



# DENVER LANDMARK PRESERVATION COMMISSION HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARK DESIGNATION

This form is for use in nominating historic districts for historic designation in the City and County of Denver. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." Questions about the application or designation process can be directed to Denver Landmark Preservation staff at [landmark@denvergov.org](mailto:landmark@denvergov.org) or (303) 865-2709.

**Proposed Historic District Name:** East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District B- Steele Street Extension

The following are required for the application to be considered complete:

- District Information
- Applicant Information and Signatures
- Criteria for Significance
- Statement of Significance
- Period of Significance
- District Description
- Statement of Integrity
- Historic Context
- Bibliography
- Photographs
- District Map and Property List
- Public Outreach Documentation
- Applicant Signatures
- Application Fee
- Inventory Table

## 1. District Information

### District Identification

Historic Name: N/A

Proposed Name of District: East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue District B- Steele Street Extension

### Location:

Boundaries of District: Center of Steele Street to the center of the alley east of Steele Street from 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The house on the north end of the 600 block and the house on the south end of 700 block are excluded from this application as they are already included in the East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District.

### Legal Description:

Block 342, Lots 6 through 20 and ½ of lot 21 and Block 332 , Lots 1 through 19, together with the adjoining public rights-of-way but only to the centerline thereof, Capitol Avenue Subdivision, Third Filing, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado. Specifically excludes L 22 & 23 & S1/2 OF L 21 EXC REAR 6FT TO CITY BLK 332CAPITOL AVE SUB THIRD FLG and L 4 & 5 EXC REAR 6FT TO CITY BLK 342 CAPITOL AVENUE SUB 3RD FLG

### Number of resources:

There are 19 primary structures (houses) in the boundary of the proposed district.

### Contributing and Noncontributing Features or Resources

*Describe how the contributing and non-contributing resources have been determined.*

The contributing properties were identified as those built during the period of significance and retaining integrity. Of the 19 primary structures, 18 are contributing. These structures were built between 1912 and 1930.

The detached secondary structures in the district, such as garages, have been determined to be non-contributing because they are not highly visible from the primary street, due to the orientation of the block, and some have been altered.

Evaluation of each property's status was based on physical site visits, City of Denver building permits, City of Denver Assessor's records, historic maps and information provided by owners.

### Previous documentation

*List previous historic survey and/or if property is listed or eligible for listing in the State or National Register of Historic Places.*



The blocks in the proposed district were surveyed in 1992 as part of the E 7th Ave Historic District Building Inventory. The blocks were surveyed again as part of Discover Denver’s Congress Park survey in 2019/2020, which included a Congress Park Context and field-work. Discover Denver identified 780 Steele as potentially eligible for individual landmark status, and the block was identified as a potential area of interest.



## 2. Applicant Information

An application for designation may be submitted by:

- Owner(s) of the property or properties, or
- Member(s) of city council, or
- Manager of Community Planning and Development, or
- Three residents of Denver

### Primary Point of Contact

Name: Kenda Fuller  
Address: 756 Steele Street  
Phone: 303-868-9171  
Email: kendafuller@hotmail.com

### Prepared by:

Name: Kenda Fuller  
Address: 756 Steele Street  
Phone: 303-868-9171  
Email: kendafuller@hotmail.com

Applicant Name: Jane Pritzl  
Date: 8/20/2020

(please print) Jane Pritzl

Applicant Signature: Jane Pritzl 8/18/2021

Applicant Address: 674 Steele Street

Applicant Name: Kenda Fuller  
Date: 08/20/2020

(please print) Kenda Fuller

Applicant Signature: Kenda Fuller

Applicant Address: 756 Steele 8/19/2021

Applicant Name: Tom Heese  
Date: 08/20/2020 8-20-20

(please print) THOMAS J HEESE

Applicant Signature: [Signature]

Applicant Address: 770 Steele Street

### 3. Significance

#### Criteria for Significance

*To qualify as a Landmark, a district must meet at least three significance criteria. Check the applicable criteria from the following list.*

- A. It has a direct association with a significant historic event or with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;
- B. It has direct and substantial association with a recognized person or group of persons who had influence on society;
- C. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or type;
- D. It is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;
- E. It contains elements of design, engineering, materials, craftsmanship, or artistic merit which represent a significant innovation or technical achievement;
- F. It represents an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood, community or contemporary city, due to its prominent location or physical characteristics;
- G. It promotes understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;
- H. It represents an era of culture or heritage that allows an understanding of how the site was used by past generations;
- I. It is a physical attribute of a neighborhood, community, or the city that is a source of pride or cultural understanding;
- J. It is associated with social movements, institutions, or patterns of growth or change that contributed significantly to the culture of the neighborhood, community, city, state, or nation.

#### Statement of Significance

##### **Criterion A: It has a direct association with a significant historic event or with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;**

The 600 and 700 blocks of Steele Street are significant for their close association with the City Beautiful movement and with the development of the East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway, which runs between the two blocks. The City Beautiful era in Denver is widely believed to have begun in earnest in 1904 with the election of Mayor Robert Speer and to have extended through the 1920s.

Inspired by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the City Beautiful movement promoted the design and creation of orderly, well-functioning cities. As an enthusiastic supporter of the movement, two-time Denver mayor Robert W. Speer (1904-1912 and 1916-

1918) was instrumental in growing the city’s parks and parkway system, believing it supported a rational urban framework and encouraged expanded residential development in neighborhoods radiating out from downtown Denver. During his time in office, Speer gave away over 100,000 trees to residents to plant on their land, breaking up the brown cityscape of Denver. During his first administration building heights, manners of construction, and classes of buildings were regulated for the first time. The City Beautiful movement continued to influence the development of the city as Speer began his second term in office in 1916, just as the homes on the 600 and 700 blocks of Steele Street were being built.

Residential developers during this time, including those in the surrounding Congress Park neighborhood, embraced the principles of the City Beautiful movement. Single-family detached homes prevailed, with builders focused on providing homes that were both well-designed and attractive.



Denver Mayor Robert Speer incorporated the concept of City Beautiful in city planning during his administration 1904-1912 and 1916-1918. Photo credit: Denver Public Library.

### **Seventh Avenue Parkway**

The East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway is directly associated with the City Beautiful movement and the larger park and parkway network, which became a matter of civic pride in Denver. The greening of the urban landscape with lawns, flower beds, and trees surrounding both modest residences and elaborate homes enhanced livability and elevated the urban experience for residents and passers-by.

