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## HPC-18-03

**TO:** City of Pueblo Historic Preservation Commission

**FROM:** Alan Lamberg, Planner

**THROUGH:** Scott Hobson, Land Use Administrative Official

**DATE:** April 11, 2018

**SUBJECT:** **A Nomination for Designation of a Landmark**

**LOCATION:** 300 North Main Street

**CULTURAL LISTING:** Whitcomb Block / Clark Building, constructed in 1895

**APPLICANT:** **NeighborWorks Southern Colorado,**  
1241 East Routt Avenue, Pueblo CO 81004

**PROPERTY OWNER:** Same as above

**ZONE DISTRICT:** Central Business (B-4 zone) district

**CONCURRENT REQUESTS:** None

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### **PURPOSE:**

The applicant, NeighborWorks Southern Colorado, nominated its building for designation of a landmark if it qualifies for significance by meeting certain criteria of history, architecture, and/or geography.<sup>1</sup>

### **LOCATION:**

The site is legally described as South 70 Feet of Lots 12 and 13, and West 18.6 Feet of Lot 14, Block 28, Plan of Pueblo; parcel ID: 0536127005 (Attachments A: Location Map and B: Site Map).

### **BACKGROUND:**

The applicant nominated the building and site for its distinctive character and certain criteria, and is aware of the reasons for, and effect of, designation of local landmarks in the City of Pueblo.

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<sup>1</sup> Designation as provided in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, adopted in 2002 (Title IV, Chapter 14, Section 4-14-8, of the Code of Ordinances, City of Pueblo).

The Town of Pueblo was incorporated in the early 1870s and local industry developed with the arrival of the Denver & Rio Grande (D&RG) Railroad in 1872. Within a decade the D&RG and its subsidiary, the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company (CF&I), transformed what was an adobe outpost into “the Pittsburgh of the West.” In 1886, three local towns consolidated into the City of Pueblo, and with the later annexation of Bessemer, Downtown Pueblo by the 1890s was the financial center for Southern Colorado industries of agriculture, smelting, and small business. As one of the largest and most important cities in Colorado, its growth and wealth attracted entrepreneurs.

One of the entrepreneurs was industrial “trailblazer” George Henry Whitcomb, who capitalized on envelope and stationary manufacturing in his home state of Massachusetts. In 1895, he and his Boston syndicate of investors bought the property at Third and Main Streets in a “Large Realty Transaction.”<sup>2</sup> Whitcomb had great confidence in Pueblo and helped drive growth in the city in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century with later investments with institutions and Main and Second Streets and Fifth and Court Streets.

The Boston syndicate commissioned Pueblo’s most prolific and best-known architect, Francis W. Cooper, to design the building that stands today at the northeast corner of Main and Third Streets. Cooper, born in New York, and an 1874 graduate of Cornell University, he worked in Ohio and Wyoming before establishing his firm in Pueblo in 1881. Pueblo’s first powerful family, the Thatchers, hired Cooper, and ten (10) of his eleven (11) commissions in Downtown Pueblo stand today.<sup>3</sup> An American Institute of Architects (AIA) Fellow, for sixteen years he served as President of the State Board of Architect Examiners. His work is symbolic of Pueblo as Southern Colorado’s leading urban center, which became a serious rival to Denver as Colorado’s economic capital.

Cooper’s commission replaced a blacksmithing and wagon repair shop that was constructed in 1871.<sup>4</sup> The Piper Brothers won the bid for construction for a two-story building in 1895, and it was the first steel frame structure of its kind in Pueblo. The foundation would have enabled five-story construction,<sup>5</sup> and the innovation provided for sweeping storefronts on the street level.<sup>6</sup> Akin to buildings erected in that historic period, the Whitcomb Block displayed unique fenestration on the second floor and clad with a white or “blonde” brick block curtain wall. With elaborate detailing on the façade, the building became a gem of Pueblo’s architectural heritage.

