

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Commercial Resources of the East Colfax Avenue Corridor

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Commercial Development of the East Colfax Avenue Corridor, 1880s-1968

C. Form Prepared by

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city or town Denver state Colorado zip code 80211

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature and title of certifying official _____ Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer _____ Date _____

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheet in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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Denver Public Library

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

The Commercial Development of the East Colfax Avenue Corridor, 1880s-1968

The Beginnings: "Open Prairie"

Colfax Avenue first appeared on Denver maps in 1868, named for Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Schuyler Colfax, a Republican from Indiana, who later served as Vice President in Ulysses S. Grant's administration. Colfax, whose sister lived in Denver, visited the city in May 1865, and local boosters encouraged him to support Colorado's quest for statehood. To honor Colfax, and perhaps as a quid-pro-quo for his backing, the road along the southern boundary of the Denver Congressional Grant was named for the Hoosier politician. The 1864 grant delineated a rectangular area encompassing Auraria and Denver City, where streets were angled to align with the channels of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River. Outside of the Congressional Grant streets followed east-west and north-south alignments. Denver historian Jerome Smiley noted, "the two great thoroughfares, Colfax Avenue and Broadway were established as what may be called base-line streets for the eastern and southern new districts."¹

The area along Colfax Avenue east of Broadway developed slowly. By the end of 1879, William N. Byers' residence at the northeast corner of Sherman and Colfax and a handful of other dwellings were present east of Broadway and north of Colfax; only two or three houses existed south of Colfax. Smiley wrote that local citizens viewed Byers' house as being "out in the country" and that "the Capitol Hill district remained open prairie."²

The Boom of the 1880s and the Growth of Rapid Transit

With the arrival of the railroad in 1870, Denver's population surged from 4,759 to 35,629 by 1880. The 1880s saw the population nearly triple, with the city reaching 106,713 inhabitants in 1890. The 1887 Robinson map revealed that the western portion of the East Colfax Avenue corridor had begun to develop. Between Grant and Ogden streets, the western section of East Colfax Avenue emerged as an attractive residential area. East Colfax became a prestigious residential street and served as the eastern entryway into downtown Denver. The thoroughfare was lined with large masonry mansions of the city's upper class and bordered with trees (See Figure H1). Residential development became sparser between Ogden and Gilpin streets, and between Gilpin and York the land remained vacant. No identifiable commercial buildings existed along the roadway. Smiley observed that by 1887, "the city's expansion along Broadway and Colfax Avenue had begun, and the people and property owners along and adjacent to those

¹ The Colfax Avenue alignment is also the dividing line between Townships 3 South and 4 South, 6th Principal Meridian. Phil Goodstein, *Denver Streets* (Denver: New Social Publications, 1994), 7; Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver* (Denver: Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901; reprinted Denver: Old Americana Publishing Co., 1978), 444.

² Smiley, *History of Denver*, 456 and 465.

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streets were anxious for better transportation facilities than horse-car lines could afford, and were urging the building of cable roads.”³

Many subdivisions sprouted along the 2.3-mile corridor between Grant Street and Colorado Boulevard. Private developers dictated lot sizes, block dimensions, and street alignments on the individual plats of the additions. Even Colfax Avenue itself took a slight northward jog between York and Josephine streets and followed a more northerly alignment east of that point. Denver historian Phil Goodstein discussed this lack of planning and coordination:

This is evident along Colfax Avenue where frequently the streets on one side of the boulevard do not directly connect with those on the other side. While there are 40 blocks between Broadway and Colorado Boulevard on the south side of Colfax Avenue, there are only 39 blocks on the north. Corona Street only cuts southward from Colfax, evidence of the uncoordinated nature of the city’s evolution.⁴

Developers agreed that improved transportation access to downtown would make their subdivisions more attractive to prospective homeowners. In 1886, a cable railway (whereby cars were powered by a cable laid in the street between the rails) extended to the western end of the corridor, linking the intersection of Grant and Colfax with the downtown business district. The system was abandoned after a year, and the Denver Tramway Company reverted to horse-car operations. Property owners along East Colfax and Broadway then offered the Tramway Company a cash bonus of approximately \$200,000 to revive the cable cars and extend the lines out East Colfax to the vicinity of City Park and down Broadway to Alameda Avenue. The Tramway Company accepted the challenge, and, by December 1888, double tracks were open on Colfax past York Street with a loop to City Park.⁵

The beginning of construction on the State Capitol building in 1886 also positively impacted development of the corridor. Henry C. Brown donated two blocks for Territorial government buildings in the 1860s, reasoning that the presence of the Capitol would help sell lots and draw development to his H.C. Brown’s and H.C. Brown’s Second additions. When more than a decade passed with no building erected on the site, Brown attempted to revoke his gift in 1879. His effort was unsuccessful, and the Capitol eventually occupied the tract bounded by East Colfax Avenue, Grant Street, East 14th Avenue, and Lincoln Street. The first legislature to meet in the building convened in 1895, but Capitol construction did not end until 1908.⁶

Over the next few years the cable car lines extended further east along Colfax Avenue. In 1890, the Colfax Avenue Railway Company built a line from the terminus at York Street to Montclair. The company reorganized as the Colfax Electric Railway Company and built the line to Fletcher (today’s Aurora) in 1898. In 1899, the enterprise became part of Denver Tramway, which had replaced its cable cars with streetcars in 1893 (See Figure H2). This move enhanced

³ Smiley, *History of Denver*, 859.

⁴ Phil Goodstein, *Denver Streets*, 8.

⁵ Smiley, *History of Denver*, 859-60.

⁶ Margaret Coel, *The Colorado State Capitol* (Denver: Colorado General Assembly, 1992), 4-6 and 15.

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transportation access, since streetcars were faster than cable cars and could carry more passengers.⁷

The presence of the rapid transit line encouraged building at some distance from the city center. In 1890, at the extreme eastern end of the East Colfax corridor, National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives was established. The institution constructed a hospital building on the south side of Colfax Avenue at Jackson Street in 1890-91. Due to the Panic of 1893 and funding shortfalls, the facility did not open until 1899. National Jewish considered itself “for consumptives [persons suffering from tuberculosis], only, and absolutely a charity. No paying patients are received; only those whose resources are exhausted, who are friendless and destitute, may enter and receive its ministrations.”⁸

The Rise of Apartments and Diversification of Building Functions

The Panic of 1893 sent Denver and Colorado into an economic recession characterized by business failures, widespread unemployment, construction stoppages, personal bankruptcies, and out-migration to other areas of the country. Not until the end of the decade did the city begin to recover. Some large houses along the corridor were converted to multi-family units during this period. As the economy revived, a number of apartment buildings arose along East Colfax, much to the alarm of residents of the surrounding neighborhood. Local citizens viewed such “tenements,” “flats,” or “terraces” as lessening the quality and property values of a residential area, constituting breeding grounds for disease, eroding privacy through higher densities, and being a hazard to health and safety through using perceived poorer construction practices than those employed for single family homes. Critics derided the area along East Colfax where apartments were rising as “Flatburg.” Paul Robert Merry, in a 1955 dissertation examining the retail development of Colfax Avenue, concluded that “before the turn of the century, east Colfax Avenue was principally a residential development—a boulevard of widely spaced mansions and a few apartment hotels. Retail activity on the street was then almost nonexistent.”⁹

By 1901, Jerome C. Smiley recognized the thoroughfare as one of the city’s principal roadways, “Colfax being the great east-west Avenue clear across its general geographical center.” Continuous development (mostly residential in nature) along the street and north and south into adjacent neighborhoods extended as far east as Steele Street; a small area of vacant land remained between there and National Jewish Hospital to the east. J.E. Holmburg built Corona Flats, one of the first “modern flats,” at the corner of Colfax and Corona in 1900. Several other apartment buildings of three to four stories were in place between Grant and Humboldt streets by 1904, including: Utopia Flats (420 East Colfax Avenue, 1902, Eugene R. Rice, architect); The

⁷ Smiley, *History of Denver*, 864-65 and 868.

⁸ Smiley, *History of Denver*, 776.

⁹ *Denver Times*, 2 March 1900; James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell, “Houses of Homes: The Origins of Apartments,” *Old House Journal* 22(November-December 1994): 25; Paul Robert Merry, “An Inquiry into the Nature and Function of String Retail Development: A Case Study of East Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colorado” (Ph. D. dissertation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, April 1955), 13.