The western section of the East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway runs between Williams and Milwaukee streets and was constructed between 1912 and 1914. The “upper” portion

of the parkway, running through the center of the proposed district and extending from Milwaukee Street to Colorado Boulevard, was implemented in 1927. Notably, all homes in the proposed district were built between 1914 and 1924, squarely within the period that the City Beautiful parkway vision was coming to fruition.



The creation of East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway during the first three decades of the twentieth century both complimented and inspired development of the homes in the proposed district. Photo by Nancy Widmann.  
*(From the original application of East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District, 1992)*

The surge in 1920s home building from St. Paul Street to Colorado Boulevard gave urgency to the planning of the upper portion of East 7th Avenue Parkway. This upper portion was planned by Saco R. DeBoer, and includes forest planting and marked a less formal part of the parkway. A uniform pine forest exists on the block between Milwaukee and Steele streets, marking the beginning of the upper parkway section.

Nancy Widmann, author of the E. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District nomination noted that for residential design the City Beautiful movement encouraged a move away from the heavy ornamentation of the Victorian era as the Arts & Crafts movement gained steam, encouraging bolder design in square column supports, wide overhangs, exposed wood rafters and massive wood brackets. These attributes and their coincidence with the build-out of the City Beautiful parkway is evident in the proposed district.

Since its implementation the parkway has been the focal point of the neighborhood. The shift in its design as it meets the proposed district at Steele Street is notable, making these blocks geographically significant as a marker between the older part of East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway and the newer section where bungalows flourished.

**Significance: Criterion B. It has direct and substantial association with a recognized person or group of persons who had influence on society;**

The 600 and 700 blocks of Steele have been home to a number of notable residents. The resident with the most lasting legacy and long-term prominence was Judge Raymond Dean Jones. Jones owned and resided at 780 Steele Street for more than forty years, creating a substantial association between Judge Jones and the blocks. Jones was a well-known personality on Steele Street and a respected figure. He played an active role in the Civil Rights Movement, was a notable attorney and judge, and was the first African American to serve on the Appellate Court in Colorado.

Born in Pueblo, Colorado Jones studied political science at Colorado College, one of only five African American students in attendance in 1964. Joanne Davidson wrote about him in *The Denver Post* published January 2012,

“In 1965, at the height of the American civil-rights movement, Raymond Dean Jones was a sophomore at Colorado College, majoring in political science. When news of the three Selma to Montgomery marches reached him, Jones stuffed a change of clothes into a bag, stuck out his thumb and hitchhiked to Alabama to take part.”

During his college years Jones also worked for Colorado Congressman Frank Evans, including time spent working in Washington D.C. and on Evans’ campaigns. This gave Jones an appetite for politics and the law, and after graduating from Colorado College Jones went on to earn a law degree from Harvard University in 1971. He then worked in New York City on Wall Street but was lured back to Denver to clerk for the Chief Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court, Justice Pringle.

In 1988, he became the first African American appellate judge in Colorado. He served as a justice for 32 years; half of this time was spent on the Colorado Court of Appeals where he wrote 1,400 opinions, with only three opinions overturned. As he stated in his alumni profile in the Colorado College Bulletin in 2013, he believed that it is “incumbent on all of us to help others to know that what is similar in all of us outreaches that which is different.” This philosophy steered his life’s work and provided a roadmap to “resolve disputes and bring peace around the world.”

Raymond Dean Jones shared his political science and legal knowledge by teaching at Colorado College and Metro State University. He helped form the Sam Cary Association of Black Attorneys, and Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Theatre (CPRD), the home of the modern dance ensemble widely renowned for celebrating the African American heritage and the human condition in general.

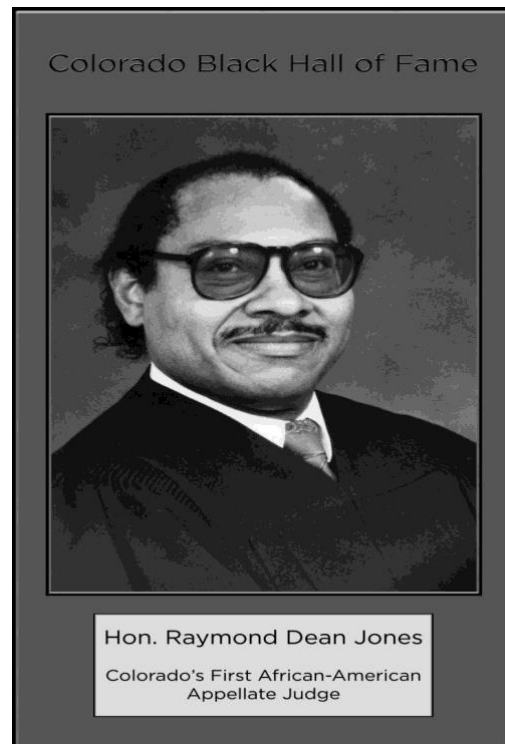
Jones was inducted in the Colorado Black Hall of Fame in 1990. The Hall of Fame honor is bestowed upon a Coloradan who has been the first African American to accomplish a professional goal in their field and/or has actively supported the African American community



while achieving his or her goal. He received the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award in 2012. In 2016, Judge Jones reported that he had attended every single Martin Luther King Day Parade since its beginning. He was part of the crowd walking proudly from Denver's City Park to Civic Center Park with the purpose to unify and educate communities within the state of Colorado while encouraging appropriate observations, ceremonies and activities in commemoration of the federal and state legal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The restaurant at the City Park Golf course (Links) named a sandwich for Judge Jones as a light-hearted gesture of love and recognition of his contributions to the community.



Judge Raymond D. Jones, May 26, 2021. Photo: Annie Levinsky.



Denver Public Library, Special Collections.

While Judge Jones was certainly the most significant individual to have lived in the proposed district, these blocks also served as home to other individuals of interest, including three generations of the Cheley family, founders of Cheley Colorado camps, and Arthur Swenson, a prominent and early proprietor of trucks.

Worth noting, in the 1920s these two blocks were also home to a number of Jewish families, many who migrated east to Congress Park after initially settling in the predominantly Jewish West Colfax neighborhood. While there is no evidence that these families knew each other prior to moving to Steele Street, the concentration of Jewish families on these two blocks during this early period is striking, with more than 1/3 of the homes owned and occupied by



Jewish families at a time when Denver's Jewish population represented only 3% of the total population. It is possible that having other families with a similar cultural background made the 600 and 700 blocks of Steele Street a familiar and attractive place to settle.

