

**COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
**City and County of Denver**  
**200 West 14th Avenue, Room 203**  
**Denver, Colorado 80204**

October 3, 2000

**LANDMARK DESIGNATION**  
**Staff Recommendation**

Staff Report -  
Not presented by  
Erlin Ittelson

**Property Name:** Country Club Gardens  
**Property Address:** 1-23 South Downing, 2-22 South Ogden, 1010-1140 Ellsworth

Review of Significance. The application demonstrates that the property meets criteria in at least two of the three categories as summarized here:

1. *Historical Importance.*
  - a. Has direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation: Country Club Gardens is a five-building, 187 unit apartment complex built in 1940. It was designed to meet the needs of middle class renters by offering as many luxuries as possible. It was the first Federal Housing Administration project in the Rocky Mountain region. The list of banks, owners, architects, and builders indicates the importance of the project to Denver. Country Club Gardens help set the tone of the Speer Boulevard area as an important multi-family housing corridor. It continues to provide housing to middle income people in an area that increasingly caters to the wealthy.
2. *Architectural Importance.*
  - a. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type: The apartment complex is one of the earliest expressions of the International style in Denver. The continuous horizontal bands and expression of materials are the notable features.
  - b. Is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder: Country Club Gardens was designed by the architectural firm of Fisher, Fisher and Hubbell. The firm designed many of the City's and regions finest buildings in the early decades of this century. The contractor for the project was Nicholas G. Petry, who's construction firm built many of the period's most substantial buildings, including Fitzsimmons Hospital, Buckley Field, and Sherman Tower.
3. *Geographic Importance.*
  - b. Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity.  
The Country Club Gardens is distinctive because of its unusually skilled interplay of building and open space and use of courtyards to organize a collection of buildings. Walter Pesman was the Landscape Architect and Charles Wilmore the landscape contractor.

c. Make a special contribution to Denver's distinctive character. County Club Gardens is located along Downing Street Parkway. The site's landscaping, which occupies two-thirds of its six-acre site, retains its integrity and reinforces the character of the parkway. The Downing Street Parkway has been designated as part of the Denver City Beautiful Parkway District.

Identification of Character Defining Features

<b>Significant Features</b>	
Site Planning and Landscape	<p>Unique arrangement of 3-story buildings form a series of interconnected courtyards</p> <p>Symmetrical building plan on both east-west and north-south axes</p> <p>Complex is designed to promote both privacy and community interaction</p> <p>Along south side of complex are 3 garage buildings; a fourth was demolished previously</p> <p>Sophisticated, thoughtful site planning unique in Denver, perhaps region</p> <p>Mature landscaping reinforces site plan</p>
Architecture	<p>Design has typical elements of International Style including horizontal banding, steel casement windows, corner voids for balconies, attention to materials rather than details, the complex as whole is more than each of its parts</p> <p>Every building has the same features so there is an egalitarian quality to the complex—no one building or unit is inherently better than another</p> <p>Scale of buildings fits with site design, giving a complete sense of enclosure, but not too tall for neighborhood</p> <p>Units are well designed—spacious, at least two outside walls for each</p>
Condition	<p>Exterior is in excellent condition</p> <p>Brick shows deterioration only where irrigation is too close to a building</p> <p>Minimal alteration except addition of a few site features</p>
Context	<p>The combination of Country Club Gardens and the Norman along Downing create an unusually gracious and beautiful face for this parkway</p> <p>Across Downing from Denver Country Club</p> <p>Speer Boulevard area gaining more high-rise towers</p> <p>Neighborhood to west and south single family houses and small apartment buildings; overlay district in place for other areas of neighborhood</p>

Staff Recommendation

The application has been submitted by the Colorado Historical Foundation in response to the increasing development pressure along this segment of the Speer Boulevard corridor.

At the request of the owner, Broe Real Estate Services, the applicant entered into negotiations to determine if additional density could be added to the site while maintaining the overall integrity of the complex. After many meetings and the considerable site analysis skill of Raphael Vinoly and Charles Blomberg, a group that included the applicants (Colorado Historical Foundation and West Washington Park Neighborhood Association), the owner (Pat Broe) and his representatives (Clark Robertston and Tom Ragonetti), and city representatives determined that this goal could be achieved.

Staff therefore recommends that the Landmark Preservation Commission recommend the designation to City Council. Such designation should not take place until such time as all required documents have been drafted and have been determined to meet the terms established by the committee described above. The documents to be prepared are 1. An ordinance designating Country Club Gardens as a district for preservation; 2. A development agreement between the owner and City; and, 3. Design guidelines for new construction on the site. All of the documents will be consistent with and the means by which the attached Vinoly concept will be implemented.