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Colfax (800 block, south side); Colonnade Flats (1210 East Colfax Avenue, 1902); and Altamaha Flats (1300-26 East Colfax Avenue, 1902). Tuxedo Place, a boarding house, was located in the 1100 block of Colfax Avenue (north side). In 1905, John S. Flowers built one of the street's earlier commercial enterprises, the West Vernon Hotel (1201-25 East Colfax Avenue).¹⁰

A few other commercial land uses appeared by the early 1900s. A corner drugstore and another business operated in a building that also contained flats at the northeast corner of Clarkson Street and East Colfax Avenue.¹¹ The most intense early business development along the avenue was located near the intersection of East Colfax and York Street. A commercial nucleus of one-story storefronts existed on both sides of the street on the blockfaces east of York. Businesses included two drug stores, a tailor, a cobbler, a paint and wallpaper store, a plumber, and a novelty and bicycle repair store. A one-story, three-storefront building opened a block east at the southeast corner of Colfax Avenue and Josephine Street and included a hay and feed store. This building was replaced in 1904 by the three-story Austin Pharmacy and Apartments (the street's earliest documented extant commercial building) (See Figure H4). Immediately north across from the pharmacy, the Colfax Avenue Floral Company operated in conjunction with a large complex of greenhouses. The Detroit, an apartment building, stood at the northeast corner of Colfax and Detroit, where a branch of the streetcar line turned north to provide access to City Park. The City Park Esplanade extended north from Colfax Avenue to the open space. No other commercial or apartment buildings were located east of this point along the avenue.¹²

One of the largest buildings along the corridor provided recreational opportunities just off East Colfax at 1510-44 Clarkson Street in 1907. The \$32,000 Mammoth Skating Rink aimed at taking advantage of the current roller skating craze (See Figure H5). Edwin H. Moorman, architect for the building, also designed Moffat Station and the Tower of Jewels at Lakeside Amusement Park. By 1911, skating faded in popularity, and the building housed the Fritchle Automobile and Battery Company, a pioneering electric car manufacturer that operated in the building until 1917.

In 1910, Denver adopted an ordinance that permitted the construction of commercial buildings along Colfax Avenue without the consent of other property owners on a block. Marketing analyst Paul Robert Merry described the impact on the thoroughfare: "First, as a series of isolated store units, then as small clusters, and finally as whole blocks of retail stores, the street rapidly became one of Denver's principal retail developments."¹³

The 1910s saw several significant entertainment, religious, and commercial buildings constructed along the thoroughfare. The Newhouse Hotel, a three-story building designed by

¹⁰ Smiley, *History of Denver*, 446; Sanborn Map Company, "Denver, Colorado," fire insurance maps (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1904); G. William Baist, "Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Denver" (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: G. William Baist, 1905); Rebecca Herbst and Vicki Rottman, "Uptown Historic Building Update Survey Report," August 1987, 10.

¹¹ This building later housed the Clarkson Hotel.

¹² Sanborn maps, 1904; Baist, "Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Denver," 1905.

¹³ Merry, "An Inquiry into the Nature and Function of a String Retail Development," 13-14.

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Arthur H. O'Brien, was erected in 1911 at the southeast corner of East Colfax and Grant Street (See Figure H6). The Catholic archdiocese completed its magnificent Immaculate Conception Cathedral at the northeast corner of Logan Street and Colfax Avenue in 1912. Composed of Indiana limestone, the facility included twin, 210-foot tall towers. Leon Coquard and the firm of Aaron M. Gove and Thomas Walsh designed the cathedral. The commercial area at Colfax Avenue and York Street gained two new buildings during the 1910s. The first Capitol Hill State Bank Building, a one-story edifice designed by noted architects William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher, saw completion in 1912 at the northwest corner of the intersection. In 1914, the three-story Park View Hotel was built across the street on the northeast corner. The location proved inauspicious for a hotel, and it soon became the York View Apartments with retail businesses (a drug store or hardware store) on the first story. Two neighborhood movie theaters were erected during the decade: the Thompson/Bluebird Theater at 3315-17 E. Colfax Avenue in 1914 and the Ogden Theater at 935 E. Colfax Avenue in 1917 (See Figure H7). Harry W.J. Edbrooke designed both film venues.¹⁴

Increasing traffic along East Colfax Avenue led developers to push for the elimination of residential restrictions along the roadway. They pointed out that growing traffic along the street diminished its desirability as a residential area. Many argued that Colfax was destined to evolve into a commercial corridor. Property owners in adjacent residential sections opposed removing the restrictions, but the corridor grew increasingly commercial. According to historians Rebecca Herbst and Vicki Rottman, after 1905 no new single family residences were built on East Colfax between Broadway and Garfield Street. In 1912, a coalition of booster and good roads groups (including the Chamber of Commerce Good Roads Committee, the Real Estate Exchange, and the Denver Motor Club) joined forces in a drive to make East Colfax the best road in the state. The group aimed to turn Colfax Avenue into the gateway to Denver for tourists visiting by automobile from the East.¹⁵

Automobility and Construction in the 1920s

The automobile significantly impacted the development of East Colfax Avenue (See Figure H8). The number of cars on the roads of Denver and the nation grew exponentially from the mid-1910s through the 1920s. By 1925, one automobile rolled off the Ford Motor Company assembly line every ten seconds. East Colfax received paving prior to 1920, and, in the mid-1920s, the street became part of U.S. 40, a transcontinental highway extending from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to San Francisco, California.¹⁶

In 1925, when the City and County of Denver adopted a zoning code for the city, the faceblocks of East Colfax Avenue between Grant Street and Colorado Boulevard were zoned Business. The western section (between Grant and Milwaukee streets) was categorized as "Business B,"

¹⁴ Thomas J. Noel, *Denver Landmarks and Historic Districts* (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1996), 44-45, 56-57, and 69-70.

¹⁵ Herbst and Rottman, "Uptown Historic Building Update Survey Report," 10 and 12.

¹⁶ *Denver Municipal Facts*, September 1920, 19; Thomas R. Vale and Geraldine R. Vale, *U.S. 40 Today: Thirty Years of Landscape Change in America* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 5.

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with building heights limited to 80 feet; east of Milwaukee Street, the avenue was zoned "Business C," with a 50-foot height limitation. In 1929, the city's first Master Plan document described East Colfax as "formerly a principal residential street, and now in large part zoned for business and the principal artery through the Capitol Hill apartment district." In 1930, the city widened the avenue from forty-eight feet to sixty-six feet between Broadway and Grant and to sixty feet between Grant and Downing.¹⁷

The 1920s saw a boom in commercial building construction along East Colfax. This expansion resulted from the street's status as a transcontinental highway and the presence of good streetcar access throughout the corridor, coupled with the presence of business zoning. A variety of commercial buildings erected along the avenue during the period included: one-story buildings with multiple storefronts; multi-story buildings with storefronts on the first story and apartments above; and multi-story buildings with offices and storefronts. Among the significant two- to three-story commercial buildings of the 1920s were: the Cathedral Apartment Building (400 East Colfax, 1923); the Seckler Dry Cleaning and Apartments (1228-40 East Colfax, 1924); the Pencol Apartments (504 East Colfax, 1925, Walter Simon, architect) (See Figure H9); the second Capitol Hill State Bank (2239 East Colfax, 1925, John M. Gardner, architect) (See Figure H10); and the Acobo Building (1900-16 East Colfax, 1928).

Special purpose buildings supporting the changing character of the neighborhood also came to the avenue, such as the Weicker Storage Depository (1925), which provided storage space for household goods, furs, and carpets (See Figure H11). The initial application for a building permit for the warehouse was denied by the Denver City Council, which was apparently persuaded by arguments that the proposed building was incompatible in terms of size and height with its surroundings and would be "a nuisance to the sky line." Opponents also argued that the building would become rat-infested and attract children, with "a detrimental result to the morals of the community." Weicker appealed the denial, and the case eventually reached the Colorado Supreme Court, which described the commercial nature of East Colfax Avenue:

East Colfax is here [at Vine Street] a business street. On that section thereof extending four blocks each way from plaintiff's lots there are 53 business houses, 12 apartment and rooming houses, 4 vacant tracts, and 4 private homes. A street car line runs on Colfax avenue. A service garage adjoins plaintiff's property, and grocery stores are plentiful.¹⁸

The Supreme Court reversed the lower court, holding that the denial of the building permit was an abuse of discretion and opining that the proposed building was "architecturally unobjectionable." Fisher and Fisher designed the eight-story Italian Gothic building, which some observers believe drew inspiration from city halls in Florence and Siena, Italy. The December

¹⁷ City and County of Denver, "Building Zone Map, City and County of Denver," February 1925; City and County of Denver, Planning Office, "Capitol Hill Neighborhood Plan," 1973, 2.

¹⁸ Justice Burke judged that the specter of a rat infestation from a furniture warehouse in an area with numerous grocery stores was "unworthy of consideration until those animals change their habits and diet." *Weicker Transfer & Storage Co. v. Council of City and County of Denver*, 75 Colorado 475, 226 Pacific Reporter 857 (1924).

