

LINCOLN PARK HOMES
West Colfax Ave. & Mariposa St.
Denver
Denver County
Colorado

HABS No. CO-74

HABS
COLO
16-DENV,
69-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

Historic American Buildings Survey

HABS No. CO-74

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COLO
16-DENV,
69-

LINCOLN PARK HOMES

- Location:** West Colfax Avenue and Mariposa Street
Blocks 4,5,8 and 9 of Hunt's Addition
Denver; Denver County; Colorado
- Construction Date:** 1940-42
- Designer:** Temple H. Buell, Denver CO
- Present Owner:** Denver Housing Authority
- Present Use:** Low-income housing (scheduled for demolition in 1994)
- Significance:** The Lincoln Park Homes complex is one of Colorado's earliest public housing projects. One of three such projects planned by the Denver Housing Authority soon after the agency's formation in 1938, the Homes represent a period in Denver's history when the defense industry was hitting its peak and government subsidization of public housing was just beginning in the state. The Homes are a product of New Deal efforts to revitalize the economic and moral fiber of the nation. What was once an innovative solution to the public housing needs of Depression-era Denver is now a sobering reminder of the ongoing problems associated with providing for the poor and rehabilitating deteriorating neighborhoods. They are now unoccupied, in preparation for demolition.

The Homes are also significant for their place in the lengthy and prolific career of Denver architect Temple Buell. Certainly not one of his more memorable projects, the Lincoln Park Homes represent a transition in Buell's work, from his Depression-era to World War II-era projects.

December 1993

The Historic American Buildings Survey [HABS] documentation for the Lincoln Park Homes complex was conducted by Fraserdesign of Loveland, Colorado, under contract with the Denver Housing Authority. The Housing Authority has proposed demolition of the complex in 1994. The documentation is intended to mitigate, in part, the impact on the site by this action. Photographic recordation, research and preparation of this report were undertaken in November and December 1993. The research for this project has involved five primary archival sources: the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library, the Colorado Historical Society Library and the Temple Buell Foundation, all located in Denver, Colorado; the Norlin Library at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado; and the Morgan Library at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION by Lisa M. Schoch

1 EARLY PUBLIC HOUSING: THE NATIONAL EFFORT

Since the 18th century, the idea of publicly supported housing for the poor has undergone a significant transformation in the United States. Even during the colonial period, the indigent were more prevalent in cities than in the countryside. In Boston, for instance, the number of people receiving public aid grew from 500 in 1700 to 4,000 in 1736; New York's totals rose similarly from 250 in 1698 to 5,000 in the 1770s. Public aid at that time consisted mostly of "outdoor" relief: money, food, clothing, and fuel. It was not long before "almshouses" emerged in colonial cities.¹

Poorhouses, the first of which was constructed on the outskirts of Philadelphia, were the earliest evidence of public interest in providing housing for the less fortunate. Regarded as charitable institutions, these poorhouses were quickly rendered ineffective due to increases in industrialization, immigration, and population shifts from rural areas to urban centers in the 19th century.² Between 1860 and 1910, the majority of the nation's largest cities had been established. The incredible boost in population that occurred in northeastern cities created "an urban proletariat with nothing but their labor to sell." Approximately 90 percent of Manhattan residents were quartered in rented homes or tenements in 1900. Similar situations were evident in other major cities.³

Around the turn of the century, the Progressive movement inaugurated the idea of housing as an aspect of societal reform.⁴ Articles and books by a group of writers referred to by President Theodore Roosevelt as "muckrakers" catalyzed the Progressive movement. Through their writing, muckrakers endeavored to reveal society's ills: political corruption, shady business transactions in some of the nation's most well-known companies, and unsanitary conditions in the meat industry. Incensed by the stories of muckraking journalists, Progressive leaders - the majority of whom were of middle-class backgrounds - idealistically sought "to purify politics and to eliminate the worst abuses in American business life."⁵

Progressivism had an impact on public housing as well. Chicago's Jane Addams, New York's Lillian Wald, and Boston's Robert A. Woods were all part of the movement to provide "settlement houses" for the poor. Settlement houses were patterned after Toynbee Hall, a home established by an English vicar who encouraged his students to join him in "settling" in an industrial section of London. By 1900 hundreds of settlement houses had been established in the United States. Administered generally by middle-class, educated women, these homes rendered services such as education, entertainment, health care, and job training to slum communities.⁶

Settlement houses provided relief for only a small percentage of the poor, however. They failed to produce solutions to the general problems associated with poverty and housing, and they left the adjacent slums virtually intact. Without federal subsidies, housing for the poor was necessarily supported by the limited contributions of private philanthropists.⁷ Both Addams and Wald recognized the ineffectiveness of settlement homes, as they campaigned for "housing laws, public playgrounds, juvenile courts," and other amenities necessary to improve the quality of slum neighborhoods.⁸ Widespread improvement of housing conditions, it seemed, required government intervention.

Direct federal involvement in public housing evolved slowly. In July 1892, for instance, Congress appropriated \$20,000 for a study of slums in urban areas with a population of 200,000 or more. Prepared by the Commissioner of Labor, the resulting report discussed slums in four major cities, noting the high occurrence of crime in those areas. In the spring of 1918, Congress initiated programs to provide housing for shipyard employees and war workers to insure an adequate work force. It was not until 1921, however, that the government acknowledged that housing problems required special attention. That year Congress established a Division of Building and Housing within the National Bureau of Standards.⁹ In 1926 New York Governor Alfred E. Smith initiated the first legislation in which the state took responsibility for providing "limited dividend housing."¹⁰ Signaling the first state participation in housing for the poor, this act established a housing board to ensure that the buildings to house the indigent were exempt from taxes for twenty years, and that any finance bonds or mortgages also remained tax-free. While this legislation symbolized progress, the poorest groups of people were still unable to afford rental rates in the provided housing.¹¹

During the Great Depression, federal treatment of the public housing issue reached a turning point. Most of the legislation passed during this time aspired to accomplish a number of goals: facilitating home ownership, improving slum areas, and building public housing projects. In December 1931, President Herbert Hoover met with 3,700 members of the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. A resolution in support of Hoover's recommendation for a series of "home loan discount banks," was adopted, and the members compiled a list of recommendations, which included both slum rehabilitation and housing.¹²

In July 1932 Congress passed the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932. This allowed the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to authorize loans for corporations established to provide low income housing and improve slum areas. Financing of the Knickerbocker Village in New York City (\$8,059,000) and rural housing in Ford County, Kansas, (\$155,000) were an immediate result of this act. After the election of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, Congress initiated three pieces of legislation that specifically addressed public housing needs. In June 1933 the National Industrial Recovery Act authorized federal funds for slum clearance and housing; the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 appropriated \$450 million for housing; and the 1937 United States Housing Act (the Wagner-Steagall Act) created the U.S. Housing Authority, responsible for providing loans to local housing organizations for slum clearance and low-rent housing.¹³

Despite this apparently strong legislation favoring housing programs, the Roosevelt administration gave only lukewarm support to public housing, because nearly one-third of the jobless were in the construction trade. Opposition to public housing programs during the early 1930s reflected a fear of big government - not surprising, considering the magnitude of Roosevelt's New Deal initiatives. One national real-estate lobby felt that housing programs were socialistic and would only further diminish the self-sufficiency of poor renters. Based in Chicago and Washington, D.C., the lobby believed that public housing threatened the private real-estate sector. The group also worried that the government would eventually expand its involvement into other areas, such as banking.¹⁴

Nevertheless, government efforts to establish a public housing program continued. The Public Works Administration (PWA) launched the first widely recognized government housing program in 1934. By 1935 the PWA was purchasing land, clearing slums, and building housing. In the following four years, the agency was responsible for demolishing more than 10,000 substandard houses and constructing nearly 22,000 new dwelling units in 59 separate projects. The PWA also began setting up local housing authorities responsible for choosing demolition and construction sites. Local involvement soon challenged federal control over the housing program.¹⁵

The Wagner-Steagall Act not only ameliorated relations between local and federal housing authorities, it also established a more efficient public housing program. Under the act, the U.S. Housing Authority provided guidelines and funding to local

authorities. Once local projects were approved, the municipalities were responsible for providing 10 percent of the total cost. The government supplied the rest of the money with low interest, 60-year loans. To limit rents, the government subsidized the difference between tenant rent and actual operating costs of the buildings. Local authorities under the Wagner-Steagall Act were able to contribute their knowledge of local housing to a cooperative local-federal housing program. Funded by \$800 million in Congressional appropriations, some 350 U.S. Housing Authority projects were completed or under construction across the United States by 1940.¹⁶

2 HOUSING IN COLORADO

Colorado was influenced directly by the New Deal housing legislation. Statistics reveal that between 1933 and 1939, Western states benefitted most from New Deal programs. Colorado ranked tenth of 48 states in its receipt of New Deal funding.¹⁷ While New Deal subsidies helped launch the housing program in Denver, pre-World War II defense money contributed as well to the construction of several housing projects in that city. Denver's residents in the years immediately preceding the war did not at first support President Roosevelt's desire to join in Britain's fight against Germany. Memories of World War I were still fresh; isolationism was prevalent.¹⁸

