



City of Loveland

Long Range Planning Division

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Loveland City Council Staff Report

From: Matt Robenalt, Long Range Planning Division
Meeting Date: December 16, 2003
Re: Application for Designation as a Historic Landmark Property

SITE DATA

Address: 451 N. Railroad Avenue, Loveland, Colorado

Request: Application for Designation as a Landmark Property

Historic Name: 451 Railroad/City of Loveland Building

Architectural Style: Late 19th and Early 20th Century Commercial

Current Building Sq. Ft.: 12,595 Total Sq. Ft.
Ground floor = 9,580 sq. ft.
Second floor = 3015 sq. ft.
(measurements by applicant)

Construction Date: est. 1935

Legal Description: Lots 1 through 4, Block 15, City of Loveland, County of Larimer, State of Colorado

Owners: Barry J. and Susan W. Floyd
P.O. Box 7125
Loveland, CO 80537-7125

Applicant: Barry and Susan Floyd, represented by Carl McWilliams of Cultural Resource Historians

Application Summary:

On November 17, 2003 the Loveland Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council designate the property at 451 N. Railroad Avenue as Loveland Historic Register Landmark. Approved HPC Resolution No. 03-10 is provided as an attachment.

The nomination application includes one building: 451 Railroad/City of Loveland Building. Larimer County Assessor records identify the building and parcel by the following address: 451 N. Railroad Avenue, Loveland, Colorado.

History:

The 451 Railroad/City of Loveland Building is associated with the historical context of Water/Utilities according to the "Historical Contexts" document prepared in 1997 for the Loveland Museum/Gallery by Jennifer H. Strand, Ph.D. According to the applicant's nomination form, the 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building was constructed in the mid-1930's as an electric conversion facility. Connected by a system of electric lines supported by steel poles, this facility converted electric power generated at 22,000 volts in the Big Thompson Canyon hydro-electric plant to 2400 volts, and then to 110 and 220 volts for Loveland's homes and businesses. According to the 1997 Historical Contexts document, the 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building was a part of a much larger effort and system to bring electricity to residents of Loveland. The 1997 Historical Contexts document describes the following:

When (Charles) Viestenz joined the Loveland City Council in 1911, he found the city "lacking a single dollar in the Treasury." Viestenz identified the purchase of electric power as a significant contributor to Loveland's financial troubles and found a remedy in the Big Thompson River, which he thought could be harnessed for a city-owned hydroelectric power plant. He proposed the idea to the council but was unanimously opposed. Instead, Viestenz called together a secret group of supporters, who financed a surreptitious engineering study and filed to build a hydroelectric plant for Loveland under the name of one of the group members. When the secret filing came to light, the Loveland City Council gave Viestenz "the worst calling down [he] had ever had," but the issue began to gain public support. In 1913 the municipal power generation supporters won a majority.

As soon as opposition on the city council had been overcome, the Northern Colorado Power Company began actively opposing plans for a city-owned electrical power plant. The company contacted Viestenz to convince him to drop plans for the municipal utility. According to Viestenz's recollections, the persuasion included refunds for a year's worth of overcharges. "an admission they had been robbing us." Viestenz refused; the city council contracted to build a dam, the first step in the process of constructing its power generation plant. The Northern Colorado Power Company countered with an injunction against the dam's construction. Over the next ten years, the City of Loveland made slow progress on its power plant, alternating between building the facilities and fighting the power company in court. World War I also slowed construction. Finally, in 1925 Loveland's Municipal Light and Power Plant began delivering electrical service to the people of Loveland. By 1938 construction bonds on the plant had been paid in full, freeing Loveland residents from both dependence on an electric power monopoly and from debt service.

The plant served Loveland electric users until the 1976 Big Thompson Flood swept it away, leaving only the remains of the three 400-horsepower turbines.

The 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building also housed offices of the City Engineer, and City Electrical Engineer, and was the site of the city truck scales which were located on the east side of the building. According to the applicant's nomination form, the truck scales were primarily used to weigh trucks that delivered city water to area farms lacking adequate drinking water. The scales were also used to weigh coal, which was then delivered to area homes and businesses. The use of the scales diminished after WWII, and was removed in the early 1960's.

In the latter half of the 1900's, the 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building was used as offices for the city's electric, water, streets and alleys departments, and sign and signal shops. The building was owned by the City of Loveland from the time it was constructed until it was sold in February of 2003. It was purchased by Barry and Susan Floyd, and currently houses the Loveland Boxing Club, and a youth organization associated with the Loveland Police Department.