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1926 issue of *Architectural Record* featured a picture of the fireproof brick building with rooftop crenellation and lower stories clad in travertine marble.¹⁹

To accommodate growth in the area's student enrollment, a new East High School designed by George H. Williamson was completed in 1926 adjacent to the City Park Esplanade. The red brick building with terra cotta trim featured a seven-story central tower and was likened to Philadelphia's Independence Hall. The grand Aladdin Theater, built for \$300,000 at 2000 East Colfax in 1926 (See Figure H12), represented a superb example of "atmospheric" theater design of the period. The Aladdin featured a "Garden of Allah" motif on its interior, along with fountains, ferns, palms, and 2,500 dimming lights.²⁰

Construction along East Colfax fell sharply during the Great Depression of the 1930s and remained limited during the World War II years, when construction materials and labor were prioritized for defense-related projects. Some important commercial projects were completed in the early 1930s before the economic downturn intensified. Significant projects along the corridor included: Walgreen Drugs (later Walgreen's) (2226-60 East Colfax, 1930, Harry W.J. Edbrooke, architect); Block Floral/Paradise Cleaners (3220-42 East Colfax, 1930 and 1934); the Leetonia Apartments and storefronts (2021-33 East Colfax, 1931, Walter H. Simon, architect); and storefronts with apartments above (1062-80 East Colfax, 1932) (See Figure H13). The construction of the eastern section of the Block Floral/Paradise Cleaners building drew the Colorado Supreme Court into another Denver building permit dispute. In 1932, the court held that a fifteen-foot setback required for buildings on Adams Street did not apply to the proposed building at the corner of Adams and Colfax Avenue. The opinion took notice of the corridor's commercial evolution: "Colfax avenue for many blocks east and west of Adams street, intersecting, was, and for many years had been, a business street, on which private residences were no longer being built."²¹

The Early Post-World War II Years

Margot Crowe, whose family operated the Bohm House/Holiday Chalet Hotel, and Stephen Savageau, whose grandfather built the Walgreen Drug building at 2226-60 East Colfax, recalled memories of the thoroughfare in the 1940s and 1950s. Locally owned and operated businesses still dominated the avenue, including Jultak's florist shop, the Keystone Grocery, the Degarmo Pharmacy, City Elite Cleaners, the Vernon Hotel, and the Pencol Drug Store. The Aladdin Theater showed films, and children would visit the Kitchen (now Pete's Kitchen) for burgers and milkshakes after a matinee. Roger Whitacre, who lived in East Denver and attended junior high school in the early 1950s, remembered that in the days before fast food chains, drugstore lunch counters and soda fountains along East Colfax were the place to go for a quick meal or other refreshment. He also reported feeling "no threat of danger" when walking the length of East

¹⁹ *Architectural Record*, December 1926.

²⁰ Noel, *Denver Landmarks and Historic Districts*, 67; Denver Post, 1 February 1984, 6; *Rocky Mountain News*, 31 August 1984, 8.

²¹ *Hedgecock v. People ex rel Reed*, 13 Pacific Reporter 2nd 264 (1932).

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Colfax to his home east of Colorado Boulevard after watching an evening motion picture downtown.²²

In 2004, Jan McNutt interviewed Margot Crowe about growing up on East Colfax. Mrs. Crowe recalled people embracing their religious, cultural, and ethnic heritage on East Colfax in the 1940s to 1960s:

She remembers her classmates going to religious classes after school. She thinks she was about the only one who didn't have a bar mitzvah or confirmation class during the week. Greek, Hebrew, German and black claimed the language patterns as well as the food and specialty stores along Colfax in those post-war days.²³

The immediate post-World War II era saw a need for expanded commercial space to meet the demands of the area's growing population. Many older houses along East Colfax Avenue received commercial additions on front to house assorted retail and service firms. For example, a 1946 one-story commercial space constructed on the front of the pre-1904 Loustano House (5DV10391) at 3000-02 East Colfax Avenue accommodated the Vogel Plumbing and Heating Company. The Detroit Apartments at 2801 East Colfax Avenue was converted to an office building in the early 1950s. As the O'Riley Building it housed insurance and real estate agents, a dentist, and a dental laboratory. In 1952, the Inglenook Apartments at 1820 East Colfax Avenue became the Holiday Chalet Hotel, "where every day is a holiday."²⁴

In the eastern section of the corridor the Bonfils Memorial Theater served as a major entertainment venue. In 1949 Denver architect John K. Monroe designed the blond brick and terra cotta Moderne style theater, which opened at 1475 Elizabeth Street (5DV4045) in 1953. Patron and philanthropist Helen Bonfils provided funding for the building erected in memory of her parents, Belle and Frederick G. Bonfils. The Denver Civic Theater, founded in 1929 in association with the University of Denver, utilized the facility for more than thirty years, with Helen Bonfils providing creative direction for its high-quality productions. The multipurpose theater also accommodated operas, movies, concerts, lectures, and television. The dedication program for the Bonfils in 1953 asserted, "No community theater in America—and few, if any, professional theatres—has a more beautiful home than this nor one as carefully planned and equipped for the purpose."²⁵

²² Jan McNutt, "Pieces of the Colfax Past," *Life on Capitol Hill*, August 2004, 29; Roger Whitacre, personal interview, Denver, Colorado, by R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, 23 February 2007.

²³ Jan McNutt, "Pieces of the Colfax Past," *Life on Capitol Hill*, August 2004, 29.

²⁴ The building at 1820 East Colfax Avenue was originally a large single family residence built for jeweler Henry Bohm in 1896. Front Range Research Associates, Inc., Architectural Inventory form, 1820 East Colfax Avenue, 5DV2615, January 2007.

²⁵ Mary Voelz Chandler, "Encore for a Classic," *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 June 2006; Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, National Register Listings for Colorado and Architectural Site Detail for 5DV4045, Bonfils Memorial Theater.

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East Colfax Avenue's transportation role continued to evolve. Streetcars ended their run on the street in 1950 and were replaced with buses. Businesses dependent on the flow of traffic continued to locate along the thoroughfare. A notable resource was the 1949 Black and White Automotive Service garage at 2424 East Colfax Avenue. The Moderne style building displayed glazed tile block walls, rounded corners, and a projecting metal canopy with a curved corner. Another innovative building arose in 1958 when William B. Bastien, Sr., tore down the Moon Drive-In Restaurant that he had operated since 1937 and erected a new building to house Bastien's restaurant. The twelve-sided, Googie-inspired Bastien's featured a shallow, conical, folded plate roof and an imposing free-standing neon sign aimed at catching the notice of passersby.²⁶

During 1964-68, the completion of Interstate 70 to the north as a controlled-access highway permitted transcontinental traffic to bypass East Colfax Avenue, thereby avoiding congestion and saving travel time. This change resulted in a particularly negative impact on tourist-oriented accommodations on the avenue lying east of Colorado Boulevard and west of Sheridan Boulevard. Although there were fewer motels within the corridor between Grant Street and Colorado Boulevard, the reduction in traffic doubtless influenced adjacent businesses.²⁷

As late as January 1968, a *Rocky Mountain News* columnist called Colfax Avenue "one of the most important gateways—east and west—to our town," carrying tourist and ski traffic as well as local east-west traffic. Despite the loss of traffic to Interstate 70, some new auto-oriented construction continued on East Colfax. The five-story, fifty-four room Royal Host Motel was constructed on a vacant tract of land at 930 East Colfax Avenue in 1966 (See Figure H14). The ninth White Spot restaurant in Denver (a local coffee shop chain established in 1947) and a rare example of Googie style architecture opened at 601 East Colfax Avenue in 1967 (See Figure H15). The flamboyant design by architects Louis L. Armet and Eldon C. Davis of Los Angeles attracted the attention of passing motorists. Armet and Davis, the best known of the California coffee shop architects, specialized in roofs "whose planes, angles, juttings, textures, and colors couldn't possibly coincide or blend with anything else around them. . ."²⁸

Transformations in the Late Twentieth Century

The Skyline Urban Renewal Project in downtown Denver in the late 1960s resulted in the displacement of some less desirable businesses from that area to East Colfax Avenue. A 1993 *Denver Post* article explained: "The 1960s and 1970s also were the heyday of topless bars and sexually explicit theaters. Colfax became home to many of them. Denver razed blocks of seedy shops on Larimer Street in 1967 and some of them were reborn on Colfax." The Clarkson Hotel south of Mammoth Gardens housed a topless shoeshine parlor, and *Playboy* magazine labeled Colfax "the longest, wickedest street in America." One of the most visible adult-oriented

²⁶ Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, *East Colfax Avenue* (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 2007), 80-81.

²⁷ "The Highways of Colorado," Michael Salek, website creator, www.mesalek.com/colo/info.html, accessed on 2 March 2007; William Wyckoff, "Denver's Aging Commercial Strip," *Geographical Review* 82(July 1992):283-85.

²⁸ *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 January 1968, 4; Alan Hess, *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985), 71-79.

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businesses of the era was Sid King's Crazy Horse Bar, a strip club at 1211 East Colfax that operated until 1983. Some of the long-operating hotels of the corridor began to assume the character of single room occupancy establishments, with tenants staying for longer periods. Prostitution, drug dealing, and violence flourished along the thoroughfare. One Denver policeman commented on East Colfax in December 1983: "During the early morning and the night shift you get to find just about every facet of society down there: your dealers, pimps, hookers. I think it's safe to say that anyone who is in the criminal element is on East Colfax at one time during the night." Colfax Avenue's nadir was aptly summarized by conservative columnist George Will in 1978: "The fear that [nuclear] war may blow civilization to smithereens loses some of its sting when you see Denver's Colfax Avenue."²⁹

In the 1980s and 1990s, East Colfax Avenue remained a major traffic arterial within the Denver metropolitan region. Chain store operations sited outlets along the avenue, typically featuring buildings set back from the street, with expanses of convenient parking and signage to entice drivers. The corridor featured numerous fast food chains (including McDonald's, Burger King, Arby's, Taco Bell, Popeye's, Wendy's, Pizza Hut, Starbuck's, Good Times, and Papa John's), as well as such diverse chains as Blockbuster, Walgreen's, 7-11 convenience stores, Conoco, and Grease Monkey. The emergence of these chains came in conjunction with demolitions and redevelopment in some cases. The Aladdin Theater at 2000 East Colfax, for example, was demolished in 1984 and replaced with a Walgreen's drugstore.³⁰

Twenty-First Century Revival

According to the Colfax Business Improvement District, \$100 million was invested between 2000 and 2005 along East Colfax Avenue between Broadway and Colorado Boulevard, with an additional \$100 million planned or under construction. Chamberlin Heights, a retail and condominium project completed in 2000 at East Colfax and Steele Street, represented the first new residential development along Colfax in decades. The avenue continued to carry large volumes of traffic; in 2004, the segment of the street between Broadway and Colorado Boulevard recorded an average daily traffic count of 27,400 vehicles. In 2006, the flagship store of the Tattered Cover Bookstore relocated from Cherry Creek to the former Bonfils/Lowenstein Theater building at East Colfax and Elizabeth Street. In 1974, Joyce Meskis founded the bookstore, Denver's largest independent bookseller. The building also housed an Udi's Restaurant and the Denver Folklore Center. The first Colfax Marathon took place in May 2006, with more than six thousand persons participating in the twenty-six-mile-race spanning Aurora, Denver, and Lakewood.³¹

²⁹ *Denver Post*, 18 December 1983, 1B, and 10 October 1993, 17A; Phil Goodstein, "Colfax on the Move," *City Edition*, 18-25 January 1984, 1; *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 January 1981, 4 (quoting George Will). For a discussion of SRO hotels, see Paul Erling Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994).