Despite its isolationist disposition, however, Denver readily embraced the defense industry. To entice the army to locate here, the city in 1938 purchased the Agnes Phipps Memorial Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Sixth and Quebec and transformed it into Lowry Air Base. WWI-era Fitzsimons Army Hospital underwent remodeling right before the U.S. entered World War II. In February 1941 Remington (associated with DuPont Chemical) built a munitions factory in Denver. The pre-war defense industry also influenced non-defense elements of the city. Both the Country Club Gardens, an apartment complex at Ellsworth and Downing, and the Lincoln Park housing project on Colfax benefitted from the influx of defense dollars into Denver.¹⁹

Conditions in both rural and urban sections of Colorado revealed the need for a comprehensive housing program. The prevalence of migratory farm workers in the northern Colorado sugar beet fields created a demand for seasonal, if not year-round, housing in Denver and the outlying regions. Between 1900 and 1925, low wages in the sugar industry encouraged some local workers to look for higher paying jobs. To compensate, recruiters imported Mexican labor for the less desirable work. Approximately 20,000 workers were employed in the beet fields each season, increasing to 25,000 during peak years. Although a percentage of the transient workers made permanent homes in company-provided "colonies", these colonies

were considered rural slums, rife with unsanitary conditions. Nearly half of the farm laborers were forced to migrate to the city in the off-season to look for work and housing.²⁰

This migration created problems for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Denver Relief Bureau, which estimated that some 6,000 people were at various times in need of relief services or work. Housing in Denver was either unavailable or crowded for these workers. While sugar companies, such as Holly and Great Western, had once provided some housing, they felt the problem was too much for them to handle on their own. To alleviate the pressure of urban migration, the cities needed to provide better rural housing themselves.²¹

The problems created by migrant workers flowing into Denver represented only a part of the housing challenge faced by the city. A 1937 Denver University survey reported that the city experienced the lowest percentage of vacancies in the poorest residential areas during the Depression. A four percent vacancy level indicated a "housing shortage"; Denver then had a 1.2 percent vacancy rate. The few houses built during that time were too expensive for low-income dwellers, and those that did exist were in poor condition. In 1930 an assessor reported that of 2,600 dwellings deemed uninhabitable, almost all were occupied and each was worth less than \$200. Located mostly along the South Platte River, most of these buildings were over 45 years old at the time of the report.²²

The development and implementation of Colorado's housing program from 1933 to 1940 was aided both by federal legislation and the initiative of concerned citizens. Colorado's early interest in public housing surfaced around 1932, when the Unemployed Citizens League, a group of unemployed professional men, began repairing houses in preparation for periods of free rental. Through Colorado Senator Edward Costigan, the group appealed to the federal government, offering to supply the labor for housing if the government provided funding.²³ No government funding for housing existed at that time, though, and the request was denied. By 1933, however, a civil works project known as the Subsistence Homestead Survey prepared a report regarding building sites and people interested in relocating.²⁴

The survey spawned the Subsistence Homestead Association, made up of delegates from twenty counties. It also sponsored a Technical Division (eventually taken over by the Resettlement Administration), which supplied architectural, engineering, and clerical services to communities interested in applying for projects. The Subsistence Homestead offices in Washington set up a local branch in Denver. The local director then appointed a committee to select a site and prepare an application. Eventually, the Resettlement Administration constructed two rural housing projects in Alamosa and Grand Junction. Some Limited Dividend Corporation projects were designed and plans submitted to Washington during this time as well. Although none of the projects were approved, local architects, such as Temple H. Buell of Denver, were involved in the planning.²⁵

Colorado initiated more substantial efforts to establish a housing program in 1935 and 1937. An enabling act passed in 1935 allowed the state to cooperate with the federal government in slum clearance and construction projects. The 1937 legislation revised the 1935 statute to include cities with a population of 5,000 or more. In order to accomplish this, the cities were given the authority to convey and lease property, implement parks in connection with the project, control street closure, change street grades, and engage in other activities related to the success of the project.²⁶

With the state's enabling acts in place, Denver was ready to establish a housing authority. The city's push for a housing program took a circuitous route. In the fall of 1937 a group of Denver citizens wrote to the National Public Housing of New York regarding the establishment of a housing council in Denver. Early in 1938, citizens organized a housing conference attended by Governor Teller Ammons, Mayor Benjamin Stapleton and recognized British housing authority, Captain Richard L. Reiss. In February 1938, a 15-member Colorado Housing Committee was established by executive order of the governor. The purpose of the Housing Committee was to gather and report its findings regarding the housing situation in Colorado. The Committee met on three occasions - May, June, and December 1938 - and so widespread was its popularity that an additional 24 members were added shortly after its formation. Its 1939 report found that the housing problem in Colorado was multifaceted. The issue of race relations was certainly prominent, but so were socioeconomic factors brought on by the Depression and links between health and housing.²⁷

In the meantime, the Denver Housing Council was appointed in March 1938 to rouse public interest in Denver housing issues. The Denver Housing Council petitioned the city clerk of Denver for the establishment of a housing authority. On July 18, 1938, the city council presented a resolution to the mayor seeking approval for a Denver Housing Authority.²⁸

3 THE DENVER HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Denver Housing Authority (DHA) quickly commenced its implementation of a housing program. With James Q. Newton presiding as chairman, the initial meeting of DHA took place on September 3, 1938, with the public as well as civic organizations in attendance. Primary on DHA's agenda was the issue of how much money to request from the federal government. On September 15, the DHA requested that \$3 million be earmarked for a two-year housing program. Four days later the federal agency responded: "Earmarking will be given prompt consideration after receipt of request form with substantiating data."²⁹

Data collection had begun months before, when in May 1938 chief building inspector Wendell T. Hedgcock began surveying possible sites for a public housing project. Hedgcock and Mayor Stapleton had agreed that if a suitable site was found, a report would be submitted for government approval under the Wagner-Steagall Act.³⁰ In August 1938 Stapleton announced that a low-income housing project would be built to accommodate 175 to 200 families. Officials from Washington soon arrived to help select a site that would not compete with private real-estate development.³¹ By September these efforts had paid off: the U.S. Housing Authority approved Denver's \$3 million request for slum clearance and construction. Newton stated that the money would fund the first two years of a five- to ten-year program. The funds, he said, would help build about 600 to 700 residences for lower-income families.³²

In October a promise of 500 to 600 construction jobs, available in spring, was announced in the *Rocky Mountain News*. At the height of construction, the paper reported, between 1,000 and 2,000 men would be employed on the housing project. Despite these positive accounts, however, nothing could be started until the design was approved by the U.S. Housing Authority, which in turn had to submit the plans to Roosevelt for his approval.³³

In November an ordinance supporting the demolition of unsafe and unsanitary dwellings was passed by the city council. That month S.R. DeBoer of the Denver Planning Commission was hired by the Authority to choose a project site. At the same time, DHA members made periodical trips to some of the worst regions of the city to assess possible sites. DeBoer's survey was completed in mid-December, and by the end of the month U.S. Housing Authority representatives H.H. Bentley and E.P. Grysowski had arrived from Washington to inspect the site location. In January 1939 three project sites were chosen and three architectural firms commissioned to produce the plans.³⁴

While it seemed that Denver's housing problems were finally being addressed directly, the way in which local applications were processed by the federal housing authority was frustratingly slow. To make the situation worse, DHA admittedly felt overwhelmed by the housing problem. According to chairman Newton, when it was first established, the housing authority felt confident that it could tackle housing efficiently. But a week or so after the board was appointed, as Newton so eloquently expressed it, "Hell laid an egg." Between the often unwanted advice of local and national businessmen and politicians and the input of Washington officials, the DHA began to realize what "a big mouthful of word - housing" really was.³⁵

DHA had originally hoped to integrate community planning into its housing program, but Washington housing officials quickly advised the authority to drop its plans for city and recreational planning. Slum rehabilitation was secondary; the primary goal was to supply plenty of cheap housing. Newton surmised that Washington's attitude was a response to political pressure by real-estate operators who felt threatened by housing programs.³⁶

Between January and May 1939, the DHA worked on an application for the promised \$3 million in federal funding. In January the agency announced that July would be the starting date for the first of three low-cost housing projects; a tentative site was chosen and plans for a 220-unit complex were ready to submit to the U.S. Housing Authority for approval.³⁷ DHA officials hoped to finish and send the loan application to Washington by March 1, and in February officials from Washington came out to help the local authorities work through the "voluminous documents" necessary to complete the application.³⁸ When the \$3,132,000 (90% of the total cost) loan for the construction of 718 dwellings was finally approved in May 1939, DHA took the next step: acquisition of land for three housing projects. All three sites would be near either downtown or industrial centers.³⁹ In late June DHA revealed the location of the first project. Located in north Denver and bordered by Tejon, Boulder, Erie, and Central streets, the 13-acre complex would eventually contain 210 units, playgrounds, and a park. The other two project sites, to be located in west and east Denver, would be disclosed at a later date.⁴⁰