Architectural Description:

The 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building is a Late 19th – Early 20th Century Commercial structure. The Colorado Historical Society Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering identifies 20th Century Commercial structures as generally one (1) to five (5) stories, with flat or slightly pitched roofs. Often constructed of blond or light colored brick, these buildings have very little ornamentation other than some decorative brickwork along the cornice or parapet. In some of the smaller Colorado towns, these buildings retain some elements of the 19th Century Commercial structures, particularly the recessed entrances, clerestory, and transoms. According to the Colorado Historical Society Guide to Historic Architecture and Engineering, the characteristics that define the 20th Century Commercial style can include a recessed entrance, clerestory, transom, corbelled cornice, decorative brickwork and parapet. Examples of this type of Colorado architecture are provided in Photos #1 and #2.



Photo # 1 & #2. Examples of 20th Century Commercial architecture. Source: Colorado Historical Society Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering

The 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building consists of a two-story, L-shaped structure, and a one-story rectangular section located at the rear (west) of the two-story section. The building has a flat roof, and is constructed of brick masonry. See Photo #3. The two-story section exhibits brickwork with a substantial amount of detailing, while the single-story section is less ornate. The two-story section's brickwork features brown brick laid in common bond, with alternating headers and stretchers every seventh brick course. See Diagram #1. The first three brick courses contain reddish-purple bricks, which comprise a decorative laid pattern with headers and soldiers. A "soldier" course is one in which brick are laid standing on end with the narrow edge facing out. This type of course is sometimes used for decorative effects over door and window openings. See Photo #4.



Photo #3. Two-story and one-story section of 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building.

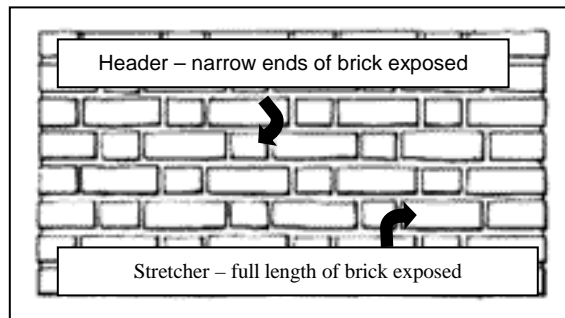


Diagram #1. Example of brick courses with alternating headers and stretchers.

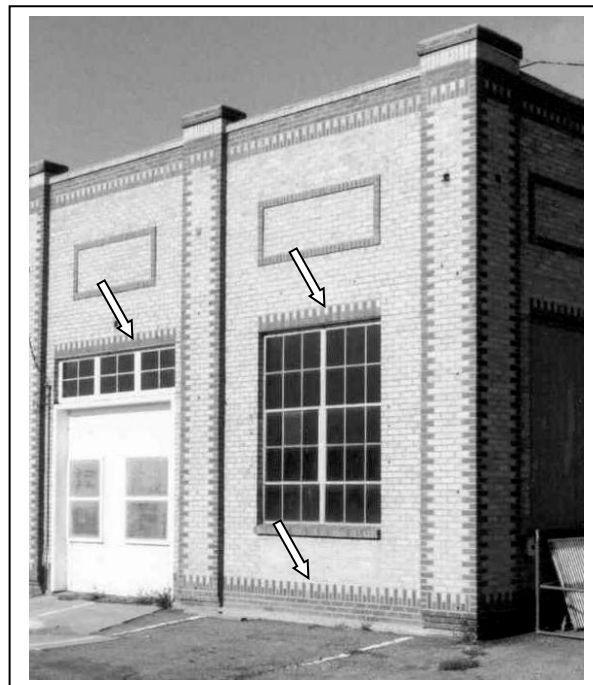


Photo #4. 451 Railroad/City of Loveland Building exhibits decorative brick masonry with "soldier" courses.

Additional decorative brickwork on the two-story section includes nine projecting brick columns, and rectangular projecting brick panels on the east, west, and north elevations. The building features six large industrial sash windows with brick sills and lintels, and two wood-panel entry doors. There are six (6) garage bay entrances dispersed on the east, west and north elevations. Three (3) of these garage bays entrances have been enclosed with a wooden framework that contains standard entrance doors. The remaining three (3) garage bay entrances still function, but have been replaced with modern metal roll-away doors. See Photos #5, #6 and #7.

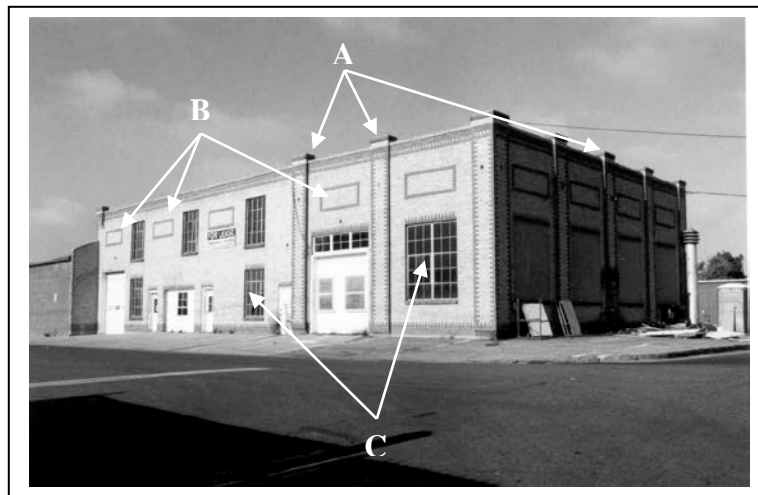


Photo 5. Features include nine (9) projecting brick columns (A), rectangular brick panels (B), and six (6) industrial sash windows (C).