³⁰ Chain outlets were identified in the reconnaissance survey.

³¹ "The Highways of Colorado," Matthew Salek, website creator, www.mesalek.com/colo/index.html, accessed on 2 March 2007; *Denver Business Journal*, 22 April 2005.

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In 2005, the Denver City Council approved Main Street Zoning for the portion of East Colfax Avenue between Sherman and Albion streets. Main Street Zoning is an example of form-based zoning, which emphasizes design and character in assessing proposed projects. The action was the largest single rezoning in the city since the 1950s.

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F. Associated Property Types

1. Name of Property Type³²

Property Type: Commercial Resources of the East Colfax Avenue Corridor

Subtypes: General-Use Commercial Building
Entertainment and Recreation Building
Hotel/Motel Building
Transportation-Related Building
House with Commercial Addition

Historic Context: Commercial Development of the East Colfax Avenue Corridor, 1880s-1968

2. Description

Commercial resources, reflecting the evolution of the East Colfax Avenue Corridor from residential to business-oriented, are the most numerous type of buildings present in the geographic area defined in Section G. The commercial category is broadly defined to include general-use commercial buildings, entertainment and recreation buildings, hotels/motels, transportation-related buildings, and houses with a commercial addition. Commercial buildings with a residential or fraternal/meeting hall component on an upper story or in an attached section are included in the category. This submission focuses on the commercial development of East Colfax Avenue, so non-commercial property types are not addressed. The latter group includes domestic buildings (single family houses, duplexes, apartments, and condominiums), public buildings, and health-related buildings.

Historic commercial buildings in the corridor typically employ masonry construction, represent a variety of architectural styles, vary in scale from one story to eight stories (with one to two stories most common), and generally are built at the sidewalk line with no setback. Density is higher in the western portion of the corridor, with buildings abutting one another and some properties occupying an entire half-block, from cross-street to alley. The eastern section of the street is more likely to have free-standing buildings, greater numbers of newer buildings with setbacks, and more examples of older houses with commercial additions.

Most historic commercial buildings within the corridor include multiple storefronts on the first story. Some commercial resources of the corridor embrace a single retail use, such as free-standing restaurants, entertainment and recreation facilities, and transportation-related resources, such as gas stations and garages.

³²There may be other commercial resources present in the corridor which do not fall into the subtypes presented. They are not called out due to the small numbers of resources they represent. The National Register Bulletin on *How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* notes that "property type analysis is not necessary on this form for unique or rare resources because the information can appear on the registration form within the multiple property submission."

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No one architectural style predominates along the corridor. Historic commercial buildings along this section of East Colfax Avenue display a variety of architectural styles and building types. Classical Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Colonial Revival, Exotic Revival, Renaissance Revival, Mission Revival, Eclectic, Art Deco, Art Moderne, Beaux Arts, Modern (including Googie, Formalist, and International), and Italian Gothic style examples are present. Notable examples of polychromatic terra cotta ornamentation are found on several of the corridor's buildings.

Based on the survey process that was a part of this project, five commercial subtypes were identified: general-use commercial buildings; entertainment and recreation buildings; hotels and motels; transportation-related buildings; and houses with commercial additions. The characteristics of commercial subtypes are discussed below.

Subtype: General-Use Commercial Building

The general-use commercial building subtype includes both relatively small, one-story examples of commercial buildings, as well as larger examples of two or more stories (See Figures C1 through C9). Historian Chester H. Liebs described the general evolution of commercial corridors such as East Colfax Avenue:

The many households located along the car lines created a strong need for neighborhood stores to spare anyone wanting to buy groceries or have their hair cut from having to go all the way downtown. So by the close of the nineteenth century, alert speculators had begun erecting commercial buildings along the streetcar routes. These structures usually consisted of a single row of shop fronts, although some were capped by an additional story or two of lofts or offices. Since builders assumed the more concentrated urban settlement spreading out from the city center would eventually make land along the avenues valuable for more intensive development, they generally conceived of the structures as interim improvements designed to produce enough revenue to pay the taxes and hold the property for the future. Hence these buildings were often referred to as "taxpayers."³³

In the case of Denver's East Colfax Avenue subsequent re-development into more intensive commercial uses generally did not occur, so many of the pioneering commercial buildings remain.

The small scale, one-story commercial buildings within this subtype include buildings of one, two, or multiple storefronts, which housed retail, service, and office functions (See Figures C1 and C2). Most small scale commercial buildings are of brick construction with flat roofs, no setback from the sidewalk, and feature multiple storefronts with individual entrances (sometimes inset), storefront transoms, and large fixed-light display windows. Ornamentation may consist of contrasting brick or terra cotta or more elaborate polychromatic terra cotta strips, panels, or finials. Buildings located on corners frequently feature angled entrances.

³³ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 12-13.

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The subtype also includes free-standing one-story commercial buildings, such as restaurants and supermarkets. Some restaurants along the avenue evolved from drive-ins and feature off-street parking and eye-catching signage. For others, such as the Google-style White Spot restaurant and Bastien's Restaurant, the overall design of the building was aimed at drawing customers (See Figure C6). Two postwar supermarket buildings along the corridor are placed perpendicular to East Colfax and have large parking areas facing the adjoining cross-streets.

The larger scale commercial buildings of this subtype encompass two or more stories (See Figures C3 through C5). The first story of these buildings displays the same characteristics as the one-story commercial building. However, the buildings are distinguished by their larger scale and differing upper story uses. Buildings in this category feature commercial functions in street-level first story storefronts, with apartments, hotels, or offices most commonly on upper stories. In some cases, access to the upper stories is located on the adjoining cross-street; these entrances are sometimes elaborated with terra cotta surrounds, metal canopies, or other features.

Larger scale commercial buildings most often have flat roofs, although a few examples with hipped roofs are present, and a few have tiled shed roofs at the parapet. Corner buildings frequently feature angled entrances. Upper stories may display smaller windows, including double hung (often multi-over-one-light) and multi-light casement windows. Ornamentation on early twentieth century examples may consist of contrasting brick or terra cotta trim or more elaborate and extensive use of polychromatic terra cotta.

This subtype also includes the three-story Capitol Hill State Bank Building (1925) and the four-story Silver State Savings Building (1964), both of which had offices on upper stories (See Figures C7 and C8). The façade of the Capitol Hill State Bank displays extensive use of decorative terra cotta, including a projecting molded cornice with block modillions, a frieze, and fluted pilasters. By contrast, the Formalist style Silver State Savings Building features cantilevered upper stories and walls clad with precast concrete. Also embraced by this subtype is the eight-story Weicker Depository (1925), the tallest historic building along the corridor (See Figure C9). The Italian Gothic style building, erected as a storage depository for household and specialty goods by the Weicker Transfer and Storage Company, features a travertine base, brick walls, and a projecting, crenellated cornice.

Listed Resources: One property representing this subtype is currently listed in the National Register and meets these registration requirements.

Austin Building, 2400-28 East Colfax Avenue, 5DV4688, listed 1 January 1996

Subtype: *Entertainment and Recreation Building*

Entertainment and recreation buildings within the corridor include such resources as motion picture theaters, venues for drama and music, and sporting/athletic facilities. As a principal arterial that also carried a streetcar route, East Colfax Avenue represented a desirable location for such venues. Neighborhood motion picture palaces, such as the Thompson/Bluebird Theater (1914), the Ogden Theater (1917), and the Aladdin Theater (1926, demolished) were

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built along the street to serve the densely-populated areas north and south of East Colfax Avenue. The corridor was also the site for larger entertainment and recreation venues, such as the Mammoth Skating Rink/Mammoth Gardens (1907) and Bonfils Theater (1953), which drew patrons from a wider geographic area (See Figure C10). Resources in this category tend to be single-use buildings that do not share space with other commercial ventures. They also tend to display flamboyant ornamentation with embellishments such as towers, polychromatic terra cotta, ornamental brickwork, and marquees.