For example, 602 Steele Street was home for many years to members of the Troyansky and Wienshienk family. Samuel Troyansky was a Russian immigrant who initially settled in the Jewish agricultural colony of Atwood before moving his family to West Denver, and then to Congress Park after a time in Kansas City. City directories show that he was secretary of the Carbonated Bottling Company in 1906 and by 1908 was partner in the beer bottling company of Troyansky & Fine. Troyansky moved his family to Kansas City for several years and purchased the Steele Street home upon his return. Troyansky transferred ownership of the home to his daughter Rose shortly after buying it. Rose was married in 1925 to Russian immigrant and watchmaker Lester Weinshienk, who later opened his own jewelry store, Lester's Jewelers. The Weinshienks lived at 602 Steele Street through the late 1940s. Their son, Hubert, was a graduate of Harvard Law School. He married classmate Zita Leeson and the couple returned to Denver upon graduation, where Zita became Denver's first female municipal court judge.

Other Jewish families included Morris and Rose Polse at 610 Steele Street, Morris and Kate Lehman at 658 Steele, and Max S. and Pauline Schayer at 640 Steele. Max Schayer was prominent in Denver circles, serving as a leader in B'nai B'rith. 674 Steele was owned by Daniel R. and Lillian Bank from 1922 until 1930. He was active in his lodge, Western Lodge No. 303, Order B'rith Abraham. 764 Steele was the home of Joseph and Rose Bock. The couple emigrated from Romania in 1904 and were in Denver by 1906.

The second owner of 620 Steele Street, Max Schwartz, was a successful Jewish real estate man who owned rental properties across the city. Max and his wife, Bessie, lived in the Steele Street home until 1935 when he was robbed of nearly \$30,000 at his offices in downtown Denver. A month later he was gunned down in front of one of his apartment buildings by those wishing to silence his testimony. Bessie continued to live in the home and was remarried to successful plumbing supply business owner Harry Weinstein in 1937. Harry died in 1958, and Bessie continued to live in the home through 1972. Edith Schwartz Meyer, Bessie's daughter, owned the home through 1990.

The stories of these individuals and others that resided in the proposed district are detailed further in the historic context section.

**Significance: Criterion C. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or type;**

The homes in the proposed district are significant as excellent examples of the Craftsman architectural style in Denver, with 16 out of 19 structures exhibiting the distinguishing characteristics of the style, all constructed between 1912 and 1924 as the style gained great popularity in Denver.

Defining features of the Craftsman style include low-pitched gabled or hipped roofs, wide, overhanging eaves, often with exposed rafter tails, ridge beams, or knee braces, and full- or partial-width porches with substantial square or tapered piers supporting the porch roof. While the Craftsman style was most often applied to homes of the bungalow form, it could also be applied to other building types. Craftsman style elements are easily recognizable on each of the Bungalows along the eastside of Steele Street in the proposed district.

While Bungalows became increasingly common in Denver through the 1920s, the Bungalows on Steele Street stand-out for their consistency, for their craftsmanship, and for their closer than-usual exhibition of key elements of the Craftsman influence, such as the tapered columns, the front porches and knee-walls, and exposed rafter tails on nearly every home.

The Craftsman style originated with the work of Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene in Pasadena, California where the brothers practiced together from 1893 to 1914. In the early 1900s Greene and Greene began designing simple, and later highly decorative, bungalows influenced by the English Arts & Crafts movement. The movement was focused on the use of natural materials, such as wood and stone, and the blending of the home with the surrounding landscape. The works of Greene and Greene were featured prominently in architectural magazines such as *Western Architect* and *Architectural Record*, as well as in popular magazines of the day such as *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. The publications familiarized readers with the style and soon, according to Virginia and Lee McAlester in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, “a flood of pattern books appeared, offering plans for Craftsman bungalows; some even offered completely pre-cut packages of lumber and detailing to be assembled by local labor. Through these vehicles, the one-story Craftsman house quickly became the most popular and fashionable smaller house in the country.” This was certainly the case in Denver.

According to permit records, none of the homes in the proposed district were designed by architects, but instead were built by a series of small scale developers and contractors, including Daniel & Orria Stevens (four homes), Swan Johnson (two homes), K. Zoomer (two homes), and the Home Security Company (two homes). These four entities built half the homes on the blocks. Other builders active on a home on the blocks include CA Eckman, J.J. Cunningham, and George Singelton. So, while many of the homes were likely developed on spec and then sold to residents, the number of smaller-scale builders ensured that each home had distinctive details and none are identical.

The bungalows in the proposed district were constructed between 1915 and 1924, at the height of the style's popularity in Denver. The only homes not built in the bungalow style include one Foursquare and one Central Passage Double Pile, but these two homes were built within the same period, and their brick construction and setbacks blend neatly with their Bungalow neighbors.



610 & 602 Steele. Note the porches, tapered brick columns, the gabled roofs, over-hanging eaves with exposed rafter-tails. Photos: David Lyn Wise.

The home at 716 Steele exhibits its Craftsman Bungalow origin, but a fire in the early 1980s necessitated more intensive reconstruction and redesign than intended. A 1990s addition further altered the home, making it the only non-contributing primary structure in the district. However, the home respects the character and qualities of the block, with a consistent set-back, roof form, porch orientation, and over-hanging eaves.

780 Steele is likely the oldest home on the block and the only Foursquare. Building permit records indicate construction began in 1912, although assessor records reflect a 1920 date. Given the difference size and form of the home, the earlier date is most likely.

Period of Significance: 1912-1990

The homes in the proposed district were primarily built between 1912 and 1924. This coincides with the City Beautiful movement and the construction and planting of the upper portion of the East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway. It was a period of rapid growth in Denver's business community and housing was in high demand. The significance of the block extends through the 1980s as the block and parkway matured, and due to the association of Judge Raymond Jones, who moved to the block in 1977 and lived in this location when he was appointed to the Appellate Court in 1988. The homes remained consistent throughout this period.