Since its construction, the present building thrived on a decades-long association with two businesses. From 1904 until 1962 the Pueblo Savings and Trust, associated with Pueblo’s development, was influential as a financial center in southern Colorado. It’s first president was three-time Colorado Governor Alva Adams. Mahlon D. Thatcher was associated with this place, who, with his brother John A. Thatcher, are the namesakes of the Thatcher Building at Fifth and Main Street. Withstanding the Flood of 1921, “extensive improvements” were made to the building in 1922 when the Pueblo Savings and Trust bought the Whitcomb Block after leasing it for eighteen years.<sup>7</sup> From 1962 until 2005, the building was home to Clark’s Western Wear, a western

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<sup>2</sup> “Large Realty Transaction: Boston Syndicate Buys the Third and Main Streets.” (1895, August 14.) *The Pueblo Chieftain*. Chieftain Pub. Co.

<sup>3</sup> Architect Francis Cooper’s other Pueblo commissions include one in the Union Avenue Historic District, and ten residences in or around the Old North Side Historic District.

<sup>4</sup> “New Wagon Shop ...” (1871, January 12). *The Pueblo Evening Star*. Star Co-Operative Pub. Co. Also see “W.H. Hyde’s Success.” (1882, March 5).

<sup>5</sup> (1895, August 14.) *The Pueblo Chieftain*.

<sup>6</sup> “Contract Let for Steel Building.” (1902, May 7.) *The Pueblo Chieftain*. Chieftain Pub. Co. [Note: it is not known why this article is dated 1902 when the building was constructed by 1896.]

<sup>7</sup> “Pueblo Savings Bank Secures New Quarters.” (1903, December 8.) *The Pueblo Chieftain*. Chieftain Pub. Co. and “Pueblo Savings and Trust Co. Organized in 1889; Has Occupied Same Corner for Forty-Six Years.” (1950.) *The Pueblo Chieftain*.

clothing store made famous internationally by the Clark family. Post-period remodeling resulted in alterations where some windows were combined on the second floor with arched headers that fit into rectangular openings.

The site and building has been surveyed<sup>8</sup> to test for listing to the State of Colorado and National Registers of Historic Places since 1983, where it is certainly eligible under Criterion A, “Event,” because the property contributed to a major pattern of American history.<sup>9</sup>

Upon designation of the property to a historic register, the applicant and property owner, NeighborWorks Southern Colorado, intends to restore the building to its historic period of significance, including removal of the post-period 1960s awning and wood exterior treatment, and reestablishing the size and placement of windows and associated brick work to match the original façade.<sup>10</sup>

The applicant nominated the subject property for landmark designation per the requirements contained in Section 4-14-8, Chapter 14 – Historic Preservation Code, Title IV – Building Regulations, of the *Pueblo Municipal Code*. The Historic Preservation Commission may approve this application if it serves the goals of the historic preservation code. A building, object, monument, structure, or site may individually be designated as a Landmark, or one or more buildings, objects, monuments, structures, or sites which are united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development may be designated as a Historic District, if they have distinctive character and have:

1. Special historic or prehistoric interest or importance:
  - a. Has significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation; or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or
  - b. Has the site of a historic event with a significant effect upon society; or
  - c. Exemplifies the cultural heritage of the community; or has yielded, or may be likely to yield, important prehistoric information.
2. Special architectural, engineering, or aesthetic interest or importance:
  - a. Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or
  - b. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type or engineering specimen; or
  - c. Is the work of a designer whose individual work has significantly influenced the development of the City; or
  - d. Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.

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Chieftain Pub. Co. Also see “120 years: Pueblo Bank & Trust readies birthday bash for next week.” (2009, July 2.) Darrow, D. *The Pueblo Chieftain*. Chieftain Pub. Co.

<sup>8</sup> Record number 5PE1198, Historic American Building Survey (HABS). National Parks Service. (Colorado records administered by Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation [OAHP]).

<sup>9</sup> Autobee, R. (2018, March.) *Steeltown’s Barometer: a Survey and Context of Downtown Pueblo’s History and Architecture*. [draft]. State Historical Fund Grant Project (SHF) #2014-M2-016, SWCA Environmental Consultants, pages 16-33, 34.