An important and yet not overly obvious element of the housing program was its attention to minority housing. Certainly not progressive in its approach, but nevertheless aware of minority groups, the DHA and the Colorado Housing Committee incorporated the growing minority population's needs into its housing plans. In its 1939 report, the Colorado Housing Committee distinguished four specific groups of people in Denver that had special housing needs based on their socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. Unemployed "slum dwellers" unable to pay even the lowest rents, blue collar workers whose incomes were too high for government housing and too low for regular rentals, minorities, and migrant workers constituted these groups. Their situations called for a housing program in Colorado that would accommodate as many of their needs as possible.⁴¹

The predominant minority groups at issue were Hispanics and blacks. Between 1930 and 1940 the Hispanic population in Denver doubled from 6,000 to 12,000. In the 1920s approximately 12,000 blacks lived in Colorado, with three-fifths of this number inhabiting Denver.⁴² By the time the Colorado Housing Committee issued its 1939 report, the once-affluent white neighborhood of Five Points had become a predominantly Hispanic and black enclave. The housing committee recognized different problems for the minority groups. Spanish-speaking immigrants faced prejudice based on their socioeconomic background and their ethnicity; according to the housing committee, they were like most Americans, needing "an opportunity and some direction and encouragement."⁴³ For blacks, however, the situation was more complex. Faced with racial prejudice and limits to the types of jobs they were allowed to hold, blacks consequently had problems affording housing. In addition, they were limited geographically to certain residential areas such as Five Points, which was by then both overcrowded and neglected. The Colorado Housing Committee recognized these problems and on behalf of blacks requested a low-cost housing project that would provide the "privileges of homes" that all Americans should enjoy.⁴⁴

It was not surprising, then, that when the DHA began its quest for housing sites, it did so with minority groups in mind. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported in February 1939 the city's plan to build three housing projects.⁴⁵ Once the U.S. Housing Authority approved the loan, DHA stated that "projects intended to house different racial groups, will be widely separated and will consist of 208, 210, and 300 units to the project."⁴⁶ While the housing program in Denver did support better housing for minority groups, it evidently did not support integration.

Expecting opposition, Newton announced the locations of the other two housing sites in July 1939. One was in the Five Points neighborhood between East 26th Avenue and Downing Street. As proposed, the Five Points project would accommodate 210 families and would cost nearly \$950,000 to build. In the process, 150 single-family houses would be demolished to make room for the new structures. Located four blocks north of Lincoln Park between Osage and Mariposa Streets, the West Denver site carried an estimated price tag of \$1,460,000. There were several advantages to the Lincoln Park site: the nearby park provided recreational activity, and the area was right in the center of Denver's Catholic community - hopefully, it would provide moral and spiritual guidance to residents. Newton pointed out, however, that the Lincoln Park site was also one of the oldest neighborhoods in Denver, and that it was surrounded by industrial factories. The structures in the area were deteriorating, but the site itself was "solidly built up."⁴⁷

4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF DENVER'S NEIGHBORHOODS: ORIGINS OF LINCOLN PARK

The neighborhood around Lincoln Park has been historically one of transition. Like most Denver neighborhoods, its socioeconomic framework has evolved over time. Unlike other neighborhoods, however, Lincoln Park traces its origins to the very first settlement in Denver: Auraria. The gold rush of 1859 was largely responsible for the influx of settlers to the area where Denver stands today. In the fall 1857 rumors of gold in the central Rocky Mountains inspired prospectors to try their luck. In the spring of 1858 two groups of gold seekers - the William Green Russell party and Cherokees led by John Beck - ventured to the Arkansas River, past Bent's Old Fort, and then on to the South Platte. During June and July hundreds of men panned Cherry Creek for gold. Finally, in early July traces of gold were discovered in Little Dry Creek, a few miles up the South Platte from its confluence with Cherry Creek. The news spread quickly. By November 1858, members of the Russell party formally laid out the town of Auraria on the west bank of Cherry Creek. Shortly thereafter, Denver City was formed by the Denver City Company. The two towns, once camping sites for gold seekers, were now home for the first settlers of 1858.⁴⁸

In December 1859 the towns of Denver, Auraria, and Highland were consolidated under an act passed by the territory's "Jefferson Legislature", which was supported two years later by the First Legislature of the Territory of Colorado. In March 1864 the corporate boundaries of the city were expanded to include 2,240 acres. In May 1864 title to the land was addressed in a law known as "An Act for the Relief of the People of Denver, Colorado Territory."⁴⁹

Until 1860, when the Cheyenne and Arapahoe signed a treaty at Bent's Fort passing title to the land to the United States, the Native Americans had title to the original settlement tracts. The "Relief" act was supposed to accomplish two things: smooth over problems with land titles resulting from Denver's unusual development, and supply authentic titles to all those involved with the Denver Town Company's original activities. According to the land laws, one-and-a-half sections of land could be provided for each established town. Because Auraria, Highland, and Denver City had opted to merge, the three regions together received one-and-a-half sections. This significantly reduced the area encompassed in Denver's city limits. Portions of Auraria and Denver City were cut, and all of Highland was eliminated from the boundaries.⁵⁰

Denver's formative years were often uncertain. From 1860 to 1866, the territory's population decreased from 34,277 to 27,931. After the Civil War, Denver's population was only 3,000. A variety of factors, including declining mine production and isolation from other cities, contributed to the city's early difficulties. In addition, relations with nearby Indian tribes had reached a crisis level. In the late 1860s, Denver and its rival, Golden, competed both economically and politically to become the territory's leading city. In June 1870, when the Denver Pacific Railroad opened between Denver and Cheyenne, Denver clinched its victory from Golden. In August 1870 the Kansas Pacific reached Denver from the east, and the Colorado Central stretched a 15-mile segment to the Denver Pacific. These connections not only boosted Denver's stature in the territory, they also tripled Denver's population and its businesses in the following four years.⁵¹ The territory's status clearly was aided by these changes as well; on August 1, 1876, Colorado became a state.⁵²

Between the 1860s and the early 20th century, the character and location of Denver's neighborhoods shifted in response to the city's growth and prosperity. As early as 1863, well-defined commercial and residential districts had surfaced in the fledgling city. The central business district at this time was located around Blake, Larimer, Market, and 15th streets. Upper-class residents lived southeast of 14th and Arapahoe streets. A major fire in 1863 prompted an architecturally more stylish rebuilding of the affected regions. Brick structures replaced wood in the business district, while Victorian houses sprouted in the residential areas. Lawns and tree planting were made possible by the completion in 1865 of an irrigation ditch in the city.⁵³

Population changes in Denver between 1878 and 1893 brought about changes in the distribution of its residents. During the first half of the 1880s, 20,000 people moved to Denver; 50,000 more arrived in the latter half of the decade. Denver's population had risen to 130,000 by 1893. This influx of new residents changed the complexion and location of Denver's neighborhoods. Most residential neighborhoods extended from the business district of the 1870s and early 1880s, southwest and northeast of the Platte River. The core of the Auraria and Curtis Park historic districts, with their Italianate houses, formed during this shift. In the mid-1880s, upper-crust Denverites lived in Brown's Bluff subdivision, which surrounds the present Capital site. A plethora of revival architectural types - Tudor, Moorish, Medieval and Romanesque - was then constructed in this area.⁵⁴

Other areas acquired new architectural elegance as well. Downtown Denver, for example, was influenced by the arrival of silver baron Horace Tabor, who invested in commercial real estate and in 1879 commissioned Chicago architect William Edbrooke to design the "Tabor Block" at 16th and Larimer Streets. During the 1880s and 1890s, Denver's business district shifted from Larimer Street, moving toward Broadway via 16th and 17th Streets. During these years, many of present-day Denver's buildings and hotels were constructed.⁵⁵

The turn of the century once again brought about both population and neighborhood changes in Denver. Between the 1890s and World War I, middle class subdivisions developed in Montclair, Cherry Creek, Country Club, and University Heights, as the city's boundaries pushed outward. The city annexed 42 square miles between 1893 and 1902. An influx of immigrants at this time contributed to the changing composition of the city's neighborhoods. The numbers of immigrants from Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and Italy, for instance, rose from 900 in 1880 to 16,000 in 1910. Eastern European Jews inhabited the area around West Colfax, while German Jews settled in East Denver.⁵⁶

The Platte River bottoms were initially an Italian settlement, but eventually most of the Italians moved to Northwest Denver. English, Irish, and Scandinavians found homes throughout the city, with Irish and Scandinavians congregating mostly in the older neighborhoods near downtown. German-Russians, Poles, Slovenians, Czechs, Croatians, Slovaks, Serbs, Greeks, and Russians lived in Globeville, a northern industrial suburb annexed by Denver in 1902. The Chinese settled near Market Street, while blacks moved into Five Points. Many of these ethnic neighborhoods were characterized by crowded and unsanitary conditions. Nevertheless, the immigrants needed residences near their industrial workplaces. Globeville, Elyria, Highlands, and Five Points emerged as working-class neighborhoods located northeast, north, and northwest of downtown.⁵⁷ While immigration certainly altered the contents of Denver's neighborhoods, the Panic of 1893 affected the locations of these neighborhoods as well. More than 2,000 houses were constructed in 1890, for instance; in 1894 only 124 houses were built. The city's outskirts were riddled with half-finished project sites during the depression of the mid-1890s.⁵⁸

