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## HPC-25-06

August 20, 2025

**To:** Historic Preservation Commission  
**From:** Wade Broadhead, Senior Planner  
**Through:** Beritt Odom, Director of Planning and Community Development  
**Location:** 105 S. Victoria Ave  
**Applicant:** City of Pueblo  
**Owner:** Black Hills Service Company LLC  
**Year Built:** Power at the site in 1888, building erected in 1921/22  
**Legal Description:** Lots 10-14 & lots 19-24, Block 30, CC&I Addition #2  
**Zone District:** S-1, Governmental Use Zone District

### Synopsis

The City of Pueblo is requesting rescission of the historic landmark designation for the Black Hills 5 and 6 Power Plant, 105 Victoria Avenue, located adjacent to Pueblo's Riverwalk between Victoria and D streets. According to Section 4-14-10 of the Pueblo Municipal Code, "a landmark, or historic district designation maybe amended or rescinded in the same manner as the original designation was made". The application to rescind landmark designation followed the Pueblo City Council approval of resolution 16010 on June 9, 2025 which stated "...visions for redevelopment of the Black Hills 5&6 Power Plant as a vibrant mixed-use activity hub including space for a hotel, expanding the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk of Pueblo, restaurants, retail shops, and flexible green space for outdoor activities with the Power Plant 5&6 building serving as its centerpiece, have failed to develop".

### Background

Black Hills 5 and 6 Power Plant designation as a historic landmark was approved by Pueblo City Council with ordinance number 9268 on May 14, 2018, after being introduced May 9, 2016. The landmark designation found that Black Hills 5 and 6 Power Plant was eligible for designation according to the following criteria (Section 4-14-8, (a), of the Pueblo Municipal Code):

#### **(1) Special historic or prehistoric interest or importance:**

##### **1a: Has direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation:**

Electricity first came to Pueblo, Colorado in 1888, just nine years after Thomas Edison produced the first electric lamp. 105 S Victoria Street was the site of the first steam driven generator, which brought electricity to the city. This was built and operated by Pueblo Light, Heat, & Power

Company. An immediate beneficiary of electricity was the Pueblo City Railway Company, formed in 1889. Pueblo has the distinction of becoming one of the first cities to have electric powered street cars.

Power requirements increased and resulted in mergers by 1911 of power companies in Pueblo, Cañon City, Rocky Ford, Cripple Creek and Victor. Those municipalities formed Arkansas Valley Railway, Light, & Power Company. Additional mergers with power firms in Florence and Custer County formed the Southern Colorado Power Company in 1923. Of all of the old power plants consolidated into the system, all have been demolished except for Skaguay in Victor, CO, and Pueblo.

Increased need of power, especially from large consumers like the Pueblo Army Depot, required the second phase expansion to the east side of the powerhouse with the addition of a 7500KW steam powered turbine. This increased the Power Company's total output to 34,000KW.

Increased post war power demands from factories, industries and homes in Pueblo and Freemont Counties required construction of the third phase expansion to the west end of the building. A 15,000KW combination steam and fuel oil turbine driven generator was installed and constructed in 1949.

Notable persons involved in electrical power were W. N. Clark, head of Southern Colorado Power Company for whom the Canyon City plant was named after, and Mark G. Lord, Superintendent of Power Plant and Shops and VP of sales. Mr. Lord was responsible for assisting in the management of innovations on gravel separation and water cooling for which the Arkansas River represented unique challenges after the 1921 Pueblo Flood and subsequent relocation of the river channel midway through construction of the Pueblo Steam Plant (the building now known as Power Plant 5 & 6). Mr. Lord's grandson, Todd Pasquin, now owns and operates the Historic Federal Building in downtown Pueblo (and other direct descendants are prominent members of the business community.)

Byllesby Engineering & Management Company, the designer of the Pueblo Steam Plant (*see Architecture 2b, below*), was also an owner and operator of a number of trolley systems in the United States in the early part of the 20th century. The design was named the "Safety Car," and became known as the "Birney Safety Car" and ultimately simply as the "Birney" car.

The Pueblo Steam Plant construction began in 1921 and was halted by the great Pueblo Flood on June 3, 1921. Workers scrambled to sandbag facilities on the site to maintain vital electric service to the telephone switchboards so residents could be warned of rising flood waters. Construction of phase 1 was completed in 1922 and the 7500KW generator was brought online. This helped to power development in the city and region including mining of the Cripple Creek District.

**(2) Special architectural, engineering or aesthetic interest or importance:**

**2a: Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or type.**

Black Hills 5&6 was originally known as the Pueblo Steam Plant, was built in the style of Art Deco Industrial with Modern design features. Completed in 1922, it provided electricity to more than 300 Central Business District (CBD) structures. Designed by Byllesby Engineering & Management Company (*see Architecture 2b, below*), the Steam Plant's architecture, equipment, cooling water screening operation and is notable both for its engineering and industrial design innovations. The equipment was innovative in the region and the western United States when it began operating. The plant underwent a series of expansions in generating electricity to keep up with power demands due the expansion of housing, commerce, manufacturing, steel production at Colorado Fuel & Iron Works, and mining. It remained operational until its recent decommissioning in 2012.

