple form add to the Mayan Revival architecture of the movie palace reopened in 1985.

Denver Landmark status is conferred, upon application by any person or group of persons, by vote of the Denver Landmark Commission. The Commission recommends designation to the Mayor and City Council. Designation is by ordinance, like zoning. Properties must possess significance and integrity as defined by the National Register of Historic Places' criteria. Properties do not have to be listed on the National Register.

The Neighborhood could initiate, either through the Landmarks Commission or some other preservation group, a thorough survey of the neighborhood. In 1981 a minimal reconnaissance-level survey of the neighborhood was published by the city as part of the Historic Building Inventory, City and County of Denver. This report lacks much. A new

survey should be undertaken. All historic properties should be identified using standard professional guidelines for the survey and inventory of historic properties.

The Broadway Avenue "Miracle Mile" should receive high priority as well as representative blocks of Queen Anne and Bungalow residences.

Once individual properties or districts are identified, National Register of Historic Places nomination forms should be completed and submitted to the city, under the Certified Local Government Program, and to the State for review, comment and forwarding to the Federal Keeper of the National Register.

#### 4. Denver Certified Local Government

On September 23, 1985, the City of Denver became a Certified Local Government (CLG). This program was developed by the National Park Service and is administered by the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office to assist local preservation efforts through matching grants. Cities must pass acceptable historic preservation ordinances, convene historic commissions, and identify historic properties in order to become CLGs.

Ten percent of the federal preservation annual historic preservation grant to the State must be passed through to CLGs (an estimated \$50,000 for 1991). The City of Denver may apply for a share of these funds to conduct such projects as survey and inventory of historic properties, preservation education programs, or workshops. As part of Denver, the West Washington Park Neighborhood is eligible to apply through the Denver CLG (Landmarks Commission) for a grant-funded preservation project.

The West Washington Park Neighborhood should receive high priority from the Denver CLG for funding a thorough survey and inventory of historic properties. The history, characteristics and architecture of the neighborhood has not received a share of the study monies made available to the City. It is time to request funds and expertise to accomplish the goals of completing an historic context, survey and inventory and nomination of properties to either the National Register or City Landmarks. A portion of the funds could be used for compiling illustrated design guidelines.

**5. Other Public Incentives for Historic Preservation**

Besides the grants awarded to the Denver CLG, other grants are available directly to the State for preservation projects such as survey and inventories and preservation of historic properties. If funds are requested for restoration work, the property must be on the National Register. Because funds are very limited for grants for restoration projects, owners of historic structures have utilized the tax incentives.

Tax incentives for historic preservation are available both from the State and federal government for the rehabilitation of commercial properties. The investment tax credits, again, are available only for historic properties considered eligible for or already on the National Register. State tax incentives are available to properties designated historically significant by local entities. These State tax incentives went into effect January 1, 1991 and are available to commercial properties as well as owner-occupied residences.

No properties in the West Washington Park Neighborhood have utilized the grants or tax credits. A survey of the neighborhood could identify numbers of historic properties eligible for these public incentives. Information about preservation incentives is available at the State Historic Preservation Office at the Colorado History Museum on Broadway at 13th.

As part of the survey and inventory project, information about federal and State preservation incentives should be mailed or handed to all residents and property owners.

**6. Public Awareness of Historic Preservation**

Our society's attitude has become increasingly more positive towards preservation and the movement has become a mainstream activity. This interest is shown on the local level as well. As described above, the City of Denver has adopted several ordinances to promote preservation. Also as described above, the Federal government during the same period has provided new techniques, tax advantages, and monies for preservation projects.

The neighborhood has also worked to improve awareness of the history and architecture of the area by supporting Preservation Week activities held in May, usually through walking tours, by providing a forum for preservation discussions as seen by several public meetings held in the neighborhood specifically on preservation issues, and, finally, by incorporating into this plan the concerns over historic preservation issues.

Many homes are being rehabilitated by their owners and other owners desire information on how to appropriately and sympathetically renovate their homes and businesses. Illustrated design guidelines or a similar document should be prepared to help property owners in their rehabilitation work. The standards for historic preservation are in the Secretary of Interior's "Standards for Historic Preservation Projects." These give general guidance. Design guidelines developed for the neighborhood will help home owners build compatible new additions and preserve the character-defining elements of the neighborhood's architecture.

The Neighborhood should continue its support of walking tours and public meetings. A self-guided tour could be developed in conjunction with the Denver Landmark Commission on all significant properties in South Denver. This tour could feature community leaders, significant buildings, sites of historic events that took place in the area, architectural styles, historic streetscapes, scenic views, etc. The potential to educate -- and entertain -- the public while increasing awareness, familiarity and appreciation of Washington Park could produce long-lasting dividends for the neighborhood and the city.