#### **4. District Description**

a. *Summary Paragraph*-The boundaries are 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north. The proposed district includes the houses on the east side of Steele Street as the homes on the west side of the block are already included in the East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District. These 19 houses, included in the growth and development of residential Denver as described above, are an established and identifiable part of the Congress Park neighborhood. This area is now zoned U-SU-C a single unit district allowing urban houses with a minimum lot area of 4,500 square feet. Blocks typically have a pattern of 37.5 foot wide lots. Setbacks and lot coverage standards require front and side yard, which are character defining features of the proposed district.

b. *Architectural Description* – The homes in this application consist of 17 bungalows, one Foursquare and one Central Passage Double Pile. The predominant architectural style of the blocks is the Craftsman style. Although modest in size the homes embody a skillful and expressive use of brick masonry for the exterior elevations, which are sheltered by wood framed roofs with refined carpentry details. Every house on the block, including all three housing types, has a similar front porch that projects forward and aligns with the block setback. The front facing gable roofs are similar in size and design. They are large enough to use as open-air furnished rooms. The design of the homes is meant to work in common to create a harmonious streetscape as well as to make interesting individual but aesthetically compatible buildings.

The topography of the district includes a Denver roll that rises from the sidewalk to meet consistent front yards and porches. The slope of the hill is similar across the two blocks and the height of the buildings appears uniform with minimal exceptions for the two taller homes.

#### **5. Integrity**

Integrity of location and setting of the homes in the proposed district is high. The homes all remain in their original location, and their setting, with uniform setbacks, sidewalks, and tree lawns, remains unchanged. The homes throughout the proposed district largely retain their original materials, predominantly brick, and have changed little since their construction. The original forms, detailing, and style of the homes is highly evident. Minor alterations, such as enclosed front porches or replaced windows in their original openings, have minor impact on the district's integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Integrity of feeling and association are also high across the proposed district. The street is lined with tree lawns, sidewalks, and mature shade trees, and each of the homes is perched atop a Denver roll and set back from the street. The feeling is of an early suburban neighborhood from the 1910s or 1920s, consistent with the era of construction for the homes and the influences of the City Beautiful era.

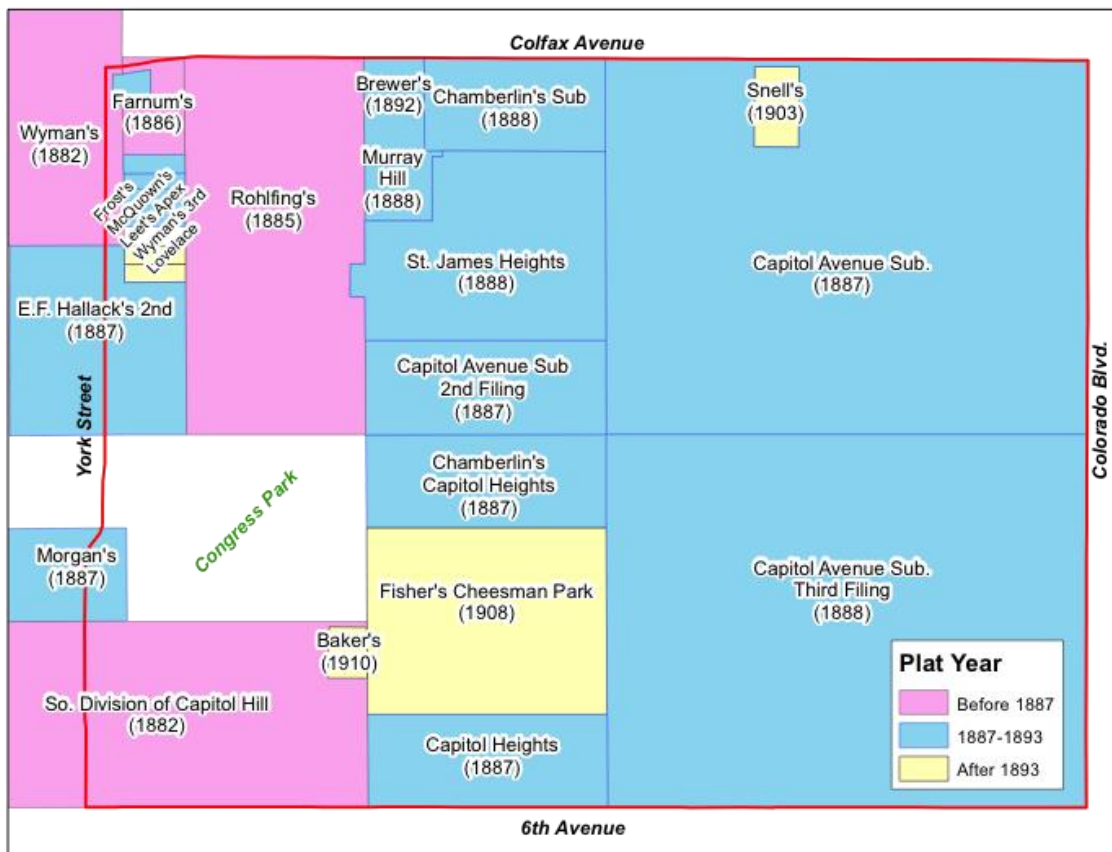
## 6. Historic Context

(Includes references and excerpts from the Congress Park Context, Discover Denver, 2020, with additional block-specific information and context).

### Early Congress Park Development, 1887-1900

In 1887 York Street marked Denver’s eastern edge, an ambitious border given that few buildings existed east of the site of the State Capital, which was yet to be constructed. At the time, what is now the Congress Park neighborhood consisted of mostly vacant, un-platted land controlled by investors betting on the city’s eventual growth.

That growth became more likely in 1887 with the incorporation of the Colfax Avenue Railway. The railway ran between York Street and Quebec Street, the western edge of the Town of Montclair. Service for the new railway began at the end of 1887, providing seamless transportation between Montclair and the established Denver core. A real estate frenzy ensued, and plats for most Congress Park subdivisions were filed between 1887 and 1890. The 600 and 700 blocks of Steele Street were included in the Capitol Avenue Subdivision, Third Filing, in 1888.



Subdivisions within the Congress Park neighborhood, with filing year.

Source: Discover Denver Congress Park Survey Report.

However, it would be many years before home construction would begin in the south east portion of the neighborhood. Instead, residential development began in the far northwest section, near the Colfax railway.