Listed Resources: Three properties representing this subtype are currently listed in the National Register and meet the registration requirements.

Bluebird Theater, 3315-17 East Colfax Avenue, 5DV4519, listed 31 January 1997

Bonfils Memorial Theater, 1475 Elizabeth Street, 5DV4045, listed 27 December 2006

Ogden Theater, 935 East Colfax Avenue, 5DV2609, listed 31 August 1995

Subtype: Hotel/Motel Building

The hotel and motel subtype includes facilities that provide temporary lodging. Dwellings and apartment buildings with no associated commercial components do not fall within this subtype and are not considered commercial resources under the terms of this MPDF. Resources in the hotel and motel subtype may originally have been built as such or have been changed to these uses during the historic period. For example, a single dwelling house or apartment converted to a hotel or bed and breakfast falls in this category. Older hotels in the western portion of the corridor, such as the Newhouse and West Vernon, typically occupied the upper story or stories of a building that featured some storefronts on the first story (See Figures C11 and C13). Generally, older hotels display design elements similar to those discussed for larger scale commercial buildings. Post-World War II hotels further to the east were more likely to be taller (four-plus stories), free-standing buildings that were designed in subcategories of the Modern style. The Royal Host Motel (1966) at 930 East Colfax Avenue, for example, reflected International style architectural elements in its rectangular form, flat roof, cantilevered balconies forming hoods for balconies below, strong horizontal emphasis overlaid with vertical elements, and stacked floors(see Figure C14). These later hotels possessed off-street parking and eye-catching neon signage.

Listed Resources: No properties representing this subtype are currently listed in the National Register.

Subtype: Transportation-Related Building

The transportation-related subtype embraces resources directly tied to East Colfax Avenue's role as a segment of a transcontinental highway (U.S. 40) and major urban arterial. Such resources as service stations, garages, automobile dealerships, vehicle repair businesses, vehicle part and supply firms, and similar establishments fall into this category. Buildings of this subtype within the corridor are generally one-story in height, have flat roofs, are set back from the street, and often occupy corner locations. Service stations within the subtype tend to be rectangular boxes, having an office area with display windows and a pedestrian entrance at one end attached to a

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garage area with overhead, sectional garage doors. Fuel pump islands are present a short distance from the front and sides of the building. Few service stations along the corridor display an identifiable architectural style. One of the most notable transportation-related resources along the avenue is the Black and White Automotive Service (1949) at 2424 East Colfax Avenue (See Figure C15). The two-story Art Moderne style building is composed of tile block and has curved corners, large display windows, a curving metal canopy, and metal coping. Historic automobile dealerships generally featured a small, one-story office set well back from the thoroughfare, with the large open area in front used for the display of vehicles. Some auto dealership buildings of the later twentieth century tended to be much larger in scale, with two stories, some interior showrooms, and attached service areas.

Listed Resources: No properties representing this subtype are currently listed in the National Register.

Subtype: House with Commercial Addition

The house with commercial addition is a property type recognized by the Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. A MPDF from New Mexico called these types of resources “Commercial/Residence Hybrid Buildings.” East Colfax Avenue, which originally developed as a residential thoroughfare, became increasingly commercial in the early twentieth century. While a good many of the original large dwellings along the street were demolished to make way for businesses, others were retained and converted to commercial uses through the construction of additions (See Figures C16 and C17). Generally, the additions were one-story in height (although a few examples of two-story additions exist) with flat roofs, abutted the original house, and extended to the sidewalk line. Additions were constructed of a variety of materials, such as brick, block, and stucco; additions were accessed by an entrance from the sidewalk and generally featured large display windows. Examples of this subtype located on corners may have commercial additions on the cross-street side as well as the front. In significant examples the house behind the commercial addition should retain substantial physical integrity. In many cases, proprietors of the business lived in the attached house, while in others the house was itself used as part of the business or converted to multiple apartment units.³⁴

Listed Resources: No properties representing this subtype are currently listed in the National Register.

3. Significance

Criterion A

Commercial resources of the East Colfax Avenue Commercial Corridor may be significant under *Criterion A* for their association with events that have made an important contribution to the broad patterns of the corridor’s history. These resources may be significant principally in

³⁴ See, State Historical Society of Colorado, *A Guide to Colorado’s Historic Architecture and Engineering*, 2nd ed. (Denver: State Historical Society of Colorado, March 2003), 76-77 and Chris Wilson, “Auto-oriented Development in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1916-1956,” National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, 15 September 1996, 29.

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the field of *Commerce*. Some resources may be also be eligible under Criterion A in areas of significance not listed in this MPDF.

In 1901, historian Jerome C. Smiley recognized the street as one of the city's principal roadways, "Colfax being the great east-west Avenue clear across its general geographical center."³⁵ While originally developed as a residential street, the avenue's importance drew commercial enterprises as early as 1905. A cable street railway was constructed on the western section of the thoroughfare in 1886 and converted to a streetcar route in 1893. The railway line eventually extended along Colfax Avenue to Fletcher (present-day Aurora) by 1898. By the early 1920s, Colfax Avenue through Denver received designation as part of U.S. 40, a cross-country route. The fourfold nature of East Colfax Avenue--as a streetcar route, a significant intracity arterial, a portion of a transcontinental intercity highway, and a business strip serving densely-populated neighborhoods through which it passed--was a powerful lure for commercial enterprises heeding the importance of location in business siting decisions. Residences along the street were demolished to make way for new commercial buildings; other residences saw conversion to commercial uses through the construction of commercial additions. Formal business zoning of the faceblocks along East Colfax came in 1925. By the end of the 1920s, the character of the street had been dramatically transformed, with the city's first Master Plan document of 1929 describing East Colfax as "formerly a principal residential street, and now in large part zoned for business and the principal artery through the Capitol Hill apartment district." To accommodate increased traffic and provide on-street parking for businesses, East Colfax Avenue experienced a number of widenings.³⁶

An array of specialty retail and service firms, transportation-related businesses, offices, lodging facilities, and entertainment and recreation venues located along East Colfax Avenue during the historic period. The proprietors of the street's businesses viewed the parade of streetcar passengers, motor vehicle occupants, and adjoining neighborhood residents as a vast pool of prospective customers for their goods and services. A rich cross-section of businesses flourished along the corridor, with restaurants and bars comprising the most numerous type of retail establishment. Grocery stores made up the second largest category of businesses during the historic period, with clothing stores (including several furriers), drugstores, bakeries, meat markets, confectioneries, appliance stores, florists, liquor stores, and decorating firms also well-represented. At least nineteen other types of retail stores, including purveyors of notions, furniture, jewelry, hats, books, dry goods, hardware, and music, were listed in city directories from the 1920s through the 1950s. Service establishments also located along the corridor in large numbers, led by dry cleaners and laundries. Beauty salons, barbers, and shoe repair establishments were common, as well as several tailors, photo studios, plumbers, and mortuaries. Some of the retail and service firms were branches of local firms (such as dry cleaners) or were outlets of national chains (such as Walgreen's, Piggly Wiggly, Safeway, MacMarr, Miller's, and the National 5-10-25 Cent Store).

³⁵ Smiley, *History of Denver*, 446.

³⁶ City and County of Denver, "Building Zone Map, City and County of Denver," February 1925; City and County of Denver, Planning Office, "Capitol Hill Neighborhood Plan," 1973, 2.

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Office uses existed along the corridor, but in relatively small numbers. Real estate firms represented the most numerous type of office use in storefronts along the avenue, followed by medical/dental practices. Small numbers of storefronts housed lawyers; insurance agents; and loan, finance, and investment workers. The three-story Capitol Hill State Bank (1925) at Colfax Avenue and York Street contained medical offices, architects, insurance agencies, and miscellaneous businesses. The four-story Silver State Savings Building (1964) housed that financial institution as well as diverse offices on its uppermost story.

Transportation-related resources were well-represented along Colfax Avenue, although in smaller numbers than retail and service businesses. Service stations and car sales firms were the most numerous types of explicitly transportation-related enterprises. Franchisees of several national gasoline companies, such as Chevron, Powerine, Phillips 66, Texaco, and Sinclair, operated service stations along the corridor, with corner locations most prevalent. Car sales lots tended to locate along the less densely developed eastern end of the avenue, where larger parcels of open land were more readily available. Automobile repair firms, garages, and auto parts and supply businesses (including batteries and tires) also found locations along the avenue.

Hotel/motel buildings and entertainment and recreation buildings account for relatively few resources along the corridor, but tend to be of relatively larger scale and manifest distinctive ornamentation that highlights their presence along the street. Hotels in the western portion of the avenue tend to occupy the upper stories of buildings with retail or service businesses on the first story, such as the Newhouse (1911) and West Vernon (1905) hotels. Hotels in the eastern section are more likely to be of more recent postwar construction--free-standing, single-use buildings with adjacent off-street parking for patrons. Theaters are the most numerous type of entertainment and recreation resource, although a roller skating rink (later a sporting event and concert venue), a bowling alley, and a dance studio are present.

In short, the East Colfax Avenue corridor offered a full array of commercial enterprises during the historic period. The businesses along the roadway supported tourists, travelers, and neighboring residents with retail and service outlets, entertainment, lodging, and automotive services. Such properties are associated with the area's development over time into one of Denver's most important commercial corridors.