Transportation during this time also determined the city's growth. Two cable-car companies, the Denver Tramway Corporation (DTC) and the Denver City Railroad Company, ran 38 miles of cable lines on overlapping routes during the end of the 1880s. Made vulnerable by the Depression of 1893, Denver City Railroad ceased its business in the early 1890s. Shortly thereafter, DTC assumed control of the Denver City Railroad's tracks, and over the next 30 years Denver's growth was determined by the location of DTC's tracks.⁵⁹ Streetcar transportation initiated significant changes in Denver's oldest neighborhoods. Auraria, which had become industrialized with the arrival of the railroad, was abandoned by its original residents to lower-income factory workers and their families. Most Denverites with money joined the exodus at that time to the streetcar suburbs. Interested in the region east and south of downtown, these people travelled by streetcar to evaluate home sites in the more upper-class neighborhoods of Curtis Park and Park Hill near City Park; the lots there were larger than those in the city.⁶⁰

Fairly recent additions to the city, these latter parks formed the centerpieces for many of the newer, more affluent neighborhoods. Although the original city planners had made no provision for a municipal park system, at least one of the original settlements - Auraria - had attempted to set aside a park a mile southeast from Cherry Creek. It was too far removed from the settlements, however, and was eliminated by the 1864 Relief Act. Acquisition of lands for parks was suggested by Denver Mayor Joseph E. Bates in 1872, but he was not taken seriously.⁶¹

Yet, it was around that time that a park system in Denver began to take shape, when Congress ceded what is now Congress Park to the city. Formal recognition of Denver's park system began during Mayor Richard Sopris' administration (1878-1881), when State Representatives Henry Lee and Jacob Downing introduced a bill in the House proposing that the city purchase two sections of school lands for park purposes. Despite opposition in the Senate and by people who could see no point in creating parks, a scaled-down version of the bill passed. What is today City Park was part of this early effort. Other smaller parks followed. The city council operated the parks until spring 1889, when a Commissioner of Public Parks under the Board of Public Works took over the responsibility. In 1893 a newly created Park Commission assumed the administration of Denver's parks.⁶²

The Lincoln Park area [see *Figure 1*], south of Auraria and west of Denver's business district, was also influenced by the city's growth. Located in Hunt's Addition, one of Denver's original lot-additions, the Lincoln Park neighborhood originated with the establishment of the park itself. Around 1872 former Territorial Governor A.C. Hunt donated land tracts that would eventually become Lincoln Park. Hunt, who had a ranch nearby and a house on the tract, felt that the land should become the site of the county courthouse. The courthouse was built elsewhere, but by 1901 the nine-acre Lincoln Park was one of twelve in the Denver park system.⁶³

The ethnic and economic complexion of the Lincoln Park neighborhood changed with Denver's growth. Studies reveal that West Denver in 1890 was inhabited mostly by German and Irish immigrants and some Native Americans, with Scandinavians located near the Lincoln Park neighborhood. By the turn of the century, the older neighborhoods near downtown were almost entirely made up of new immigrants.⁶⁴ The early development of Lincoln Park demonstrated that nearby residents used the park for recreational activities. In 1908 concession facilities were offered at the park, in 1911 a bath house and pool were completed. Various additions to the park's area were made in 1921.⁶⁵

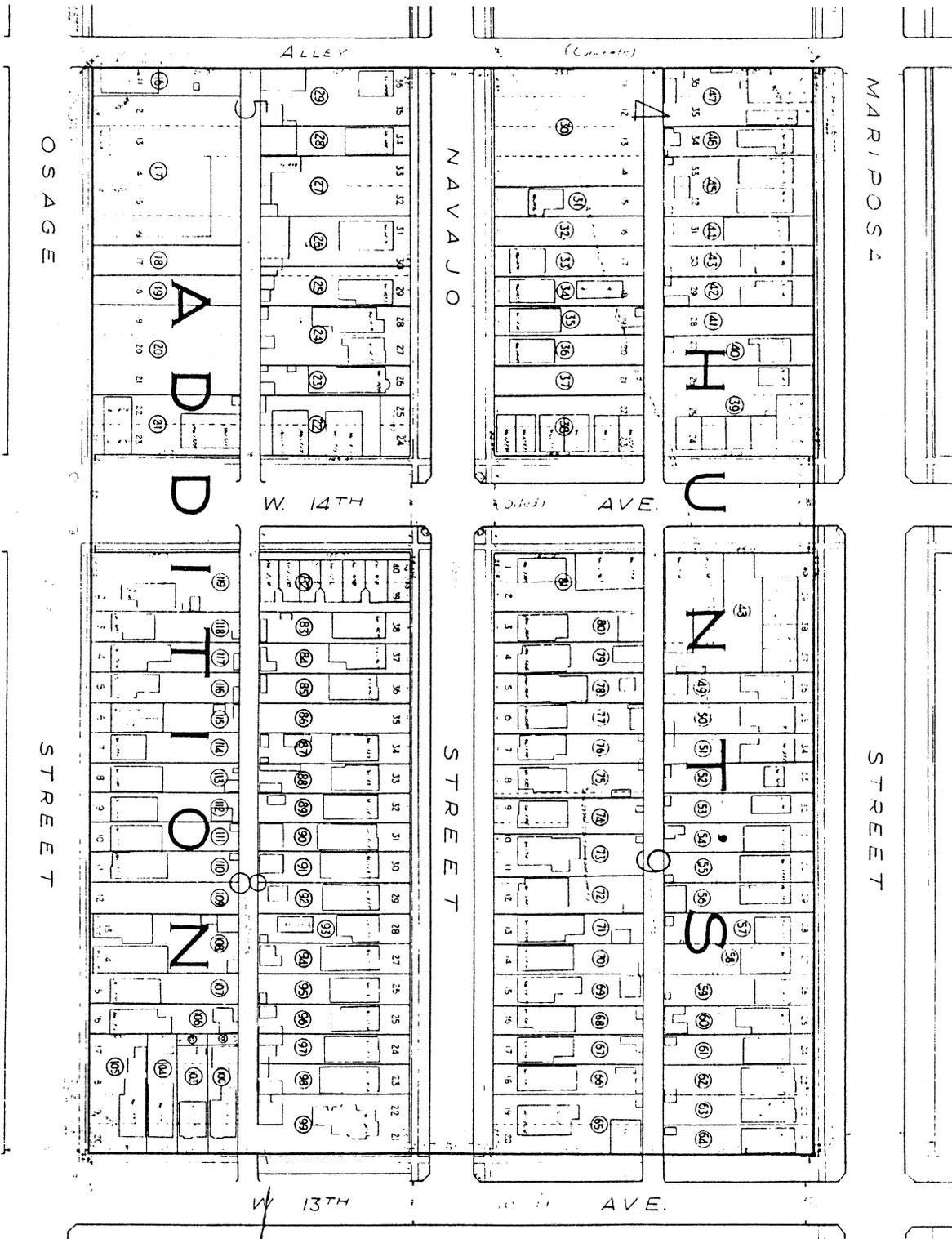
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for 1929-1930 indicate that the neighborhood north of Lincoln Park included both residential and industrial structures. It was bounded by West Colfax on the north, West 13th on the south, Osage on the west, and Mariposa on the east. Osage Street separated the neighborhood from a variety of industrial businesses, such as the Clark Foundry, the Western Elaterite Roofing Company, the Western Steel Products Company, the Swift Moving and Transfer Company, and the Denver Iron Works.⁶⁶ Additionally, the park was located in a part of Denver not so long ago abandoned by higher income residents who had settled in the city's peripheral suburbs. The construction of the Colfax Viaduct also contributed to the area's character. Designed in 1912 to accommodate cars and trolleys, the viaduct was intended to eliminate the obstructions created by the South Platte River and the railroads west of downtown. Construction contracts for this structure were awarded in 1914, and it opened to traffic in 1917. Passing the northern edge of the Lincoln Park area, Colfax Avenue carried increasingly heavy traffic.⁶⁷

By August 1939, with the construction of the Lincoln Park Homes imminent, buildings in the affected region of the neighborhood were still intact. Prepared by Prouty Brothers Engineering Company [see *Figure 2*], the acquisition documents for the Lincoln Park project indicated that many of the buildings were private residences and that their occupants were of diverse ethnic backgrounds: Irish, Italian, German, and Hispanic, to name a few.⁶⁸

5

LINCOLN PARK HOMES: PRELUDE TO CONSTRUCTION

As with every phase of the public housing program in Denver, plans were subject to change from month to month. Such was the case with the projects in North Denver, Five Points, and Lincoln Park. In September 1939 DHA Technical Director Hedgcock announced plans to begin construction on the Lincoln Park site by December of that year, with work to commence on the other two projects the following January. Sixty percent of the property had been secured but not purchased in September,



■ Figure 2. Site plan of Lincoln Park area, from Prouty Brothers Engineering Company. "Property Line Map, Lincoln Park Project, 1939.