Gradually attempts began to lure potential buyers eastward. Developers James Leonard and John C. Montgomery established the Monroe Street Horse Car Line in 1889, transporting riders from Colfax Avenue along Clayton Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and Monroe Street to the line's termination at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.<sup>1</sup> Along with Donald Fletcher, the pair built eight speculative homes along the route – four on the 800 block of Monroe Street, and four on the 1100 block of Monroe. These homes pre-dated the homes on Steele Street by several decades and marked the eastern edge of the city.

Residential development wasn't the only activity in Congress Park during these early years. In 1892 the Jewish Hospital Association laid the cornerstone for the Frances Jacobs Memorial Hospital, the precursor to today's National Jewish Health Center, at 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Colorado Boulevard. The hospital was named for Frances Wisebart Jacobs, a tireless worker for Denver's needy, who had died earlier that year.

In 1893, boom times in Capitol Heights came to an end with the start of a crushing economic depression. Residential development throughout the city stalled, and the homes on Steele Street were not constructed for another decade and a half.

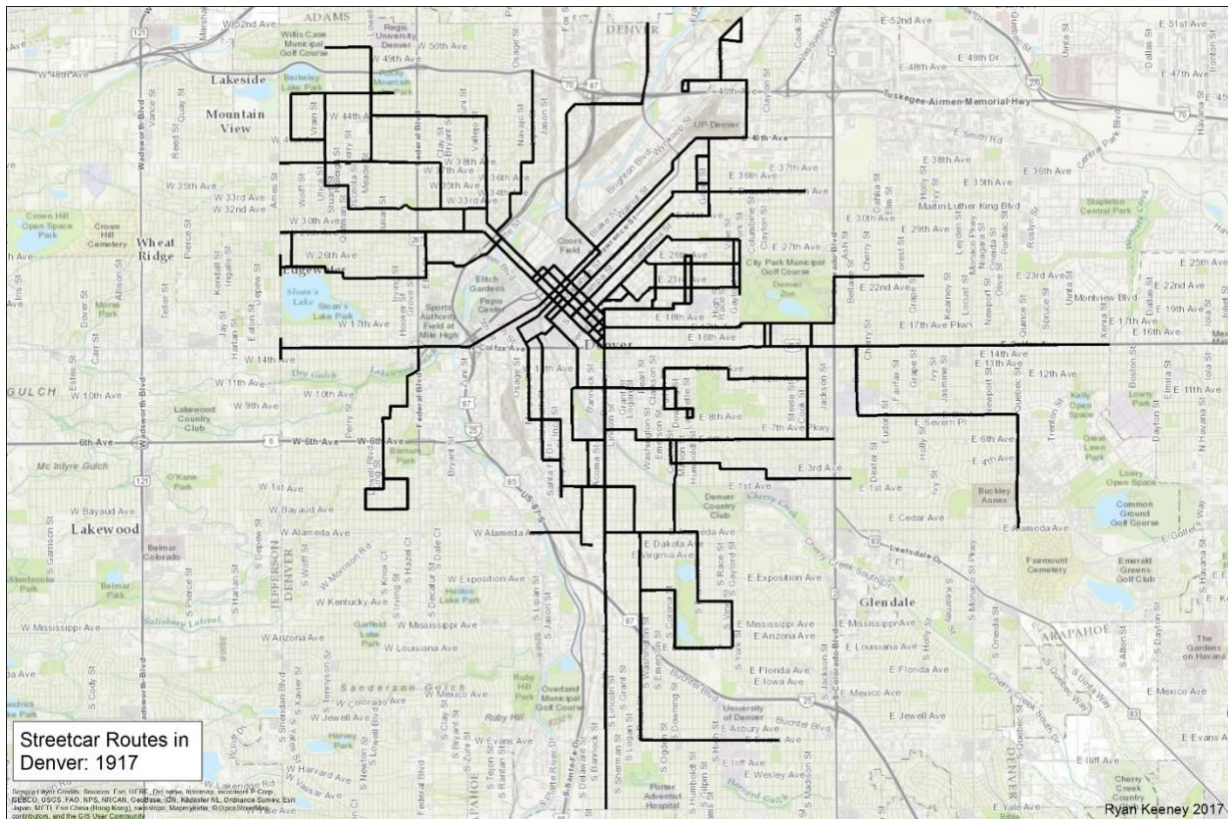
### **The City Beautiful Era, Residential Expansion, 1900-1930**

After the 1893 Silver Crash residential construction in Denver's first-ring neighborhoods slowly began to recover and was eventually spurred into high gear by the ambitions and city-building efforts of Mayor Robert Speer, who first took office in 1904. Inspired by what he saw at the 1893 Columbian Exposition Speer's vision included developing an extensive park and parkway system modeled on the City Beautiful movement. This included beautifying Cherry Creek, constructing Civic Center, and establishing the network of parks connected by boulevards and greenways, today's parkway system. According to Tom Noel and Stephen Leonard, Denver's park acreage more than doubled during Speer's terms in office.

Speer hired Charles Mulford Robinson and George Kessler, a landscape architect from Kansas to prepare a preliminary parks and parkway map in 1907. Development of the plan and expanding residential development converged at East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Williams Street, so that homes built east of Williams were built with an awareness about the parkway intention, although the city did not purchase the land for the parkway until 1912. At that point the city hired Holland-born landscape architect Saco Rink DeBoer to design the parkway plantings. The Frederick Law Olmsted firm consulted. The first set of plantings were implemented from Williams to Milwaukee, while the second set of planting extended from Milwaukee to Colorado Boulevard

in 1927, just as the homes on Steele Street were built, as development of the southern portion of the neighborhood (south of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue) generally followed the expansion of the parkway from west to east chronologically. DeBoer’s influence on the plantings in the upper parkway is apparent, as he was known for the use of indigenous plant material, sensitivity to the natural landscape, and sustainable practices such as water conservation.

The Congress Park neighborhood was well situated to benefit from these civic investments, with close proximity to Cheesman Park and Congress Park, and due to the development of the East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway, one of several planned across the city. At the same time, expanded streetcar service made Congress Park more easily accessible. By 1907 the 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue streetcar line was extended to Madison Street where it met a newly constructed line running north to south between Colfax and 6<sup>th</sup> avenues. Small commercial nodes developed along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Elizabeth and Madison streets, and along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Nodes included grocery and drug stores as well as other small shops catering to the neighborhood.



Denver Streetcar Routes as of 1917. Source: Ryan Keeney 2017.