<sup>10</sup> “Lofty plans for 3rd and Main in Pueblo: NeighborWorks to redevelop ex-Clark’s building.” (2017, July 3.) Darrow, D. *The Pueblo Chieftain*. Chieftain Pub. Co. Also see “The Main Street Project,” NeighborWorks Southern Colorado, retrieved 2018, April: <https://nwsoco-org.presencehost.net/how-to-help/campaigns/main-street-project.html>

3. Special geographic interest or importance:

- a. By being part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area, which should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural, or architectural motif, or
- b. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City.

The Pueblo Historic Preservation Commission, in prior cases, has considered landmark designation applications eligible if they meet two of the three criteria. This application’s justification of facts proposed eligibility on criteria 1a, 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d.

**ZONING DISTRICT:**

The site and surrounding area is entirely zoned for Central Business (B-4) (Attachment C). The standards of this district are intended to provide areas for the location of business and other central services required by the region at large.

**LAND USE:**

**Site Character**

On the existing site, located on a corner lot, there is a building over 122 years old and is an eligible contributing resource to a national historic district. Restoration and preservation is the primary goal for such buildings.

The original building was two-story steel frame with white block masonry. The original use of the Whitcomb Block was financial services. It was maintained after the 1921 flood, with historic period alterations. In the 1960s, the use was changed to retail, with post-period alterations to the façade. The applicant stated its intent to restore the building to its early 20<sup>th</sup> historic period context, and use it for mixed use, planning for commercial retail and grocery on the first floor, with residences on the second floor.

**Neighborhood Compatibility**

The neighborhood is generally composed of a stable, established historic downtown with occupied storefronts consisting of early Twentieth Century masonry buildings.

**PUEBLO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (COMPREHENSIVE) PLAN:**

**Regional Plan Guiding Principles<sup>11</sup>**

- Urban Development Principles
  - *Provide a Regional land use plan that recognizes the relative importance of Downtown Pueblo to the Region.*
  - *Provide for mixed use and in-fill development that make it convenient for employees to walk or bike to work.*

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<sup>11</sup> *Pueblo Regional Development Plan*, Regional Plan Guiding Principles, pp 30-32.

- Design Character and Environmental Quality Principles
  - *Plan growth to enhance the Region’s natural and historic character.* Landmark designation is a method to enhance and preserve historic features.
  - *Encourage development that adds to the aesthetic quality of the Region.* Landmark designation qualifies for restoration tax credits, which support aesthetic vision desirable to residents and encourages redevelopment where existing infrastructure is provided.
- Neighborhood Principles
  - *Promote both historic and economic neighborhood revitalization and preservation.*

**Development Action Areas<sup>12</sup>**

The existing character of Downtown Pueblo is a Developed Urban Area in the Northwest Planning Quadrant of the City of Pueblo. Future Character of mixed use development (residential, office and commercial) as well as cultural and governmental facilities is supported by landmark designation, and reinvestment through preservation, and tax credit and/or grand funded restoration.

**Future Land Use**

The *Pueblo Regional Comprehensive Development Plan* Urban Area Plan Map depicts urban mixed use throughout the entire neighborhood (See Attachment D). The designation of *Urban Mixed Use* identifies land use supported by the traditional Downtown Pueblo area. It emphasizes retail, office, and public uses on the first floor of all buildings to maintain a high activity level that tends to spur redevelopment of underutilized commercial and office buildings. Office and high-density residential uses are encouraged on the upper floors in multi-story buildings. High density use encourages pedestrian-oriented development patterns reflective of more historic development within the urban area.<sup>13</sup>

The potential use of new professional service office and pedestrian-oriented activities in a historic building is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

**Regional Transportation Plan**

Preservation and restoration of an existing building in Downtown Pueblo for the purpose of mixed-use support the goals of Mobility, Land Use, and Livability.

