COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MEMO REPORT
OF FINDINGS FOR DEMOLITION

July 22, 2020

Address: 1039 N Inca St

Legal Description: L 26 TO 31 INC BLK 6 SMITHS ADD

Current Building Name: 1039 N. Inca St.

Construction Date: c. 1948 (City Directory)

Source of Information: Denver Assessor’s Office; Sanborn Insurance Maps from 1929 (corrected to 1951), Denver City Directories.

Architectural
Architectural Style: Modern / Moderne elements
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Source of Information: Photographs, Google Earth Streetview

Historical
Original owner: Colorado Photo-Litho Co.
Original use(s): Lithographer
Current use(s): Manufacturing facility (or recently vacant)

Historical background: The modern style brick building at 1039 Inca Street was constructed in or around 1948 to house the Colorado Photo-Litho Company. Research did not reveal the architect or firm associated with the design of the building. The Colorado Photo-Litho Company purchased the parcel in 1948 from Emma E. Edwards, widow of Charles Edwards, who is shown in grantor-grantee records as owning the lots as early as 1912. In 1953, the building was purchased by Henry Poertner and became the home of the Poertner Lithographing Company. Mr. Poertner retired in 1957 and turned the business over to his son, Allan Poertner. Poertner Lithography was a respected firm, and printed artwork by Otto Kuhler, a Colorado artist and railroad designer recognized for important work in the streamline style of railroad locomotives. Through the early 1960s, the building was owned by Lillian Poertner, widow of Henry. Mrs. Poertner brought a business partner, Robert Razor, on in 1964, and by 1973 Mr. Razor was the sole owner.

In 1968 Razor leased the building to Operation SER (Service, Employment, Redevelopment), a federally funded jobs training and employment organization dedicated to helping Latinx Denverites achieve economic security and success. This program was also known in Denver as Jobs for Progress, Inc. By 1970, the executive director of SER was Ruben Valdez, a Hispano activist and notable figure in Colorado’s Latinx history, who would in 1971 be elected to the Colorado State House and would be the first Latino to serve as the Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives.

By 1977 the building was once again a printing facility, Scott Printing Co., having been purchased by Alex and Dorothy Scott. In 1984 it was purchased by Howard Emeson, who in 1986 quitclaimed it to what appears to be an investment group of which he was a member (Rosemary Garcia et al.). The group sold in 1996 to Leo Proctor, who sold in 1998 to Rimfire 12, Inc., which in turn sold in 2001 to Carrera Properties, Ltd. The building houses, or recently housed, Team ATE, whose website describes its
purpose as “… an international supplier of pre-owned electronics manufacturing equipment. Since our start in 1986, we have specialized in automatic test equipment (ATE) used to test semiconductors and printed circuit boards in the electronics manufacturing process.” The current owner of the building is Keller Holland Santa Fe Investors, LLC.

**Source of Information:** Denver Assessor’s Office; Sanborn Insurance Maps from 1929 (corrected to 1951), Denver City Directories; Denver Post articles through World Access News; https://team-ate.com/About-Us.html

**Designation Eligibility Assessment**

**Landmark Designation Criteria:**

A structure or district may be designated for preservation if, due to its significance, it meets the criteria listed in subsections (1), (2), and (3) below

(1) The structure or district maintains it integrity;

(2) The structure or district is more than 30 years old, or is of exceptional importance; and

(3) The structure or district meets at least 3 of the following 10 criteria:

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

**Integrity:** If a structure maintains its integrity, it may be designated for preservation.

☒ Has integrity
☐ Does not have integrity

**Does the structure have potential for designation?**

☒ Has potential for designation
☐ Does not have potential for designation
Although research did not reveal the architect of this building, it is an excellent example of mid-twentieth century modern design in a commercial/light industrial context. The two parts of the rectangular-plan brick building sit in harmony, with the Streamline Moderne-style metal cornice on the southern mass’s street facade sheltering a continuous row of clerestory windows that suggest the earlier daylight factory windows. The cornice curves into the two-bay northern mass, which features outsized glass-block lights set in the red brick façade, which curves to meet the façade entrance. Throughout the façade, the brick masonry adjusts seamlessly in color and bond patterns to meet the requirements of the building’s form. The integrity of the front façade is outstanding, with all aspects intact. The prefabricated steel addition, with is attached to the rear of the building, is not visible from the public right of way.

Sanborn maps show that although this building was constructed in a mostly residential neighborhood, the parcel upon which it sits was vacant until that time. As Denver’s economy entered the post-World War II years marked by prosperity, light industrial businesses such as the lithographer housed here became important employers in and contributors to the Lincoln Park neighborhood. With distinctive modern architectural design, it sat in juxtaposition with the older brick cottages and Terrace type homes that faced and surrounded it.

From 1968 to 1977, 1039 Inca Street was the home of Operation SER, a Federal jobs training and employment program known locally Jobs for Progress, Inc. Operation SER, which stands for Service, Employment, and Redevelopment, is a Federal program started in 1964 that supported educational opportunities and job training for members of the Latinx community. The building on Inca Street was the program’s first permanent location in Denver and was of a substantial size to train up to 300 students at a time. The program boasted that about a quarter of the students would matriculate at a local community college, while other students would receive on-the-job training. During the time Jobs for Progress / Operation SER was located at 1039 Inca Street, the program was a source of pride for the Latinx community and contributed to the neighborhood’s culture.

In the late 1960s, Ruben Valdez was a leader at Jobs for Progress and became the director in 1970, the year that he was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives representing Denver’s West Side. Valdez served as a State Representative until 1978 and was Colorado’s first Latino Speaker of the House from 1975 to 1976. He was instrumental to the passage of the nation’s first Bilingual and Bicultural Education Act, which promoted bilingual education to elementary school children in Colorado. Valdez was later appointed as a regional director of the Department of Transportation by President Jimmy Carter, and served in the cabinet of Governor Richard Lamm as the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Social Services. Valdez was a prominent leader in the Latinx community in Colorado until his death in 2019.

Based on all of these findings, and based on the building’s strong integrity, the building at 1039 Inca Street has been found to have potential to meet three designation criteria: it has direct and substantial association with a recognized person who had an influence on society (Ruben Valdez); it embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or type (modern with streamline moderne elements); and it is associated with an institution (Operation SER / Jobs for Progress) that contributed significantly to the culture of the neighborhood and community.