with the remaining areas scheduled to be acquired through bids in November.⁶⁹ In October Lincoln Park was the only one of the three housing projects that appeared to have a future. In addition, DHA decided that in order to provide more housing and publicize the project's positive points to housing opponents, the site needed to be enlarged to include two blocks that faced West Colfax. The extension would allow 375, rather than 300, units to be built. Negotiations with property owners for this new section began immediately.⁷⁰

In the meantime, opposition to the projects grew. When DHA announced the location of its Lincoln Park and Five Points housing projects, the issue of public housing was already controversial. The Denver Real Estate Exchange, the South Denver Civic Association, and the Denver Realty Board protested the use of federal tax money for public housing. They also worried that this housing would compete with the real estate market. Opposition to housing had existed since the DHA was established in July 1938, but as plans for specific projects solidified, this resistance was expressed more openly.⁷¹

The end of October signalled significant changes in DHA's plans. The beginning of Lincoln Park's construction was pushed back by delays in land acquisition. Still in negotiation were the two-and-a-half blocks facing West Colfax; prices asked for these additional lots were too high, threatening the expansion. Of the lots on the original site, three remained in negotiation: two would be purchased, the last acquired through condemnation proceedings. At that time the original project carried an estimated cost of \$1,431,000, while the enlarged project would cost \$1,750,000. Pending receipt of a U.S. Housing Authority loan for \$167,000, none of the land had actually been purchased. DHA's expenditures up to this time had been modest. Out of a preliminary \$108,000 loan from the housing authority, only \$44,000 had been spent, with the bulk of that going toward administrative costs and appraisers' and architects' fees.⁷²

Other factors delayed the construction of the Lincoln Park Homes further. Due to a local building boom, not enough skilled laborers could be secured to start work on the projects before mid-December. DHA had hoped to demolish the existing buildings in the fall and then clear the site in December for construction. Meanwhile, plans for the other two projects were on shaky ground. The North Denver project had been abandoned entirely, and the proposed Five Points project was close to being discontinued, because DHA was unable to negotiate purchase options with the property owners. Alternate projects in the city were under consideration, but only Lincoln Park was a realistic possibility.⁷³

Through the late fall of 1939, DHA continued to prepare for the construction of what had come to be known as the Lincoln Park Homes. Bids for the demolition of 123 buildings on the project site were to be opened on November 20th, with January 1, 1940, as the revised target date for completion of demolition. Plans to enlarge the project were shelved when owners of the lots facing West Colfax refused to lower their prices. The project's architects were advised to finish plans for a 300-unit

complex.⁷⁴ In October 1939 the U.S. Housing Authority approved a \$167,000 loan for DHA. Made available through the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, the loan would cover the purchase of 104 parcels of land necessary for the construction of the Lincoln Park housing project.⁷⁵

Once the land was acquired, the plans and specifications for the housing project had to be approved by the U.S. Housing Authority. In November 1939 Hedgcock, project architect Temple Buell, and project engineer Harold Marshall went to Washington, D.C., to secure approval for the design. After DHA gained approval, it could prepare more detailed plans before bids were taken for project construction, which would begin in February or March of 1940.⁷⁶

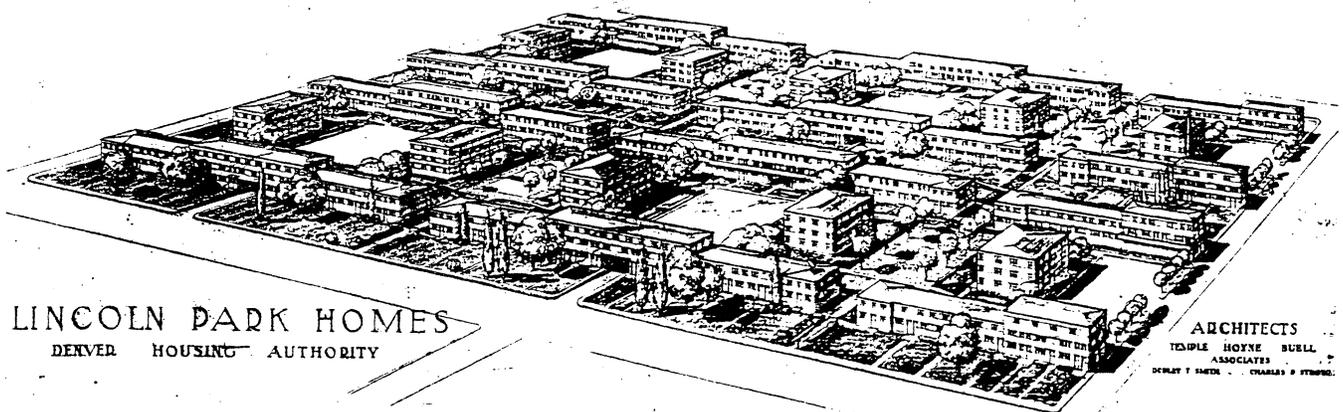


Figure 3. Rendering of Lincoln Park Homes, by Temple H. Buell, 1939, courtesy of the Temple Buell Foundation.

In December the *Denver Post* printed a lengthy article entitled "How the Lincoln Park Housing Project Will Look." The piece outlined the merits of various features of the complex, including its thermostatic heat control, sun rooms, extra showers, roof snow guards, tinted mirrors, and ceiling insulation. Touted as modern, many of the features, such as the sun rooms and the indirect lighting, were included to provide healthy living conditions for tenants. The article reproduced Buell's rendering of the housing project [see Figure 3]. For Buell, the Lincoln Park Homes were one of many projects he completed during a lengthy and prolific career.⁷⁷

6 TEMPLE HOYNE BUELL: A CAREER OVERVIEW

Temple Hoyne Buell was born to a wealthy family in Chicago on September 9, 1895. After earning a B.S. in Architecture from the University of Illinois in 1916 and a M.S. degree in architecture from Columbia University in 1917, Buell entered officers' training school for the army. He was sent to coast artillery school in Virginia. Shortly thereafter he was commissioned a second lieutenant and was sent to France where he attended a number of army schools before being assigned to the 101st Trench Mortar Battery, 26th Division A.E.F. During this time, Buell was promoted to first lieutenant and recognized for his achievements with a Distinguished Service Medal. Badly gassed at the Battle of Chateau-Thierry, he returned to the United States and resigned from the army.⁷⁸

Back in the country, Buell joined the firm of Marshall and Fox, known for designing some of Chicago's greatest hotels. He then worked for Rapp and Rapp, an architectural firm nationally known for its extravagant theatrical architecture.⁷⁹ In 1921 Buell's career was interrupted by a severe case of tuberculosis for which doctors advised him to move to the recuperative climate of Colorado. He arrived in Denver that same year.⁸⁰ While recuperating from the tuberculosis, Buell took a part-time job with the Denver architectural firm of Mountjoy and Frewen.⁸¹ In 1923 he formed his own firm: T.H. Buell and Company, Architects, located at Fourteenth and Stout streets.⁸² Buell's office became one of the most successful in Colorado, responsible for the design of everything from public schools and housing projects, to college libraries, and theaters.⁸³

During the 1920s Buell's major projects included six schools, three theaters, and one apartment building.⁸⁴ His first commission of consequence was the Paramount Theater in Denver, built in 1929. Drawing upon his experience at Rapp and Rapp, he designed the Paramount with that firm's trademark blending of symmetrical, formal exterior facades and a sumptuous, highly ornamental interior typical of the time. Buell soon drifted from his Chicago influences with the design of the Sterling Auditorium (1931) in Sterling, Colorado. This latter building was a much more austere, straightforward architectural expression, described by Diane Wilk Shirvani as "almost temple-like in its quality," in her 1989 critique of his architecture.⁸⁵ Although similar in its program to the Paramount Theater, the Sterling Auditorium reconciled the interior and exterior elements far more successfully into a cohesive whole.

In the Sterling Auditorium and subsequent commissions such as the Horace Mann High School (1931) in Denver and the Fruita Union High School (1935), Buell developed a distinctive architectural style that has come to be termed the "Western Style." He became increasingly fascinated with the ornamental use of brick. The exterior of the Horace Mann school, for instance, was a confection of brickwork, with bricks of contrasting colors laid in a dizzying variety of zig-zagging corbels. Buell later explained his penchant for ornamental brick and lamented its passing from style:

In the early days in Denver, the cheap material for building was brick, and it occurred to me that in our brilliant sunshine, if you set brick out from the wall in a pattern, you'd achieve a constantly changing mosaic of light and shadow. I called it "ornamental brick" and used the technique for some years. But when I started doing work for the Federal government, the decorative brickwork was considered "too expensive". Now the trend is no decoration at all. I like ornamentation in buildings, and sooner or later it will become popular again, though maybe not in my lifetime. The old order of architecture I knew is gone, and so is the day of the individual architect. Nobody wants beautiful detail now. Everything has to be functional. And architects are getting to be like doctors and lawyers. Instead of working alone, now they operate in groups of specialists.⁸⁶

During the Depression, Buell's work included eight schools and a number of private residences.⁸⁷ By 1940 his firm was the largest in the Rocky Mountain region, employing some 150 architects and draftsmen. Designed at the end of the decade, the Lincoln Park Homes reflected the prevailing architectural style of the time and Buell's pragmatic approach to government work. As planned by Buell, the four-block complex consisted of twelve long two- and three-story buildings, interspersed with ten three-story blocks. Distributed among these buildings were parking lots, playgrounds and exterior courtyards. The buildings were laid out in a formal grid-iron pattern, with the long buildings enclosing the site visually on the east and west. Access through these structures was gained by drive-through cutouts on the buildings' ground floors. The buildings themselves were simple masonry boxes, punctuated with the simplest of fenestration and modestly ornamented with corbeled brick coursing.