**FINDINGS OF FACT FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION REQUIREMENTS:<sup>14</sup>**

1. Special historic or prehistoric interest or importance.
  - **Comments:**  
Affirmative finding supporting criteria 1a, regarding development of the City of Pueblo and the State of Colorado by historic institutions and persons Whitcomb, Thatcher, and Adams; and, criteria 1c, regarding heritage of Downtown Pueblo.  
 Furthermore, the property may be eligible for State and National Register listings under Criterion B, “Person,” for its association with significant people of the American past.

<sup>12</sup> *Pueblo Regional Development Plan*, Development Action Areas, pp 33-40.

<sup>13</sup> *Pueblo Regional Development Plan*, Future Land Uses, p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> PMC, Section 4-14-8 (a).

4 (page 7). Also see *Criteria for Restorations*, Section 1.4.1.2 (page 9).

2. Special architectural, engineering, or aesthetic interest or importance.

• **Comments:**

Affirmative finding supporting criteria 2a, regarding the environment of Downtown Pueblo; 2b, embodying distinguished architectural characteristics; 2c, association by notable architect Cooper; and 2d, embodies innovations as the second steel framed structure in Pueblo, and possibly for the white block curtain wall.

Regarding State and National Register listings, at the time of this application, it is not eligible for Criterion C, "Design/Construction," which concerns distinctive characteristics of the building by its architecture and construction, including having great artistic value or being the work of a master. However, the applicant plans to remove the post-period awning and wood exterior treatment installed in the 1960s, and then restore the building to its early 20<sup>th</sup> Century period.

3. Special geographic interest or importance.

• **Comments:**

Affirmative finding, supporting criteria 3a, for the site's development as the original plan of Pueblo and development as Downtown; and 3b, for the building's visual significance as a place over the course of Pueblo's history.

4. Conform to the Pueblo Regional Development Plan with respect to Guiding Principles, Development Action Areas, Future Land Use, and Regional Transportation Plan.

• **Comments:**

Affirmative finding, because preservation, restoration, and adaptive reuse with mixed-use of Downtown places supports all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan.

**PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends APPROVAL of the application for a Landmark Designation. If approved by the Historic Preservation Commission, the approval will be transmitted to the Planning & Zoning Commission for consideration and recommendation to City Council.

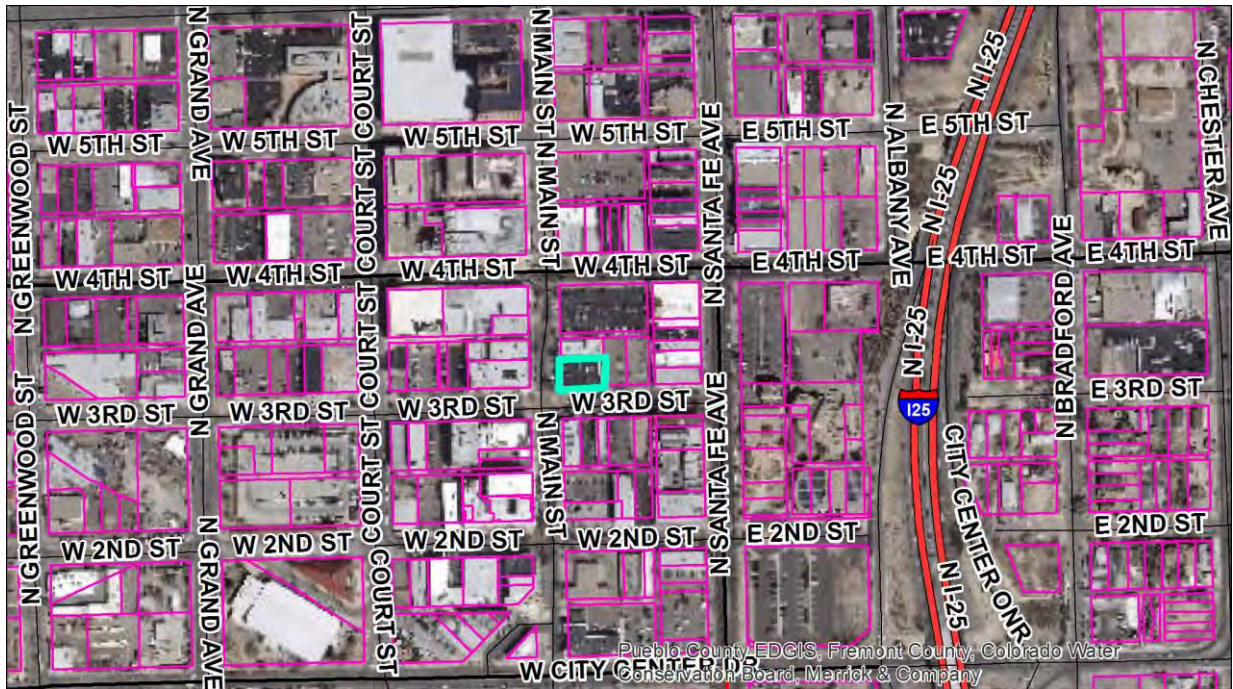
Staff suggests further research by the applicant to complete the historic narrative, particularly with reference to the life of Whitcomb and his Boston syndicate of investors; details how the Pueblo financial institutions with Adams and Thatcher spurred further development in Downtown Pueblo; how and why steel frame structures innovated new construction, with resulting buildings Downtown; details about blonde brick curtain wall; and details about original fenestration and detailing on first and second floor façade.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Location Map
- B. Site Map
- C. Zoning Map
- D. Comprehensive Plan Map
- E. Site Photographs
- F. Public Notice Photograph
- G. Application