Criterion C

Commercial resources of the East Colfax Avenue Commercial Corridor may be significant under *Criterion C* for their *Architecture*, as examples of architectural styles and building types typically found along commercial transportation corridors. For example, the greater density and business character of the avenue provides an early example of transit-oriented development, as businesses and investors took advantage of the presence of the East Colfax Avenue streetcar line. Apartment uses placed on the upper stories of the avenue's commercial buildings provide another example of streetcar-related densification. East Colfax Avenue displays many of the distinctive development characteristics denoted by historian Chester H. Liebs as a "taxpayer strip" (see page 14). Some transportation-related resources

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may be distinguished by their placement and setback from the street to accommodate vehicular access to fuel islands and garage bays. Setbacks and off-street parking increased in importance after World War II for resources such as restaurants, reflecting the discontinuance of the streetcar line and the growing importance of the automobile during the era.

Some of the corridor's commercial buildings may also be significant for design and ornamentation that attracted the notice of passing travelers along the roadway. Such differentiation set a building apart from its neighbors amidst the crush of businesses along the commercial strip. The application of panels, strips or finials of polychromatic terra cotta, and the use of contrasting brickwork served this purpose. The shapes of some buildings, through the incorporation of towers, crenellation, streamlining, and unusual roofs, helped them vie for potential customers. A good example of this is the Googie style White Spot Restaurant (1967), with its distinctive roof planes, large plate glass windows, and contrasting materials. In addition, some buildings may possess marquees or freestanding signs featuring distinctive design and lighting (often neon) that further served to draw the eyes of travelers.

Some buildings along the corridor may also be eligible as excellent examples of recognized architectural styles or building types. As discussed earlier, many different architectural styles and building types are found along East Colfax Avenue. Notable examples of such styles as Art Deco, Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, Exotic Revival, Modern Movements, and others have been identified along the corridor.

Some resources may be eligible under Criterion C, as significant examples of the work of recognized architects and master builders. Denver architects William E. and Arthur A. Fisher, Harry W.J. Edbrooke, Walter H. Simon, William C. Muchow, Edwin H. Moorman, T. Robert Weiger, Audley W. Reynolds, Arthur H. O'Brien, Eugene R. Rice, John K. Monroe, and John M. Gardner are known to have designed buildings along the corridor. The prominent Los Angeles firm of Armet and Davis prepared plans for one documented building—the 1967 White Spot Restaurant (now Tom's Diner).

Criterion B

Some resources may be eligible under *Criterion B*, for their association with the lives of people influential in the city's past. Prominent persons who have a direct association with corridor resources through their construction of buildings and/or longtime operation of businesses may meet this criterion. This criterion is particularly applicable to persons who strongly influenced the overall commercial development of the corridor, such as individuals who led efforts to permit commercial resources along the street, who advocated commercial zoning of the corridor, who developed a number of properties along the avenue, or who played key roles in creating business or merchants' groups.

4. Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing as a commercial property type under this MPDF a building or district must: a) be located within the geographic area defined in section G; b) have been originally used

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for a commercial purpose or converted to such a use during the historic period; c) have been built between the 1880s (the period when the street began to rapidly develop) and fifty years before the present; d) possess historical associations related to the commercial development of the East Colfax Avenue Corridor; and e) possess sufficient historic physical integrity to convey its significance. In addition, resources less than fifty years of age must meet National Register Criteria Consideration G by possessing "exceptional significance" in order to be eligible.

Alterations to storefronts should not automatically render a resource ineligible for listing, as changes to entrances, store windows, clerestories, and finishes at street level are typical in successful commercial corridors. A resource should be considered eligible if the alterations do not detract from the overall design, character, and proportions of the building. Such alterations may have a greater impact on the eligibility of a one-story building than on buildings of two or more stories, as thereby reflecting a modification to a greater proportion of the overall historic fabric of the building. In some cases storefront redesign by long term tenants may reflect a building's most significant historic appearance.

For a historic district to be nominated under this property type, its component resources must, as a group, have been associated with the development of the East Colfax Commercial Corridor during the historic period and must possess sufficient historic integrity to convey a sense of the original urban fabric and commercial nature of the area. Commercial buildings must be the predominant type of resource within such a district.

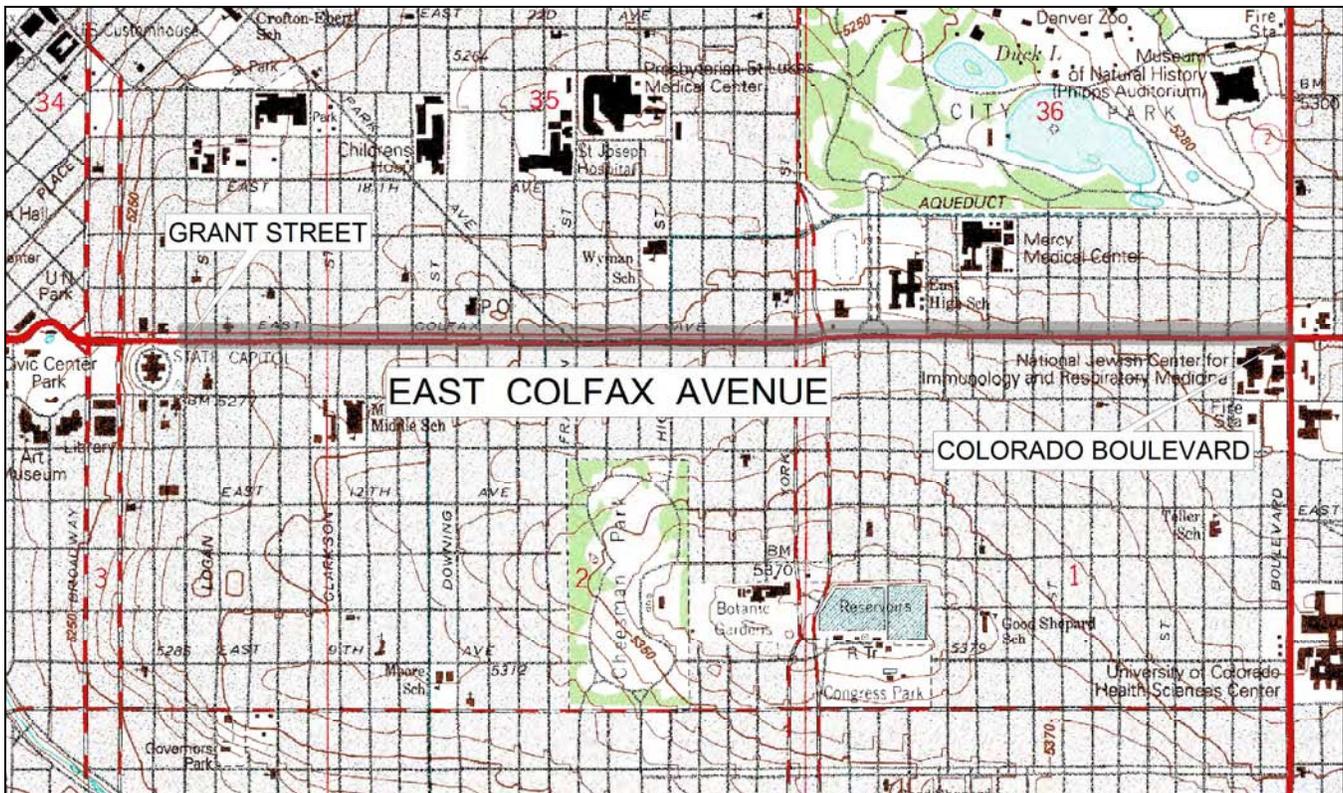
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G. Geographical Data

The focus of this Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) is East Colfax Avenue from Grant Street on the west to Colorado Boulevard on the east, located in the City and County of Denver, Colorado (See shaded segment of the street on the map below). The area is defined as including: 1) all properties which directly front onto East Colfax Avenue and 2) all cross-street properties which immediately abut properties that directly front onto East Colfax Avenue. This section of East Colfax Avenue most clearly represents the early commercial development of the thoroughfare. The segment west of Grant Street is primarily devoted to governmental land uses, while the segment to the east of Colorado Boulevard generally reflects less dense development patterns with a predominance of substantial post-World War II and late twentieth century construction.



The gray highlight identifies the segment of East Colfax Avenue included in this MPDF. SOURCE: Extract of U.S. Geological Survey, "Englewood, Colo." (1994).

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H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Published Works about the East Colfax Avenue Corridor

At the onset of the project no book focusing solely on East Colfax Avenue and its history existed. The street is briefly mentioned in Phil Goodstein's *Denver Streets* (1994). The development of the corridor is discussed in books about Denver and its neighborhoods. In this vein, two other Goodstein books on the Capitol Hill neighborhood were helpful: *Denver's Capitol Hill* (1988) and *Ghosts of Denver: Capitol Hill* (1996). Among the general histories covering the city's history, Jerome Smiley's, *History of Denver* (1901) was quite useful, as was Thomas J. Noel's *Denver Landmarks and Historic Districts* (1996). *Denver's Street Railways*, volume 1 (1999) by Don Robertson, Morris Cafky, and E.J. Haley and volume 2 (2004) by Robertson and Cafky were helpful in understanding the role of cable railways and streetcars along Colfax Avenue. In 2007, R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons produced *East Colfax Avenue* for Historic Denver, Inc., as part of its Historic Denver Guides series.