The Lincoln Park Homes resembled numerous other public housing complexes of the 1930s, but in truth Temple Buell was severely limited in his design for the complex. The U.S. Housing Authority had codified design parameters for public housing projects in the mid-1930s, based on "an intensive study... of every conceivable element which might concern the successful development of a low-rent housing venture." The agency developed a narrow range of dwelling units, prescribing minimum square footage for "three types of dwelling units, namely those in apartment houses, row houses, and flats."⁸⁸ Buell's design for the Lincoln Park complex incorporated both apartments and row-houses in one- to four-bedroom units. Following federal guidelines for site planning, building design, dwelling size and layout, and even the features within each unit, the Lincoln Park Homes resembled similarly scaled public housing complexes in Lackawanna and Buffalo, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Toledo, Dallas, and several other cities around the country.⁸⁹

During World War II, Buell was asked to join the Contract Award Committee in Washington, D.C., but he opted to stay in Denver. The defense industry here provided plenty of work. His firm was involved in one of the region's first defense projects: the munitions depot at Fort Wingate in New Mexico. In addition, Buell designed the Denver Medical Depot (1942), the Airplane Modification Center at Stapleton Airfield (1943), and a number of military housing projects (1942-1945).⁹⁰

After the war Buell completed more school projects along with the Denver Post Building (1949) and the U.S. Postal Terminal Annex. He conceived the idea for one of the nation's first shopping centers - Cherry Creek - in the early 1940s; it was completed in the 1950s. From 1950 to 1957, he designed over thirty buildings for the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company. He also designed eight federal and four state buildings in Colorado.⁹¹ Throughout his career, Buell designed a total of forty educational buildings in Colorado and Wyoming, including six university buildings, 13 high schools, and 21 elementary schools. Among the more noteworthy of these were Norlin Library on the University of Colorado campus (1939), the Geology Building at Colorado School of Mines (1939), and a library building at Western State College (1939).⁹² His greatest disappointment was his firm's failure to secure the contract for the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.⁹³

Temple Buell was no architectural visionary like his better-known contemporaries, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe. His work reflected architectural trends more than it determined them. His buildings generally featured pragmatic floorplans with as much exterior ornamentation as clients and prevailing architectural styles would allow. His government clients of the 1940s permitted almost no ornamentation, and projects such as the Lincoln Park Homes reflected this with their austere exterior features and straightforward plans.

Still, his more distinctive works were recognized at the time. In 1937 his brickwork on the Horace Mann High School won a prize for unusual brick design from the National Brick Industry. His designs were also praised for their innovative features. The Horace Mann school, for instance, was widely publicized for its stairwells, which also served as interior fire escapes. In the Fruita Union school, Buell used ramps instead of stairs so that students and faculty used a lower heart rate to climb to the second floor. A model of this school was part of the Colorado display at the 1939 New York World's Fair. And the design for the Lincoln Park Homes became a prototype for other housing projects.⁹⁴ The design for Cherry Creek Shopping Center in the early 1950s was also innovative. Unlike other shopping centers of that time, which featured streets running through a group of shops, Buell's Cherry Creek complex clustered the shops in the center, with parking surrounding the stores.⁹⁵

Undoubtedly, Buell's greatest business success was his ability to predict Denver's growth.⁹⁶ While recuperating from tuberculosis in 1921, he spent a great deal of time reading and memorizing the map of Denver. This information proved helpful when he began in his subsequent real estate developments.⁹⁷ In the 1930s, when the counties around Denver did not yet have city planners to predict problems associated with Denver's growth, Buell helped to form planning commissions. Through their efforts, the Colorado Legislature passed a bill in 1939 that permitted municipalities and unincorporated sections surrounding Denver to enact zone ordinances. Buell also campaigned to have architectural fees modified on government jobs so that architects received at least some sort of profit.⁹⁸ Notable also for his involvement in public service and philanthropic ventures, Buell donated a great deal of money during his life to the development of various educational projects.

Buell's work - both in the types of commissions he took and his architectural style - reflects Denver's development from the 1920s to the late 1950s. The combination of his architectural abilities and his gift for planning and real-estate development helped him to "mold the face of Denver."⁹⁹ On a broader scale, Buell's career reflects the evolution of architecture in America for the last century. His training in the Beaux-Arts tradition gave way to the functionalism of World War II architecture. The shopping mall of the 1950s marked yet another shift in both America's and Buell's architectural style.¹⁰⁰ While certainly not one of his more glamorous or noteworthy projects, Lincoln Park was the product of Buell's dual talents. Built as one of Colorado's earliest public housing projects, Lincoln Park met the demand for low-income housing in one of Denver's oldest and poorest neighborhoods.

7 LINCOLN PARK HOMES: CONSTRUCTION

At the end of 1939 Lincoln Park Homes were still only in the planning phase. Land had been purchased and architects hired. Buell and associate architects Dudley Smith and Charles Strong worked into mid-December 1939 to prepare the plans and specifications for competitive bids. The plans called for 22 separate buildings containing 346 living units: 116 one-bedroom, 145 two-bedroom, 66 three-bedroom, and 19 four-bedroom units. Buff-colored brick and structural clay tile had been chosen for the buildings' exterior walls.¹⁰¹

DHA's next step was to facilitate resident relocation and site demolition. In January 1940 only five of the 161 families still inhabited homes on the Lincoln Park site. DHA planned to relocate them shortly. Demolition, however, was delayed by an injunction issued by District Judge Joseph J. Walsh. Walsh ruled that while public housing was legal, no demolition or new construction could begin until the Colorado Supreme Court approved his decision. In the meantime, the project site was referred to as "virtually a ghost town" by the *Rocky Mountain News*. Nearly 141 empty structures - 108 of which were private residences - stood ready for demolition.¹⁰²

When the Colorado Supreme Court lifted the injunction in March, DHA solicited bids for both the demolition and new construction on the Lincoln Park site.¹⁰³ Contractors were asked to bid on either a general package which included construction, plumbing and heating, electrical, and landscape work, or provide estimates for separate segments of the overall project. Bids on individual aspects of the project were more successful and proved to be more economical for DHA's budget. The J.E. Dunn Construction of Kansas City was low bidder at \$836,242 for site clearance and construction. Whitley Palmer and Company of Salt Lake City was low bidder (\$232,000) for heating and plumbing, Reliable Electric Company of Denver for electric work (\$36,300), and Marshall's nurseries of Nebraska for landscaping work

(\$15,720). These bids totaled \$1,120,262 - nearly \$97,768 less than the architect's estimate.¹⁰⁴

With the approval of the U.S. Housing Authority, DHA signed contracts with each of the bidders in May 1940.¹⁰⁵ Ernest Dunn, general manager of J.E. Dunn Construction, stated that about 1,000 workers would be employed for both demolition and construction. Initial work involved the demolition of seventy-five existing structures, and as part of the federal housing act, 270 substandard homes throughout the city would also be demolished to make up for the 346 units that would eventually be constructed at Lincoln Park.¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, as an actual construction date approached, DHA prepared its finances. The estimated cost of the Lincoln Park Homes was \$1,679,000. In order to assure that funds for construction on the project would continue through August 1940, DHA requested a loan in March of \$248,000 from the U.S. Housing Authority. This brought DHA's total debt to \$559,000, a fraction of the \$3.1 million originally appropriated by the government for housing in Denver.¹⁰⁷ In May DHA sold over \$1 million of short-term notes to several New York banks in order to start construction. The notes would be repaid once U.S. Housing Authority bonds were sold that November.¹⁰⁸

In June 1940 both the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* printed group photos of the ground-breaking ceremonies for the project. In attendance were DHA Chairman James Newton, Denver Mayor Benjamin Stapleton, Chief Architect Temple Buell, and William A. Divers, Regional Director of the U.S. Housing Authority. Demolition of existing structures was already underway, and the Barnett Wrecking company was given two months to complete the site clearing.¹⁰⁹

Demolition and construction overlapped during the summer of 1940. During the ground-breaking ceremony, plans were made to pour the foundation for the first structure the following week.¹¹⁰ In mid-June Chief Building Inspector Lyle D. Webber issued a building permit to DHA for the construction of 22 buildings at the Lincoln Park site. Construction had already begun, as the foundation for the boiler house was completed. The contract stipulated that all construction would be completed by June 1941.¹¹¹ By August 1940 the campaign was nearly finished to destroy substandard homes corresponding to the number of newly constructed units.¹¹² The *Rocky Mountain News* printed a series of photographs under the caption "Rapid Progress is Made on Lincoln Park Housing Project," late that month. According to Wendell Hedgcock, the first apartments would be completed by December 1, 1940. The remaining units would be ready between January and March, 1941.¹¹³