The extension of public transportation helped fuel residential development in Congress Park, and the construction of amenities such as the E. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway made the area particularly desirable. Many small-scale real estate developers were active in the neighborhood. Often, they would purchase multiple lots on a block and construct, on speculation, a row of homes with



similar massing and floor plans but slightly different stylistic elements. On the 600 and 700 blocks more than half the homes appear to have been built by four or five such small scale contractors, while the balance of the homes were either constructed by the eventual residents or were one-off projects. As an example, Oria Stevens owned four lots on the block, and was the wife of contractor Daniel Stevens. The homes they built include 650, 658, 726 and 730 Steele, each built in a different year and all Bungalows, but not identical in appearance. While the Stevens built four homes, the other small scale contractors built only one or two on the block each over the course of a decade.



A view through the porches in the 700 block of Steele, demonstrating the Craftsman Bungalow style and form, and the consistency along the block. Photo: David Lynn Wise, 2020.

The inventory included in this application provides examples of some of the typical residents living to the north and south of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue on Steele Street during this early period. Evidence indicates many residents of the block, including residents of more than half the homes in the 1920s, were employed in downtown Denver, which they likely accessed on the streetcar, or by automobile as cars became more affordable and ubiquitous.

For example, and consistent with the rising popularity of cars, Arthur Swenson (730 Steele), was successful in the auto industry, first with Swenson Motors and then in representing Republic Trucks on Champa Street. He was described in *Colorado History* to be “in hearty sympathy for every plan or movement that is calculated to advance the welfare of the city or support those interests which are a matter of civic virtue and of civic pride.”



Fleet of Republic Trucks-Swenson Auto Co. Distributors. from the Western History and Genealogy Dept., Denver Public Library.



Delivery truck parked near the Swenson Auto Company at 1960 Champa Street in downtown Denver, Colorado. Lettering on the truck reads: "Denver Mud Express 330." from the Western History and Genealogy Dept, Denver Public Library.



William Shaw (740 Steele) was president of Shaw Dental Infirmary Co. located at 1454 Champa Street. Daniel Crossley (756 Steele) was a floor manager at Denver Dry Goods and submitted a patent for a drapery mechanism in keeping with the move toward efficiency in the household. Wilhelmina Malcom (770 Steele) was a graduate of the University of Denver. William Hammack (780 Steele) was head of the Denver Optical College Association in the 435 Commonwealth Building and sat on the board of the Optometry Examiners. H. G. Macomber (660 Steele) was a physician practicing at 1415 Welton Street. He and his wife are listed as Tammen Society donors to Denver's Children's Hospital. Frederick Sass (624 Steele) was an attorney in private practice in the Foster Building at 912 16<sup>th</sup> Street, designed by Fisher and Fisher and Frank Cheley (601 Steele on east side of block) started Cheley Summer Camps as an outgrowth of the philosophies of Teddy Roosevelt and the YMCA, which connected physical activity with moral character. Carrying this early history further forward, Cheley's grandson continued to run the camps from the home for many years and Frank's sister, Clara, married James Calhoun, who worked at Neusteters Department Store, and they moved across the street to 716 Steele. The early owners of 780 Steele, one of the largest homes on the block, regularly took in boarders, a practice that was common at the time.

As noted earlier in the application, several Jewish families lived on the blocks, particularly in the 1920s. These families included the Troyansky and Wienshienk family at 602 Steele and next door at 610 Steele Street were Morris and Rose Polse. Like Samuel Troyansky, the Polses were born in Russia. They settled in West Denver after immigrating to the United States in 1904. Morris was the proprietor of a furniture and second-hand goods store downtown. The couple lived at 610 Steele for several years before selling the home in 1925.

The second owner of 620 Steele Street was Max Schwartz, a successful Jewish real estate man who owned rental properties across the city. Max and his wife, Bessie, lived in the Steele Street home until 1935 when he was both robbed and murdered to prevent his testimony against the perpetrators. Bessie continued to live in the home, eventually with her second husband, successful plumbing supply business owner Harry Weinstein. Harry died in 1958, and Bessie continued to live in the home through 1972. Edith Schwartz Meyer, Bessie's daughter, owned the home through 1990.

640 Steele Street was the home for many years of Max S. and Pauline Schayer, who purchased the home in 1922. Max sold insurance from his office in the Empire Building in downtown Denver, advertising "every kind of reliable insurance." He was prominent in Denver circles, serving as a leader in B'nai B'rith. Max died in 1942 and Pauline sold the home that year.

Morris and Kate Lehmann purchased 658 Steele Street in 1923. The Lehmanns came from Telluride, where Morris was active in mining and , banking , and was part -owner of a saloon. After coming to Denver, he purchased the De Soto Hotel at 1823 Broadway. The Lehmanns lived in the Steele Street home until Morris's death in 1928.



674 Steele was owned by Daniel R. and Lillian Bank from 1922 until 1930. Bank, a Russian immigrant, owned a downtown furniture store before working in real estate. He was active in his lodge, Western Lodge No. 303, Order B'rith Abraham.

764 Steele was the home of Joseph and Rose Bock. The couple emigrated from Romania in 1904 and were in Denver by 1906. Bock was owner of his own successful tailor shop.

Many families living on Steele Street in the 1920s continued to live on the blocks through World War II, and in some cases for several decades.

### **The End of the Building Boom & Suburbanization, 1930-1973**

While nearly 1,000 Bungalows were constructed in Congress Park by 1929, the Great Depression brought this building boom to a close. Banks and businesses failed, and unemployment in the city reached 25%. Despite the poor economy, Denver saw its population continue to increase. Between 1940 and 1943 the city's population grew by another 4%.

Development in Congress Park during this period mirrored what was happening in the rest of the city. Only seventy-nine buildings were constructed in the neighborhood between 1930 and 1945. The streetcar continued to be the main form of transportation for most Denver residents, though the automobile was becoming increasingly commonplace. In Congress Park, increased car ownership was evident in the number of new garages built on the lots of pre-existing homes. It was also seen in the filling stations and automobile sales and service businesses that began to appear along Colfax Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Because the neighborhood was largely built out during in the years preceding World War II, fewer than thirty single-family homes were built in the neighborhood between 1946 and 1982 and much of the region's growth spread into newly forming suburban communities.