**2b: Be a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder:**

The Pueblo Steam Plant was designed by the Chicago based firm of Byllesby Engineering & Management Company. This company was founded by Henry Marison Byllesby (1859 - 1924) who was one of the most prominent electrical engineers of his time. Around 1881, after Byllesby earned an engineering degree, he was hired by Thomas Edison and made all of the drawings and most of the designs for the first central station of the Edison Electric Light Co in Manhattan. In 1885 he was hired by George Westinghouse to manage, help organize and incorporate Westinghouse Electric Companies in the USA and London England. He formed H.M. Byllesby & Co. (later Byllesby Engineering & Management Co by the time Pueblo Steam Plant designs began in 1920) a Chicago-based conglomerate that owned steamships, streetcars and utility companies across the United States. Mr. Byllesby was largely responsible for the development of the alternating current system of lighting and procured over 40 patents on distribution systems and electrical apparatus. In 1904, the H. M. Byllesby Engineering & Management Company of Chicago, Illinois, obtained the controlling interest in the Birney Safety Streetcar Co through stock purchases. These cars replaced the Denver Car design in Pueblo and were used until the end of trolley service in 1947. (Ref: Waymarking.com; exhibits M, N.)

**2c: Contain elements of architectural design, engineering, materials, craftsmanship, or artistic merit which represent a significant or influential innovation.**

Art Deco Industrial with Modern Movements: The original core of this industrial plant is of vernacular design in brick masonry with Neo Classical design features in cast concrete. The primary construction material is hard-fired brick, laid up with narrow mortar joints in the English Bond pattern, with alternating courses consist of headers and stretchers, ending with queen closers. Soldier and Sailor brick courses are prominent features that frame the fenestrations and decorative bands of the upper facades. This particular bond is the strongest structurally and is often used in industrial buildings of this type. The cornice is simple, flat and not a decorative feature of this

building – though this simple design allows for stepped parapets as needed to accommodate and screen roof-top projections.

The most prominent character defining feature are the massive, deep-set recessed vertical steel windows with divided lights, the lower sections incorporate operable transom windows. Vertical brick pilasters are incorporated between each vertical window block and extend approximately 3/4th the distance from the ground to the cornice, ending in a raked (angled) top capital. Rectangular cast concrete corner blocks appear at the top of each window block.

The exterior condition of this core section appears to be in good-to-excellent condition, with normal deterioration of the steel windows as typical when regular maintenance has been stopped.

**(3) Special geographic interest or importance:**

**3a: Have a prominent location or be an established, familiar, and orienting visual feature of the contemporary city.**

One of Pueblo’s most prominent skyline features is the Power Plant’s steel smokestack rising to a height of more than 270' and masonry smokestack rising 160'. In the context of the city’s surrounding landscape, the Power Plant is historically significant for its role in the evolution of the power industry in Southern Colorado. For ninety years it provided electrical service to Pueblo and Surrounding Southern Colorado towns.

Black Hills Power Plant 5 & 6 is about three quarters of a mile west of Interstate 25. The power plant is located directly west of the HARP’s Lake Elizabeth and one block north of the Union Avenue Historic District. Black Hills Power Plant 5 & 6 is also located in Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority’s “Expanded Phase One Urban Renewal Project Area.” The Power Plant is adjacent to the Historic Union Ave Historic District. The Union Avenue Historic District consists of a large group of commercial structures located south of the central business district in Pueblo, Colorado. The commercial buildings in the area lie primarily along Union Avenue and Victoria Ave along the four intersecting streets of East and West "B," "C," and "D" and South Grand. The district has a total of 87 properties. Of this number, 70 contribute to the historic and architectural integrity of the district; 9 are more modern, noncontributing structures; and 8 are vacant lots. When taken together, the structures form a record of commercial architecture in Pueblo and evidence of the changes which have taken place in the course of time. The Historic District maintains the feeling and association of a late nineteenth/early twentieth century commercial area.”

**Analysis:**

In the seven years since designation the overall physical condition of the building has remained unchanged. The character defining architectural elements, geography, and history that contributed to its significance and designation are the same as they were in 2018 when the structure was designated. Resolution 16010 does not include documentation citing changes in the structure’s historic integrity.

**Commission Action:**

According to Section 4-14-8, (f), of the Pueblo Municipal Code, the Commission may recommend approval or denial of the rescission request to the Planning Commission, including the findings of fact, which constitute the basis for HPC recommendation.

Within 15 days after HPC makes a recommendation, the Planning and Zoning Commission shall review HPC's recommendation and submit a recommendation to City Council taking into consideration the Comprehensive Plan, zoning requirements, projected public improvements, and existing and proposed renewal and development plans applicable to the section of the City to be affected by the rescission of the landmark designation; Section 4-14-8, (g), of the Pueblo Municipal Code.

**Maps and Photos**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Local Area and Parking
3. Black Hills 5&6 North and East Facades
4. Aerial image of Black Hills 5&6
5. Historic Photos of Black Hills 5&6

**Attachments:**

1. Opengov Application 25-131
2. Resolution 16010, A Resolution to Initiate by Application to the Historic Preservation Commission The Rescission of the Landmark Designation for Black Hills 5&6
3. HPC-16-01 Staff Report



1. Vicinity Map from 2016



2. Black Hills 5&6 Site with Parking and Potential Access from 2016



3. Black Hills 5&6 north and east facades, 2016



4. Black Hills 5&6 aerial image, 2016



5. Historic photo of Black Hills 5&6 in the background



5. Historic photo of Black Hills 5&6 in the background

For additional attachments please visit the Department of Planning and Community Development at 211 E. D. Street, or call at 719-553-2259.