In October 1940 the Denver Housing Authority began accepting rental applications for the Lincoln Park Homes. Housing Manager Ira E. Lute detailed the conditions for occupancy: The head of the family had to be a U.S. citizen; the family had to have resided in Denver for at least a year and had to currently live in substandard housing; and the yearly income had to be a maximum of only \$1,080.00. One-bed-

room units rented for \$17.50 per month, two-bedrooms were \$17.75, and three-bedroom units were \$18.25, all including utilities. Single persons could not rent the units, and families were not allowed to double up or take in boarders. Tenants displaced by the Lincoln Park construction were given first priority.¹¹⁴

DHA hoped to have 48 apartments available by December 1940. An additional 140 apartments would be ready by January 1941. In December 1940 students of West High School worked to design the interior of one apartment as a demonstration to potential residents. The students made the point that with only seven dollars' worth of materials, a unit of the Homes could be decorated very attractively.¹¹⁵

As work was concluding on the original section in January 1941, DHA revived its plans to enlarge the project. Hedgcock informed Buell of DHA's July 1940 motion to expand the Lincoln Park Homes. The motion requested that Hedgcock prepare an application for construction of 75 additional units (including the Colfax frontage) and that he acquire the land and instruct the architect to prepare plans.¹¹⁶ Known as Lincoln Park Project No. COLO 1-2, the DHA had sent an estimated cost of \$259,692 to the U.S. Housing Authority for approval.¹¹⁷ Temple Buell was once again the principal architect, Mead and Mount Construction Company of Denver the general contractors.¹¹⁸ In April 1941 Temple Buell expressed his satisfaction with the expansion work: "I am more than pleased that the work is definitely going ahead, as I sincerely feel, as you know, that it will mean the making of the project."¹¹⁹ The second phase was completed in 1942.

8

LINCOLN PARK HOMES: OCCUPATION AND DEMOLITION

Having housed a variety of residents over the years, the Lincoln Park Homes eventually suffered from age, neglect, and the impact of increasing crime in the neighborhood. By the late 1970s the neighborhoods around Lincoln Park Homes were in need of rehabilitation. In 1978 Denver was awarded a \$13.5 million federal Urban Development Action Grant to initiate a West Denver revitalization program. Estimated to cost \$62.5 million, the program would include construction and rehabilitation of 1,900 houses and commercial development in an 80-acre area bounded by Osage Street, West Sixth, Speer Boulevard, Bannock Street, and West Colfax.¹²⁰ Lincoln Park was the focus of an urban renewal project in 1979. In that year the Denver Urban Renewal Authority decided to buy land valued at \$2.7 million as part of the Lincoln Park renewal. This project included the construction of some 750 middle-income dwellings and townhouses.¹²¹

The West Denver urban renewal programs ran into some social conflicts, however. In the 1970s investors suddenly reversed the prevailing trend and began to buy

older houses near downtown for renovation. While in the west Denver neighborhood of Baker, residents and city officials waited to see how the influx of younger white families would influence the predominantly poor Hispanic residents, they also wondered whether pumping \$13.5 million into La Alma/Lincoln Park would increase property values and eventually displace longtime residents of the area. The goal was to strengthen the run-down neighborhoods with new residences, without completely disregarding the financial capabilities of the original residents. Clearly the mostly poor residents were not in a position to live in the newly built high-rises designed for middle-class professionals.¹²²

The Lincoln Park Homes were the center of a different sort of controversy in 1988, as plans to raze the project were being considered.¹²³ In an effort to preserve the complex, the Colorado State Historical Preservation Office argued that, although the property had not yet reached the 50-year mark necessary for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, it was nevertheless historically and architecturally significant.¹²⁴ DHA countered that saving and modernizing the complex was not feasible. "The project is almost 50 years old," stated Ron Paul, the housing authority's director of redevelopment. "It is inherently a poor design and should never have been built in the first place."¹²⁵ Discussion between DHA and SHPO indicated that, despite DHA's professed concern about the impact of the demolition on surrounding historic buildings, the Lincoln Park Homes themselves would not be saved.¹²⁶

By February 1989 DHA had requested permission from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to demolish the Lincoln Park Homes to clear the land more low- to moderate income-housing. With nearly 1,200 people then occupying the Homes, concerns about the relocation of current residents were prevalent, as voiced by Denver Councilwoman Deborah Ortega. According to Ron Paul, each unit demolished would be replaced by another. Since only half the site would be redeveloped for housing, however, DHA would have to find housing elsewhere for at least some of the residents.¹²⁷

Complex residents themselves gave mixed opinions of the impending demolition. Valorie Sandoval told a *Rocky Mountain News* reporter that she wanted to move out since the neighborhood was a bad place to raise children. Ten-year resident Betty Hernandez expressed frustration with the housing authority: "We're all poor people here. And [housing] officials still don't know what they're going to do with this project - or with us. For most people this is a last resort."¹²⁸ Like the Lincoln Park Homes, the surrounding neighborhood was also in decline. In April 1989 the *Denver Post* reported that the Auraria-Lincoln Park neighborhood was the "worst in crime" in the Denver area. Statistics showed that three of every ten neighborhood residents had been victims of crime in the year 1988.¹²⁹ Now a mostly lower- to middle-income Hispanic neighborhood, the region contains both residential and commercial zones.¹³⁰

9 CONCLUSION

The demolition of the Lincoln Park Homes is today an inevitability. All but a few apartments are unoccupied, their windows boarded. What was once an innovative solution to the public housing needs of Depression-era Denver is now a sobering reminder of the ongoing problems associated with providing for the poor and rehabilitating deteriorating neighborhoods. The Lincoln Park Homes are an example of the differing perspectives between those who make housing policy and those who actually live by that policy. While Ron Paul stated that the Lincoln Park Homes should have never been built, resident Betty Hernandez points out that for many poor people the Homes are a "last resort". This schism reveals a problem with which the country has tried to come to terms since colonial times: What should be done about the poor? Various approaches have been used to accommodate the needs of the poor, and although some seem to work, others, like the Lincoln Park Homes, have proved all too temporary.

The Lincoln Park Homes are also an important indicator of the changes Denver and its neighborhoods have undergone since the city's establishment. Once part of the original settlements around Denver, the neighborhood has metamorphosed according to Denver's growth. When A.C. Hunt donated the tract for Lincoln Park in 1872, he could not foresee the ethnic evolution of a neighborhood first inhabited by Denver and Auraria's original settlers in the late 1850s; then mostly European immigrants in the 1890s; a mixture of Irish, Italian, German, and Hispanic people in the 1930s, and a largely Hispanic population today. The shifts in the socioeconomic conditions of Denver's neighborhoods throughout its history have been hard on the people and structures encompassed within those neighborhoods. In the late 1930s, before the construction of Lincoln Park Homes, the existing neighborhood north of Lincoln Park was dilapidated and in desperate need of revitalization. Today, the neighborhood is facing a similar situation.

On a broader scale, the Lincoln Park Homes represent a period in Denver's history when the defense industry was hitting its peak, and when government subsidization of public housing was just getting started in the state. One of the first housing projects in Denver, it also is significant for its place in the long career of Denver architect Temple Buell. Certainly not one of his more memorable projects, the Lincoln Park Homes represent more of a transition in his work, from Depression-era to World War II-era projects. The project is also a product of New Deal efforts to revitalize the economic and moral fiber of the nation.

10

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⁴⁸Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, pp. 51, 53.

⁴⁹Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver: With Outlines of the Earlier History of the Rocky Mountain Country*, edited for the *Denver Times* (Denver: Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901), pp. 443-444.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

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⁵²Ubbelohde, Benson, and Smith, p. 155.

⁵³Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, p. 67.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 236-238.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 194, 239-40.

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⁵⁹Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, p. 241.

⁶⁰Leonard and Noel, p. 57.

⁶¹Smiley, pp. 645-46.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 639, 645-46.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 443, 645-46.

⁶⁴Stephen J. Leonard, "Denver's Foreign Born Immigrants 1859-1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School and University, 1971), pp. 133, 229.

⁶⁵"A History of Denver's Parks," prepared under the direction of Ben Draper, 1934, Document Division, Denver Museum Collection, Denver Public Library, pp. 159-60.

⁶⁶Sanborn Insurance Map for Denver, Colorado, Volume 2, 1929-1930, Reel 4, Plate 205, Denver Public Library.

⁶⁷Dedication Pamphlet, "Dedication: Denver's New Colfax Avenue Viaduct: August 7, 1984."

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⁷⁸*Men and Women of Colorado Past and Present* (Denver: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1944), p. 82.

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⁸³Mike Patty, "Temple Buell's Life and Times," *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 January 1990, p. 8.

⁸⁴Diane Wilk Shirvani, "A Century of Exploration in Civic Architecture: Temple Hoyne Buell," *Avant Garde*, Winter 1989, p. 18.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁶As quoted in Olga Curtis, "The Man Who Gave Away \$25,000,000," *The Denver Post, Empire Magazine*, 7 January 1968, page 10.