Currently Designated Resources in the Corridor

Part of one National Register-listed historic district, the Swallow Hill residential area, is located within the corridor. Sixteen resources along the corridor are individually listed in the National Register. Twelve of the individual nominations are for non-commercial resources; the four commercial resources consist of three theaters and one three-story commercial building that includes apartments.

Earlier Survey Work in the Corridor

Prior to the 2006-07 survey (see below) no systematic examination of commercial resources along the East Colfax corridor had occurred. Some previous projects documented selected commercial buildings along the avenue during the 1980s through the early 2000s. A file search of the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) database in April 2006 found approximately twenty-eight recorded commercial resources, most documented on older survey forms.

The 2006-07 Reconnaissance and Intensive Surveys

During 2006-07, the State Historical Fund awarded a grant to the Colfax Business Improvement District (CBID) for documentation of the commercial resources of East Colfax Avenue. Front Range Research Associates, Inc., of Denver, as consultant to CBID, undertook the project, which consisted of a reconnaissance survey of the entire corridor from Grant Street to Colorado Boulevard, an intensive survey of selected resources, preparation of this Multiple Property Documentation Form, and completion of two individual National Register nominations.

Reconnaissance Survey. The reconnaissance survey ascertained the nature and distribution of commercial resources along the East Colfax Avenue Commercial Corridor. The survey embraced a 353.8-acre project area extending one block on either side of East Colfax Avenue from Grant Street to Colorado Boulevard. The purpose of the survey was to determine the

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extent and character of the commercial area lying adjacent to East Colfax and to identify potential resources for inclusion in an intensive survey.

The City and County of Denver provided geographic information system (GIS) data that assisted in the survey and identification process. The geographic information included building outlines, street centerlines, and parcel layers, as well as Assessor parcel attribute information such as year built, zoning, physical address, owner information, and (in some cases) building name. The project GIS was used to create a series of maps showing the location of parcels and buildings in the East Colfax corridor. The maps indicated the current zoning status of each lot, identifying those with a commercial use. The map also indicated whether each resource had no designation (which made it a potential candidate for survey) or had national, state, and/or local designation. During fieldwork the map was utilized to focus on the commercial buildings not previously surveyed or designated. In some cases parcels with non-commercial zoning had commercial uses, while some commercially-zoned parcels were in residential uses (based on an absence of signage or other commercial trappings).

Fieldwork, completed in June and July 2006, consisted of examining each faceblock of East Colfax Avenue, as well as side streets with commercial properties. Each commercial building not designated or recently surveyed was examined for architectural significance and integrity. Buildings were ranked into high, medium, and low priorities for intensive survey.

Intensive Survey. Twelve resources identified in the reconnaissance survey were selected for intensive survey, based on such factors as architectural significance, known historical associations, representation of diverse property types, and apparent physical integrity. The buildings were described, photographed, researched, mapped, and evaluated, with Colorado Historical Society Architectural Inventory forms completed for each property. The survey report for the project discussed methodology, described results, presented National Register eligibility recommendations, and included a historic overview of the corridor which became the basis for the historic context included in this MPDF.

Examination of Comparable MPDFs from Other States

Multiple Property Documentation Forms produced in other states for commercial areas and commercial corridors with similar resources were examined for guidance on overall approach and the discussion of property types. These MPDFs included: Chris Wilson, "Auto-oriented Development in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1916-1956," 15 September 1996; Jan Olive Nash, "Iowa's Main Street Commercial Architecture," July 2002; and Liza Mickle, et al, "Historic and Architectural Properties in Hollywood's Historic Commercial District in Portland, Oregon," 29 September 1999.

Consultation

Dale Heckendorn, National and State Register Coordinator with the Colorado Historical Society, provided insights on property types, the definition of the geographic area of the MPDF, and the architectural and historical significance of buildings in the corridor. Lyle Miller of the State Historical Fund offered suggestions for buildings to be surveyed. Both possess

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extensive knowledge of the historic resources of East Colfax Avenue. Buildings and building types suggested by Heckendorn and Miller were examined in the field for appropriateness and ranking. Chris Geddes, National and State Register Historian with the Colorado Historical Society, reviewed the draft MPDF document. Anne McCleave, Historic Preservation Specialist, administered the project for the State Historical Fund. The Colfax Business Improvement District sponsored the project, with input from Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods.

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J. Current Illustrations

Selected examples of the various subtypes of the commercial property type are provided in this section. Views were taken during survey fieldwork.

Photographic Log for Current Illustrations

Figure Number	Historic Name and Street Address	Camera Direction
<i>General Use Commercial Building</i>		
C1	Walgreen Drug Store, 2226-60 East Colfax Avenue.	S
C2	Hagans Jewelry/Block Floral, 3220-40 East Colfax Avenue.	SW
C3	Acobo Building, 1900 East Colfax Avenue.	SW
C4	Burtlock Apartments (Smiley's), 1062-80 East Colfax Avenue.	SW
C5	Seckler Dry Cleaning and Apartments, 1228-40 East Colfax Avenue.	S
C6	White Spot Restaurant, 601 East Colfax Avenue.	N
C7	Capitol Hill State Bank, 2239 East Colfax Avenue.	NNW
C8	Silver State Savings and Loan, 301 East Colfax Avenue.	NE
C9	Weicker Depository, 2100 East Colfax Avenue.	SSE
<i>Entertainment and Recreation Building</i>		
C10	Mammoth Skating Rink, 1544 Clarkson Street.	SE
<i>Hotel/Motel Building</i>		
C11	Newhouse Hotel, 300 East Colfax Avenue.	SE
C12	Holiday Chalet Hotel, 1820 East Colfax Avenue.	SSW
C13	West Vernon Hotel, 1201-25 East Colfax Avenue.	NW
C14	Royal Host Motel, 935 E. Colfax Avenue.	SW
<i>Transportation-Related Building</i>		
C15	Black and White Automotive Service, 2424 E. Colfax Avenue.	S

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Figure Number	Historic Name and Street Address	Camera Direction
<i>House with Commercial Addition</i>		
C16	1608 East Colfax Avenue.	SW
C17	Loustano House/Vogel Plumbing, 3000-02 E. Colfax Avenue.	SSE

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General Use Commercial Building



Figure C1. Walgreen Drug Store, 2226-60 East Colfax Avenue.



Figure C2. Hagans Jewelry/Block Floral, 3220-40 East Colfax Avenue.

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General Use Commercial Building



Figure C3. Acobo Building, 1900 East Colfax Avenue.



Figure C4. Burtlock Apartments (Smiley's), 1062-80 East Colfax Avenue.

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General Use Commercial Building



Figure C5. Seckler Dry Cleaning and Apartments, 1228-40 East Colfax Avenue.



Figure C6. White Spot Restaurant, 601 East Colfax Avenue.

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General Use Commercial Building



Figure C7. Capitol Hill State Bank, 2239 East Colfax Avenue.



Figure C8. Silver State Savings and Loan, 301 East Colfax Avenue.

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General Use Commercial Building



Figure C9. Weicker Depository, 2100 East Colfax Avenue.

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Entertainment and Recreation Building



Figure C10. Mammoth Skating Rink, 1544 Clarkson Street.

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Hotel/Motel Building



Figure C11. Newhouse Hotel, 300 East Colfax Avenue.



Figure C12. Holiday Chalet Hotel, 1820 East Colfax Avenue.

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Hotel/Motel Building



Figure C13. West Vernon Hotel, 1201-25 East Colfax Avenue.



Figure C14. Royal Host Motel, 935 E. Colfax Avenue.

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Transportation-Related Building



Figure C15. Black and White Automotive Service, 2424 E. Colfax Avenue.

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House with Commercial Addition



Figure C16. 1608 East Colfax Avenue.



Figure C17. Loustano House/Vogel Plumbing, 3000-02 E. Colfax Avenue.

