

NEWS RELEASE

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Denver's Civic Center Designated a National Historic Landmark

The "Heart of Denver" becomes a nationally recognized Civic Center

DENVER — Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar designated Denver's Civic Center as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) today, marking it as the City and County of Denver's first NHL and one of two Civic Centers in the country to achieve this prestigious recognition, announced Historic Denver, Inc., the Denver nonprofit that submitted the NHL nomination.

Celebrations to honor this historic moment will take place in Denver's Civic Center in 2013.

The National Park Service, which administers the NHL program, defines National Historic Landmarks as "nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States." Presently, NHLs comprise less than 3 percent of all properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. San Francisco's Civic Center is the only other location of this type currently recognized as an NHL.

Civic Center joins a list of some of the most iconic, treasured and historically significant spaces in the United States. NHL designation places Civic Center alongside such sites as the Empire State Building, the Alamo and the Library of Congress.

"As one of the premier civic and cultural gathering places in the Rocky Mountain region, the Denver Civic Center is more than worthy of this designation. It has played host to historic and momentous events, served as a gathering place in times of collective sorrow and provides a home to annual celebrations," said Senator Michael Bennet, whose support of the designation included a letter to National Park System Advisory Board Landmarks Committee. "Today's designation would not have been possible without strong support and extraordinary efforts from the local community."

"Colorado is blessed with rich history, heritage, natural wonders and architecture including Civic Center," said Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper. "We are honored that Civic Center received this national recognition. If the visionaries who imagined how great the West would become could know that a century later their efforts have been realized with this distinction, we believe they would be very proud."

“This is an incredibly important recognition for Civic Center and one that places the heart of our civic, business and cultural community up there with the most significant landmarks in our nation’s history,” Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock said. “Not only is this a great honor for Civic Center and our efforts to restore and memorialize the ‘city beautiful’ vision, it shines a light on Denver and its growing importance in the eyes of the entire country.”

The NHL designation extends from the State Capitol on the east side of Broadway to the Denver City and County Building on the west side of Bannock. State properties included within the boundary are: the State Capitol and its grounds; the State Office Building (northeast corner of Colfax and Sherman); the “Colorado State Museum” building (southeast corner of E. 14th and Sherman, which is now used as an office and meeting annex for the capitol); Lincoln Park and Veterans Park. City properties included are: Civic Center Park, the McNichols Building (Carnegie Library), the Greek Amphitheater, Voorhies Memorial, the Pioneer Monument, and the City and County Building (14th and Bannock).

In the early 20th century, the national “City Beautiful” movement, inspired by Chicago’s 1893 World’s Fair, aimed to elevate the human spirit by making communities aesthetically attractive by building parks, planting greenery, adding sidewalks and paving streets. Denver Mayor Robert Speer, elected in 1904, was an enthusiastic supporter of the City Beautiful movement, and he became the driving force behind the creation of Civic Center and other areas identified for Denver’s City Beautiful master plan. The design was shaped by a succession of nationally renowned designers, including Charles Mulford Robinson, Frederick MacMonnies, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and finally Edward H. Bennett.

The Civic Center’s national significance includes its role as:

- A western example of a fully-realized City Beautiful era civic center.
- An exceptional late American Beaux-Arts design representing the work of several nationally and regionally prominent planners, architects, artists and landscape architects.
- A holistic ensemble of built and landscape elements, significant in the areas of architecture, planning, art and landscape design.

“Civic Center Park is one of Denver’s most loved parks. Receiving this honor ensures the legacy of our forefathers will live on for all generations to enjoy and cherish such a special place in Denver,” said Denver Parks and Recreation Manager Lauri Dannemiller.

“Civic Center’s National Historic Landmark designation honors Mayor Robert Speer’s early-1900s vision that humanity could be uplifted through beautiful urban spaces; it honors the succession of architects, designers and artists whose individual contributions to Civic Center created a unified whole greater than the sum of its parts; and it honors the past, present and future public and private investments in maintaining, activating and elevating our community’s cherished historic infrastructure,” said Lindy Eichenbaum Lent, executive director of the nonprofit Civic Center Conservancy.

The nomination of Denver’s Civic Center for consideration as a National Historic Landmark was prepared by Front Range Research Associates, managed by Historic Denver and reviewed by History Colorado’s Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office). The effort was endorsed by the City and County of Denver, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Civic Center Conservancy, officials with the State of Colorado and Senator Michael Bennet. It was funded in part through a grant from the State Historical Fund, a program of History Colorado.

“Denver’s Civic Center—one of Colorado’s great historic preservation success stories—is now officially one of our nation’s great stories,” said Ed Nichols, History Colorado president and CEO and State Historic

Preservation Officer. Since 1991, the State Historical Fund has helped to contribute to its care through more than six historic preservation grants totaling more than \$751,000 for restorations. “As an important public gathering space—whether we go to the Civic Center to relax, be entertained or do business—all who call Colorado home have a stake in its preservation and success.”

“This week’s designation of Civic Center as our city’s first NHL marks the end of a seven-- year process and we are grateful for the support of all the partners,” said Historic Denver Executive Director Annie Levinsky. “It is fitting that Civic Center is the city’s first site honored at this level, as Denver is a city of parks and Civic Center its crown jewel. We look forward to another century of active use and preservation at the heart of our City.”

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About Historic Denver

Formed in 1970, Historic Denver is one of the nation’s premiere historic preservation organizations, with a focus on preserving, advocating and educating about the places that matter to our community. As an organization, we provide resources and technical assistance for those who own or live in historic structures, support to neighborhood groups interested in local preservation, and promote of the value of our cultural heritage as a key element of economic growth, community revitalization, and sustainability through a series of successful programs including Denver Story Trek; Preservation for Living Program; Sacred Landmarks; the operation of the Molly Brown House museum; and a series of publications that include 24 unique Historic Denver Guidebooks. For more information about Historic Denver, visit www.historicdenver.org.