The post-war suburbanization trend, shaped by the dominance of car-travel, was further accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s as white families sought to avoid school integration actions and debate. A 1968 integration resolution proposed by school board member Rachel Noel passed but was rescinded the following year. A lawsuit brought by black, white, and Hispanic/Chicano families followed and in June 1973 the Supreme Court released its opinion in the *Keyes v. (Denver) School District No. 1*, which determined that Denver's schools were segregated and mandated their integration, which was implemented by reconfiguring school districts and requiring the busing of students to schools outside their home-neighborhoods. Shortly after the *Keyes* decision, Colorado voters approved the Poundstone Amendment to the state constitution, which restricted Denver's ability to annex more land, and ensured busing for integration only applied to the city, and not its suburban neighbors.

Steele Street in Congress Park was a subtle school district boundary, and this invisible boundary has influenced the block for decades. Students living on the west side of Steele between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> were assigned to one set of schools, and students on the east side of the

blocks assigned to another. For example, students on the east side of the street attended Bromwell, Morey, and East High School, and students on the west side attended Steck, Hill, and George Washington High School. The rationale for delineating the school boundaries at Steele are not clear, and have likely been in place since at least the early 1970s, but the unseen boundary may have reflected the older shift of the parkway development and may even be the reason the existing East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District, created in the 1990s, also changes scope at Steele, despite the relative consistency in housing forms and block patterns to the east and west.

### **1974-1990 Urban & Neighborhood Renaissance**

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) bus lines officially replaced the Denver Tramway Corporation by the 1950s. RTD services were used by a number of the residents on these blocks to commute to work in downtown Denver. As the surrounding major highway networks became jammed at rush hour, central Denver neighborhoods remained relatively less congested. Commuting from Congress Park was convenient both by car and public transit. To further attract people back to Downtown, Denver undertook a major revitalization effort, starting with the creation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall in the late 1970s and completed in 1982. For the new design, the Regional Transportation District hired renowned architecture firm I.M. Pei and Partners with Hana/Olin as the landscape architects. The project, which spanned nearly a full mile, put people and transit at the center of the design while, according to the Pei Cobb Freed & Partners project write-up, "consolidating and revitalizing the diverse city core."

In 1983, Federico Peña became the city's first Latino mayor and one of its most visionary. Mayor Peña worked together with the surrounding suburbs to market Denver as a vibrant city, and established key strategies to enhance downtown Denver, including the vision for the Central Platte Valley and the creation of the Lower Downtown Historic District. The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District was established, supporting facilities such as the Botanic Gardens, just blocks from the proposed district. With a strengthening core, the city's close-in historic neighborhoods, including Congress Park, benefitted and became more and more popular. The city experienced an uptick in the creation of landmarks and historic districts in the 1980s and 1990s, including the existing East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Historic District adjacent to the proposed district.

It was at the beginning of this period that Judge Raymond Jones returned to Denver after earning his Harvard law degree in 1971 and working in New York City for a time. Upon his move to Denver Jones began looking for a home, and recounted that numerous colleagues recommended the Congress Park neighborhood as highly desirable. Recalling his house-hunting experience during an oral history interview in 2021, Jones described that some realtors, and even some friends, discouraged him from looking in Congress Park because it was predominantly White, and because it was outside the central and northeast Denver neighborhoods where most Black Denverites lived as a result of racist housing and lending policies, including the 1938 Home Owners' Loan/residential security maps that created the

system known as redlining. Jones, however, was undeterred and ultimately rented 780 Steele in the mid-1970s, purchasing the home by 1977.

Jones did not yet have a family when he moved to Steele Street, but eventually raised two children in the house and became a fixture on the block. In the early years he experienced discrimination not from his neighbors, but from police officers, including the chief of police at the time. In one horrifying episode a neighbor called Judge Jones to inform him that while he was out Denver Police officers broke into his home, causing damage and stealing valuables. Despite his calls to the department, no action was ever taken against the officers. Jones also recalled that the same police chief frequently idled in his car across from the Jones home during that period, and Jones noted that this officer had made it his business not to “let” Black people live south of Colfax. Justice Pringle, with whom Jones was still working, called the chief and chewed him out and eventually this harassment ceased.

More positive experiences in his early years on the block included the cakes, which several women frequently delivered to Jones because he was single. He also loved his large lawn and worked hard to make it beautiful, wanting to maintain good relationships with his neighbors and uphold his personal standard of excellence and leadership.

Jones was clearly a leader from his earliest years, having served as class President at his Pueblo schools, including Pueblo South High School, as well as at Harvard Law School. His leadership and achievements grew further during the many years he lived on Steele Street. After clerking for Supreme Court Justice Edward E. Pringle he worked for a time at a corporate law firm on 17<sup>th</sup> Street before pursuing a judgeship. He recalls being the first, or one of the first, Black attorneys working at a downtown firm. He encountered discrimination in this setting as well, with other attorneys or clients asking him to bring water or coffee, not realizing he was of counsel. He noted that many of the large firms just refused to hire non-white or women attorneys at the time. He noted, “you had to prove yourself 10-fold to have someone reach out.”

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall was a life-long inspiration and a “big role model” and reason he sought a judgeship, and Chief Justice Pringle also encouraged Jones in this direction. He was appointed as a trial judge for the Denver County Court, where he served for two years before serving for nine years on the Denver District Court and two years as the Chief Justice of the Aurora Municipal Court. In 1988 he was appointed an Associate Judge of the Colorado Court of Appeals, the first Black judge to hold such a position. He remained in this post for fifteen years and authored over 1,400 opinions. All of the years he served as a judge he resided at 780 Steele Street.

Judge Jones took pride in his home and considers it a wonderful old house worthy of preservation. Although he moved from the home in 2017, in 2021 he still recalled the block with fondness and indicated that some of his long-time neighbors have stayed in touch, including neighbors that continue to bring him cakes. A clear delight.

Jones' neighbors added to this story, expressing that the Judge was the first to host the block party, and always a regular at block gatherings. One neighbor recounted an experience that spoke to Judge Jones' character. They had played tennis together as a group and then gone for drinks afterward. Someone sent a round of drinks to the table, but when Judge Jones realized the drinks were sent by a group of attorneys, he declined to accept them, as he didn't want there to be any appearance of anything that could be considered a bribe.

Beyond his career and home life, Judge Jones was active in the Denver community, and especially the Black community. He was involved with the NAACP and the local bar associations and he played an active role in establishing the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance company, something about which he expressed great pride given the renown of the dance company over the subsequent decades.