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K. Historic Illustrations

Photographic Log for Historic Illustrations

Figure Number	Illustration Description and Source	Camera Direction
H1	East Colfax Avenue originally developed as a fashionable residential district and included large homes of the city's elite. Albert L. Welch owned this house (no longer extant) at East Colfax and Grant Street. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, William Henry Jackson image, number WHJ-806, 1880s or 1890s.	N/A
H2	East Colfax Avenue became a major transit corridor, with a streetcar line extending to Fletcher (present-day Aurora) by 1898. This early 1900s view shows a Denver Tramway streetcar approaching Marion Street. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photograph collection, call number X-18303, c. 1900-05.	E
H3	This extract of a 1908 bird's-eye-view map of Denver (view south) documents the segment of East Colfax between Humboldt Street on the east (left) and Washington Street on the west (right). A number of three- to four-story apartment buildings were erected along the street by that date. SOURCE: "Bird's Eye View of Denver Colorado, 1908," Denver, Bird's Eye View Publishing Co., 1907.	S
H4	The 1904 Austin Building at 2400-18 East Colfax Avenue is the earliest extant commercial building documented along the corridor. A drugstore operated for decades in the corner storefront and apartments were located on upper stories. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photograph collection, Rocky Mountain Photo, call number X-24838, 10 April 1924.	SE
H5	The Mammoth Skating Rink, erected in 1907 on Clarkson Street just north of East Colfax, housed a popular recreational activity. Roller skating gave way to the manufacture of electric cars in 1911, when the Fritchle Automobile and Battery Company occupied the building. SOURCE: Goodstein, <i>Ghosts of Denver: Capitol Hill</i> , 463, from the Colorado Historical Society photographic collection.	SE
H6	This view northeast of East Colfax Avenue from the State Capitol shows the Newhouse Hotel (1911) in the lower right and Immaculate Conception Cathedral (1912) above. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photograph collection, call number X-22586, c. 1912-20.	NE

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Figure Number	Illustration Description and Source	Camera Direction
H7	The Ogden Theater, completed in 1917, served as one of East Colfax's neighborhood movie theaters. It and the Bluebird were designed by architect Harry W.J. Edbrooke. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, image X-24694, c. 1917.	N
H8	The Rogers Platt Chevrolet dealership at 2120 East Colfax Avenue was one of many automobile-oriented businesses that located along the street after it became a segment of a transcontinental highway (U.S. 40) in the 1920s. The Weicker Depository is at the right. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, L.C. McClure photograph, image MCC-3586, c. early 1930s.	SSW
H9	The Pencol Building (1925) at 504 East Colfax Avenue contained the Pencol Drug Store on the first story and apartments on the upper stories. Architect Walter H. Simon designed the building. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, L.C. McClure photograph, image MCC-3933, c.1926.	SE
H10	The second Capitol Hill State Bank building, designed by John M. Gardner, opened in 1925. It replaced an earlier one-story building. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, image X-27568, 21 February 1940.	NW
H11	The Weicker Transfer and Storage Company erected this eight-story storage warehouse at 2100 East Colfax Avenue in 1925. Brothers William E. and Arthur A. Fisher prepared plans for the building, which was featured in <i>Architectural Record</i> . SOURCE: <i>Architectural Record</i> , December 1926.	SE
H12	The \$300,000 Aladdin Theater, at East Colfax Avenue and Race Street, began showing films in 1926. The motion picture palace featured a "Garden of Allah" motif on its interior. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, Rocky Mountain Photo Company photograph, image X-24785, 1927.	SE
H13	This view west down East Colfax from Downing Street (c. 1935) shows streetcar tracks in the center of the avenue, bustling traffic, and the Capitol and Immaculate Conception Cathedral in the distance. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, image X-22581, c. 1935.	W
H14	The Royal Host Motel (1966) at 930 East Colfax Avenue displayed an eye-catching neon sign and International style design elements. SOURCE: Historic postcard view, collection of Lyle Miller, Lakewood, Colorado, c. 1966.	SW

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**Figure
Number**
H15

Illustration Description and Source

The local White Spot restaurant chain opened an outlet at the northeast corner of Pearl Street and East Colfax in 1967. Armet and Davis of Los Angeles designed the distinctive Googie style coffee shop. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, clipping collection, undated.

**Camera
Direction**
N

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Figure H1. East Colfax Avenue originally developed as a fashionable residential district and included large homes of the city's elite. Albert L. Welch owned this house (no longer extant) at East Colfax and Grant Street. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, William Henry Jackson image, number WHJ-806, 1880s or 1890s.

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Figure H2. East Colfax Avenue became major transit corridor, with a streetcar line extending to Fletcher (present-day Aurora) by 1898. This early 1900s view shows a Denver Tramway streetcar approaching Marion Street. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photograph collection, call number X-18303, c. 1900-05.

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Figure H3. This extract of a 1908 bird's-eye-view map of Denver (view south) documents the segment of East Colfax between Humboldt Street on the east (left) and Washington Street on the west (right). A number of three- to four-story apartment buildings were erected along the street by that date. SOURCE: "Bird's Eye View of Denver Colorado, 1908," Denver, Bird's Eye View Publishing Co., 1907.

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Figure H4. The 1904 Austin Building at 2400-18 East Colfax Avenue is the earliest extant commercial building documented along the corridor. A drugstore operated for decades in the corner storefront and apartments were located on upper stories. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photograph collection, Rocky Mountain Photo, call number X-24838, 10 April 1924.

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Figure H5. The Mammoth Skating Rink, erected in 1907 on Clarkson Street just north of East Colfax, housed a popular recreational activity. Roller skating gave way to the manufacture of electric cars in 1911, when the Fritchle Automobile and Battery Company occupied the building. SOURCE: Goodstein, *Ghosts of Denver: Capitol Hill*, 463, from the Colorado Historical Society photographic collection.

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Figure H6. This view northeast of East Colfax Avenue from the State Capitol shows the Newhouse Hotel (1911) in the lower right and Immaculate Conception Cathedral (1912) above. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photograph collection, call number X-22586, c. 1912-20.

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Figure H7. The Ogden Theater, completed in 1917, served as one of East Colfax's neighborhood movie theaters. It and the Bluebird were designed by architect Harry W.J. Edbrooke. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, image X-24694, c. 1917.

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Figure H8. The Rogers Platt Chevrolet dealership at 2120 East Colfax Avenue was one of many automobile-oriented businesses that located along the street after it became a segment of a transcontinental highway (U.S. 40) in the 1920s. The Weicker Depository is at the right. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, L.C. McClure photograph, image MCC-3586, c. early 1930s.

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Figure H9. The Pencol Building (1925) at 504 East Colfax Avenue contained the Pencol Drug Store on the first story and apartments on the upper stories. Architect Walter H. Simon designed the building. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, L.C. McClure photograph, image MCC-3933, c.1926.

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Figure H10. The second Capitol Hill State Bank building, designed by John M. Gardner, opened in 1925. It replaced an earlier one-story building. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, image X-27568, 21 February 1940.

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Figure H11. The Weicker Transfer and Storage Company erected this eight-story storage warehouse at 2100 East Colfax Avenue in 1925. Brothers William E. and Arthur A. Fisher prepared plans for the building, which was featured in *Architectural Record*. SOURCE: *Architectural Record*, December 1926.

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Figure H12. The \$300,000 Aladdin Theater at East Colfax Avenue and Race Street began showing films in 1926. The motion picture palace featured a "Garden of Allah" motif on its interior. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, Rocky Mountain Photo Company photograph, image X-24785, 1927.

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Figure H13. This view west down East Colfax from Downing Street (c. 1935) shows streetcar tracks in the center of the avenue, bustling traffic, and the Capitol and Immaculate Conception Cathedral in the distance. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, photographic collection, image X-22581, c. 1935.

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Figure H14. The Royal Host Motel (1966) at 930 East Colfax Avenue displayed an eye-catching neon sign and International style design elements. SOURCE: Historic postcard view, collection of Lyle Miller, Lakewood, Colorado, c. 1966.

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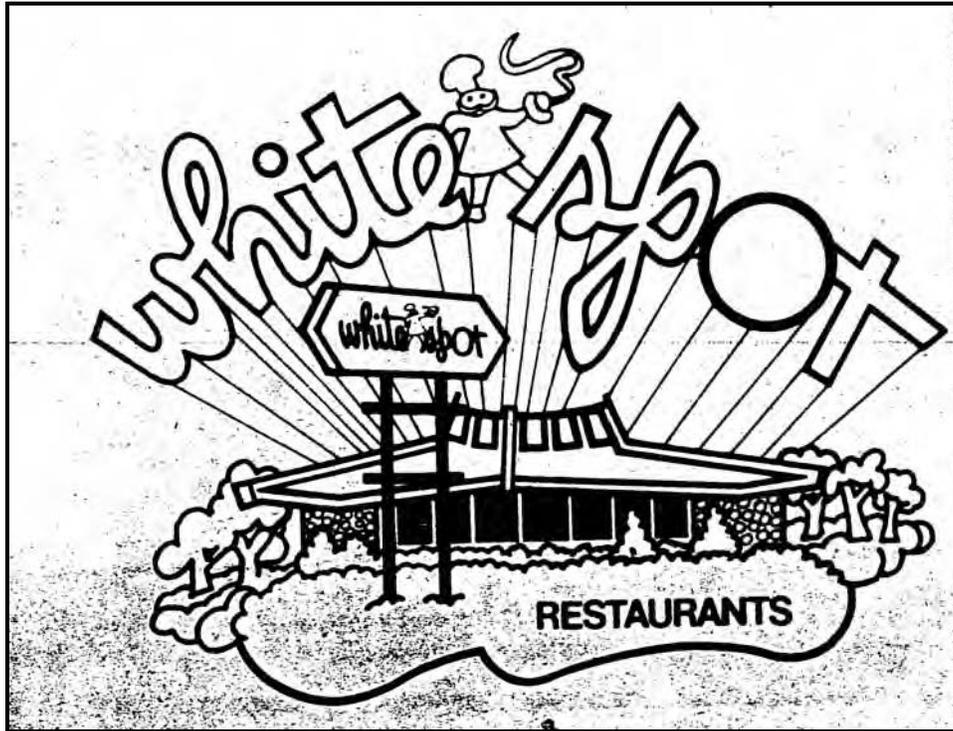


Figure H15. The local White Spot restaurant chain opened an outlet at the northeast corner of Pearl Street and East Colfax in 1967. Armet and Davis of Los Angeles designed the distinctive Googie style coffee shop. SOURCE: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, clipping collection, undated.