( A ) LOCATION



( B ) SITE MAP



**( C ) ZONING MAP**



**( D ) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAP**





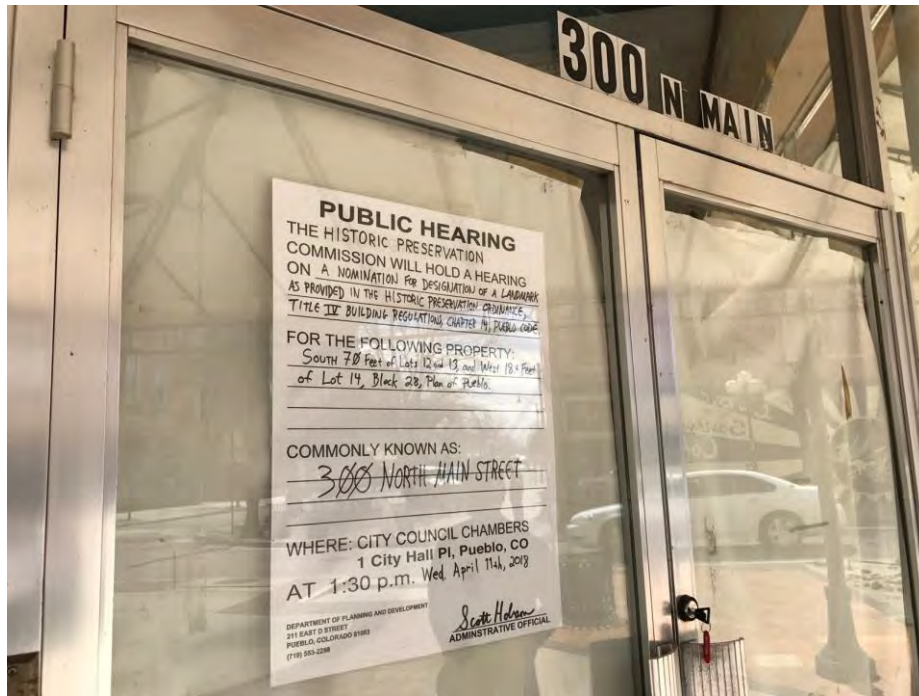
**(E) SITE PHOTOGRAPHS, EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**



**SITE PHOTOGRAPH, POST-FLOOD AND RECOVERED PERIOD**



(E) SITE PHOTOGRAPH, 2017



(F) PUBLIC NOTICE POSTER