In the years between 1974-1990, occupations of other residents on the 600 and 700 blocks of Steele Street continued to be a mix of employment types, with most of the women employed outside of the house. Examples include Jane Pritzl (740 Steele) who was the Director of Employee Health Risk Reduction for the State of Colorado, evaluating alcohol/drug use prevention projects for Family Medicine at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. Mike McGloin (716 Steele) started the law firm of McGloin Davenport Severson and Snow; his wife, Wynn Strahle was an attorney at the Denver office of Kirkland and Ellis. Christine Larocca and Mike Hanley (720 Steele) are physicians at Denver Health. Robert Mallett (748 Steele) worked at Eagle Claw Fishhooks on Colorado Boulevard and his wife Carol was a flight attendant for United Airlines. John Ladd (756 Steele) worked as a geologist while his wife, Liza Webster taught at Rocky Mountain Hebrew Academy. Paul Jonas (770 Steele) was a senior gift planning officer for the American Red Cross and Mile High United Way. The Paul Jonas' Emerging Leadership Award was established in his honor to "support an emerging development professional with a strong desire to grow as a charitable gift planner and community leader."

Through the period of significance, and beyond, the homes, landscape features, and associations along the blocks have remained intact and consistent with few significant alternations and no demolitions, unlike many other Bungalow-dominated neighborhoods in the city which have experienced the scrape and build trend, as smaller Bungalows are replaced with larger single-family homes.

**Conclusion:**

Many of the blocks' current residents have lived in their homes for decades, experiencing different eras of urban development and the ebb and flow of Denver's economy and housing market. Those that have moved onto the blocks more recently equally value the special character of the homes and the compelling history of a century of lived experiences.

The history of the blocks as presented here clearly meet the criteria for historic district designation based on criteria A, B and C for the districts association with the growth and



development of the city in regards to the City Beautiful movement, for the consistent and intact architecture, chiefly the predominance of strong bungalow examples, and for the association with individuals who had influence on society, most notably Judge Raymond D. Jones. Preservation on the blocks will help celebrate and share Judge Jones' story, serve as examples of quality craftsmanship, and ensure the existing homes, history, and lived experiences of generations endure. For the current occupants, there is a strong desire to recognize the history, appreciate the architecture and continue to enjoy the walkability.

We would like to give special thanks to Annie Robb Levinsky, Executive Director Historic Denver, Inc., the staff at Historic Denver, Nancy Widman who had worked on the initial East Seventh Avenue Historic District and Michael Henry, the Chair of the Greater Capitol Neighbors for their review and recommendations on this application, as well as Laura Ruttum Senturia of the Western History & Genealogy Department at the Denver Public Library for her help researching past owners.



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Boundary Map

East 7th Avenue B - Steele  
Street Extension Map

Key:

- = Contributing
- = Non-contributing
- = Existing Contributors to E. 7th Ave Historic District



### District Property List

Include a list of properties by address, with the contributing/non-contributing status of each property denoted (for example, 220 Grant Street – Contributing, 221 Grant Street – Non-Contributing, etc.). This list should either be inserted into this application form or, if lengthy, attached as a separate Word document or Excel spreadsheet.

1. 602 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
2. 610 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
3. 620 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
4. 624 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Accessory dwelling Non-contributing
5. 630 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
6. 640 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
7. 658 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
8. 660 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
9. 674 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing

10. 716 STEELE ST Contemporary Bungalow Non-Contributing Attached Garage
11. 726 STEELE ST Central Passage Double-Pile Contributing with Contributing Attached Garage
12. 730 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
13. 740 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
14. 748 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing No accessory buildings
- 15.** 756 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
16. 760 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
17. 764 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
18. 770 STEELE ST Bungalow Contributing Garage Non-contributing
19. 780 STEELE ST Foursquare Contributing Garage Non-contributing

### Public Outreach

Applicants must provide a written description of all outreach efforts, including, but not limited to, property owner/resident meetings (including number of attendees and information on neighborhood representation), newsletters, fliers, one-on-one meetings with property owners, etc. **A substantial effort to communicate with all property owners within a district prior to submitting an application is required.**

The idea of historic designation began in the neighborhood in late 2019. A discussion at a block holiday party sparked an interest and David Wise volunteered to follow up to see if this might be a possibility and to initiate the process. David started an inquiry via email. Because of the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, communications were limited to email, zoom meetings, phone calls and distanced conversations with residents on the blocks.

Every effort has been made to keep residents informed about the application for historic designation, as well as to provide information, answer questions, and share the research work. Email and telephone follow-up were completed through the efforts of Tom Heese and Jane Pritzl. Volunteers dropped letters and links to Frequently Asked Questions about designation at each home. Funding for the application fee has been provided by the residents, which demonstrates strong support. The group has become quite excited as we have gathered the personal history of each home. Many residents have expressed their support for the concept of historic designation and look forward to participation in an officially designated district. As of August 2021, only one owner has expressed verbal concern, while others have asked questions.

The following is a list of the correspondence about this effort to date:

May 9, 2020- E-mail to owners on the 700 block describing the purpose of the district and inviting everyone to a Zoom meeting on the following Monday to discuss. Contact information provided for anyone with questions.

May - August, 2020- Resident Jane Pritzl contacted owners on the 600 block about joining the effort and collected contributions for the application fee.

August 5, 2020- Notification of effort to Councilman Chris Hinds and Council District 10 Office

August 27, 2020- Virtual meeting between applicants and Councilman Chris Hinds

November 16, 2020- Virtual meeting with board of Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods. Board voted to support the designation. Sent update to full CHUN membership to raise awareness.

January 4, 2021- Notice provided to Congress Park Neighbors, Inc. Expression of support.

January 24, 2021- Notice provided to Seventh Avenue Neighborhood Association.



February 4, 2021- Letter sent/delivered to all owners offering an update on the effort and the intent to proceed with an application. Contact information again provided for those with questions.

July 21, 2021 – City Landmark sent a notification letter to all owners at the registered address regarding the potential proposal with an invitation to an information session on August 10.

August 10, 2021- Resident/applicants co-hosted a gathering with City Landmark staff outside at 756 Steele. Applicants provided a historical overview, City staff presented information about designation and design review and answered questions. 15 attendees.

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### Inventory Table

Complete inventory table, including photos for all primary buildings in the district. Follow the attached template.

See attached documents of Inventory 600 and 700 block of Steele Street.