Photo 6. West elevation with former garage bay now featuring standard entry door.



Photo 7. North elevation shows two garage bay entrances with modern roll-away doors.

Determination of Significance and Integrity

Significance should be used as the starting point in determining eligibility for placement on a historic register. Significance has two distinct attributes – the “area of significance” which answers the question of context, or what is significant about a resource in terms of its association to agriculture, architecture, commerce and industry, education, politics and government, and transportation. As noted in a previous section of this staff

report, the 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building exhibits historic significance in terms of its association with the context of Loveland’s “Water/Utilities” history.

The second attribute of the *significance* of a structure is its “period of significance” which places the resource on a historic timeline and answers the question of when a resource was significant. Also noted in a previous section of this staff report, the 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building is greater than 50 years old.

Integrity refers to the ability of a structure to convey its original design or some later period of significance through the intactness of its historic form, original or historic use of materials, setting and site. Integrity has seven (7) particular aspects: location, setting, feeling, design, materials, workmanship, and association with some attribute of historic significance.

A historic building, for example, that retains its original or historically significant setting with little or no visible modifications that diminish the ability to relate its historic association demonstrates greater integrity than a building that has lost many of physical historical elements. A building with high physical integrity retains the following original or historically significant elements: massing; architectural detail; surface treatment; and windows and doors.

A review of current photographs combined with the applicant’s description of the building’s present architectural features indicate that the building exhibits many of the original elements that define it as an example of late 19th –early 20th Century Colorado commercial architecture. While the loss of the original garage bay doors slightly diminish the structure’s integrity, the existence of the current garage bay features reflect the multiple and varied uses that took place in the structure while under the ownership of the City of Loveland.

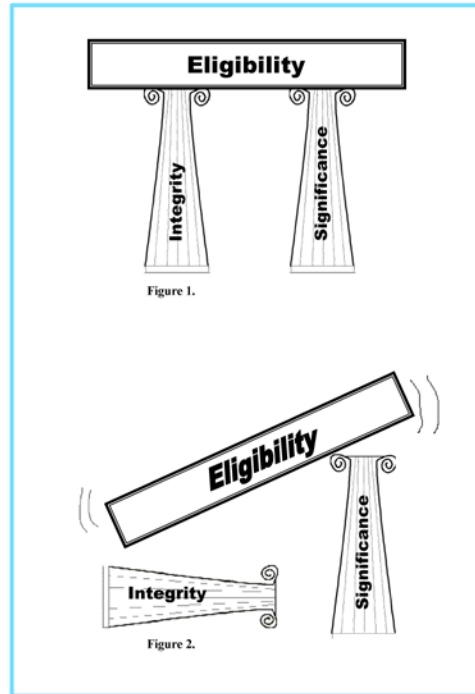
Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation

To be considered eligible for designation as a historic landmark on the Loveland Historic Register, a property must be at least fifty (50) years old and must meet one (1) or more of the criteria for architectural, social cultural, or geographic/environmental significance as identified in Loveland Municipal Code 15.56.090. The 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building satisfies the age requirement and meets the following significant criteria for designation as a Loveland Historic Register landmark of property:

- a) Architectural
 - 1. Exemplifies specific elements of an architectural style or period.
 - 2. Demonstrates superior craftsmanship, or high artistic value.
- b) Social/Cultural
 - 1. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic or social heritage of the community.
- c) Physical Integrity
 - 1. Shows character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the community, region, state or nation.
 - 2. Retains original design features, materials, and/or character.
 - 3. Is in the original location or same historic context if it has been moved.

Given available information for the property at 451 N. Railroad Avenue, the 451 Railroad/City of Loveland building exhibits both adequate *integrity* and *significance* to support its eligibility for designation as a Loveland historic landmark. This determination is based on the Colorado Historical Society’s accepted guidelines for determining landmark eligibility (see Figure 1 and Figure 2, below). The Historic Preservation Commission recommends City Council approval of this request for designation of the 451

Railroad/City of Loveland building, located at 451 N. Railroad Avenue, as a Loveland Historic Register landmark property.



Attachments:

- A. HPC Resolution No. 03-10
- B. Site Map, prepared by Staff
- C. Nomination Application submitted by owner