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⁹⁰Harold Crumrine, "Digest of Career and Achievements: Temple Hoyne Buell," Section 3, pp. 1-2, ca. 1981-82, Temple Buell Papers, Temple Buell Foundation.

⁹¹Shirvani, p. 12.

⁹²Patty, "Buell's Life and Times," p. 8; Mary Chandler, "Buell's Stature Rose with Denver," *Rocky Mountain News*, 7 January 1990, p. 78.

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⁹⁵Mike Patty, "Visionary Architect Dies at 94," *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 January 1990, p. 26.

⁹⁶Leonard and Noel, p. 413.

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⁹⁹"Buell: A Family Heritage," from the Colorado Historical Society, 1982.

¹⁰⁰Shirvani, p. 16.

¹⁰¹"Housing Project Out For Bids Soon: Denver's First Slum Clearance Project to Cost Almost 2 Millions," *Rocky Mountain Contractor: Highways Issue*, 13 December 1939.

¹⁰²"156 Families Leave Housing Project Site: Remaining Five Will Get New Homes Soon," *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 January 1940, p. 14.

¹⁰³"Bids on Lincoln Park Project to be Asked Friday: Denver Housing Authority Will Open Estimates on May 2," *Denver Post*, 28 March 1940, p. 31.

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¹⁰⁸"D.H.A. Makes Loan; Work Starts June 1," p. 7.

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¹¹³"Rapid Progress is Made on Lincoln Park Housing Project," *Rocky Mountain News*, 26 August 1940, p. 6.

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¹¹⁵"West High Students Fixing Up Apartments at Cost of Only \$7," *Denver Post*, 15 December 1940, p. 15, Sec. 1.

¹¹⁶Letter, Wendell T. Hedgcock to Temple H. Buell, 8 January 1941, Temple Buell Papers, Temple Buell Foundation.

¹¹⁷Architect's Contract between Housing Authority of City and County of Denver, and Temple H. Buell, Temple Buell Papers, Temple Buell Foundation.

¹¹⁸Contract information compiled by Harold Crumrine, Temple Buell Papers, Temple Buell Foundation.

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¹²⁰Judith Brimberg and Ann Schmidt, "\$13.5 Million U.S. Grant to Revitalize West Side," *Denver Post*, 10 July 1978, p. 1.

¹²¹"DURA Begins Site Purchase," *Rocky Mountain News*, 19 October 1979, p. 74.

¹²²Mark Stevens, "2 Inner-City Areas in Thick of Upheaval," *Rocky Mountain News*, 14 December 1980, pp. 5, 182.

¹²³Michelle P. Fulcher, "North Lincoln Park Housing Project May be Razed," *Denver Post*, 8 June 1988.

¹²⁴Letter, Barbara Sudler, State Historic Preservation Officer, to Evelyn Meisinger, Acting Director, Office of Public Housing, 15 December 1988.

¹²⁵Robert Jackson and Kathryn Nelson, "City Plans to Demolish Lincoln Park Homes," *Rocky Mountain News*, 16 February 1989, pp. 7, 31.

¹²⁶Memorandum of Agreement submitted to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Pursuant to 36 CFR S 800.6 (a). This Historic American Buildings Survey documentation has been produced as a part of the MOA.

¹²⁷Jackson and Nelson, "City Plans to Demolish Lincoln Park Homes," pp. 7, 31.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Marilyn Robinson, "Auraria Area Worst in Crime: Jefferson Park No Longer No. 1, Denver Study Finds," *Denver Post*, 28 April 1989, p. 1-A, 12-A.

¹³⁰Bill Briggs, "Lincoln Park Loses Joys of Yesteryear," *Denver Post*, 28 April 1989.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION by Clayton B. Fraser

For architectural descriptions of buildings within the Lincoln Park Homes complex, see also:

HABS No. CO-74-A Type A Residential Building
HABS No. CO-74-B Type B Residential Building
HABS No. CO-74-C Type C Residential Building

1

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural character: The Lincoln Park Homes complex is comprised of 24 two- and three-story, flat-roofed, masonry buildings, containing 422 dwelling units. The buildings are organized in a formal gridiron pattern, interspersed among parking lots, playgrounds, exterior courtyards and grassed lawns. They display the austere, plain-faced architecture that characterized PWA housing projects of the 1930s and 1940s. Massing is simple, spatial organization of the buildings formal and linear, and ornamentation limited to minor surface treatment of the exterior walls. The resulting architectural character is an uneasy amalgamation of a medium-density residential neighborhood and a military barracks.

Condition of fabric: fair-good

2

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

Overall dimensions: Type A Residential Building: 343'1"x 31'2" two- and three-story block
Type B Residential Building: 343'1"x 31'2" two- and three-story block
Type C Residential Building: 42'9"x 57'4" three-story block

Foundations: 12-inch-thick, reinforced concrete perimeter walls and interior column pads, with spread footings.

Walls: 12-inch-thick masonry walls, with alternating horizontal bands of structural clay tile (laid in running bond) and brick (laid in common bond), separated by slightly corbeled courses of rowlock bricks. Both tiles and brick are buff-colored, with raked mortar joints.

Structural system: 12-inch-thick masonry perimeter bearing walls and interior columns, with 4½- to 6-inch concrete slab floors and wood frame roof joists.

Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Narrow, tile-faced open balconies project from the rear of second-story of the three-story sections of Type B residential buildings. These are accessed from ground level by open-stringer, wrought iron staircases. Small concrete slab stoops are located at exterior entrances of ground floor residential units. Open drive-throughs are located in three-story sections of Type B residential buildings. With the rounded edges of their concrete lintels and supporting beams, these drive-throughs provide the most distinctive architectural features of the Type B residential buildings - and the complex as a whole - lending a vaguely classical character to the otherwise plain-faced buildings.

Chimneys: None

Openings: Plainly framed windows and doorways, with loose-lintel heads. Industrial steel, fixed and casement windows in 2- 4- and 5-sash banks, with corbeled rowlock brick continuous heads and sills. Single-leaf wood doors with small lights and wood screens.

Roof: Composition roof over wood joists (at a ½:12 pitch), with galvanized iron exterior perimeter gutters at top of exterior walls. No dormers, cupolas, clerestories, towers, etc.

3 DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

Floor plans: One- to four-bedroom dwelling units laid out either as apartments along a common stair hall or as row-house units with individual ground-floor, exterior access

Stairways: Open-stringer stairways, with concrete treads in steel pans, in common hallways.

Flooring: Carpeting or vinyl-asbestos tiles over concrete slabs.

Wall and ceiling finishes: Sheetrock with painted, papered or paneled finish; painted, plain-board baseboards with quarter-round shoes.

Openings: Painted, plain-board casings around windows and interior doorways; painted, two-panel interior doors.

Decorative features and trim: None.

Hardware: Mortised steel locksets and hinges on interior doors; steel window latches and hinges.

Mechanical equipment: Full plumbing and electrical service throughout; heating provided by circulating hot-water, baseboard fin-tube heaters, with hot water supplied by central boiler.

4 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

General setting and orientation: The Lincoln Park Homes complex is situated in a mixed-use, West Denver neighborhood. West Colfax Avenue, a major arterial through the city, extends east-west along the complex's northern boundary. Originally built in 1917 and recently replaced, the Colfax Viaduct stands a block away from the complex. Lincoln Park, from which the complex draws its name, is an open landscaped space immediately south of the complex. The campus of Auraria College is located immediately across Colfax Avenue from the complex; commercial buildings and the offices of the Denver Housing Authority (which administers the Lincoln Park Homes) are aligned along Colfax on either side of the complex. The low-density residential neighborhood that surrounds the complex is comprised primarily of one- and two-story single-family dwellings on small residential lots. Many of them aging and deteriorating, these were the types of buildings demolished in 1940 to clear the site for the Lincoln Park Homes.

Buildings within the Lincoln Park Homes complex itself are generally oriented north-south, with eight elongated Type A Residential Buildings and four Type B Buildings alternating in pedestrian avenues with twelve Type C Residential Buildings. The buildings are linked with each other and with exterior courtyards, playgrounds, and parking lots through a series of concrete sidewalks. Original clotheslines extend from the rears of the Type B buildings. Four asphalt-paved parking lots provide parking within the complex; off-street perpendicular parking lines Mariposa and Osage streets, at the complex's east and west perimeters. Residential lawns, trees and low plantings fill the landscaped areas between the buildings. [See *Figure 4* for a site plan of the complex.]

Historic landscape design: The site appears today much as designed and originally built, with minor changes in plantings and courtyard features.

Outbuildings: None.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1 HISTORIC DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS

Blueprints of the original construction drawings for both the original and enlarged phases of the project were provided for this documentation by the Denver Housing Authority. These drawings will eventually be archived at the Colorado Historical Society in Denver, Colorado. The original drawings are located at the Temple Buell Foundation in Denver. The Foundation also has original project correspondence and historic photographs of the project under construction. Additional photographs are located at the Western History Section of the Denver Public Library.

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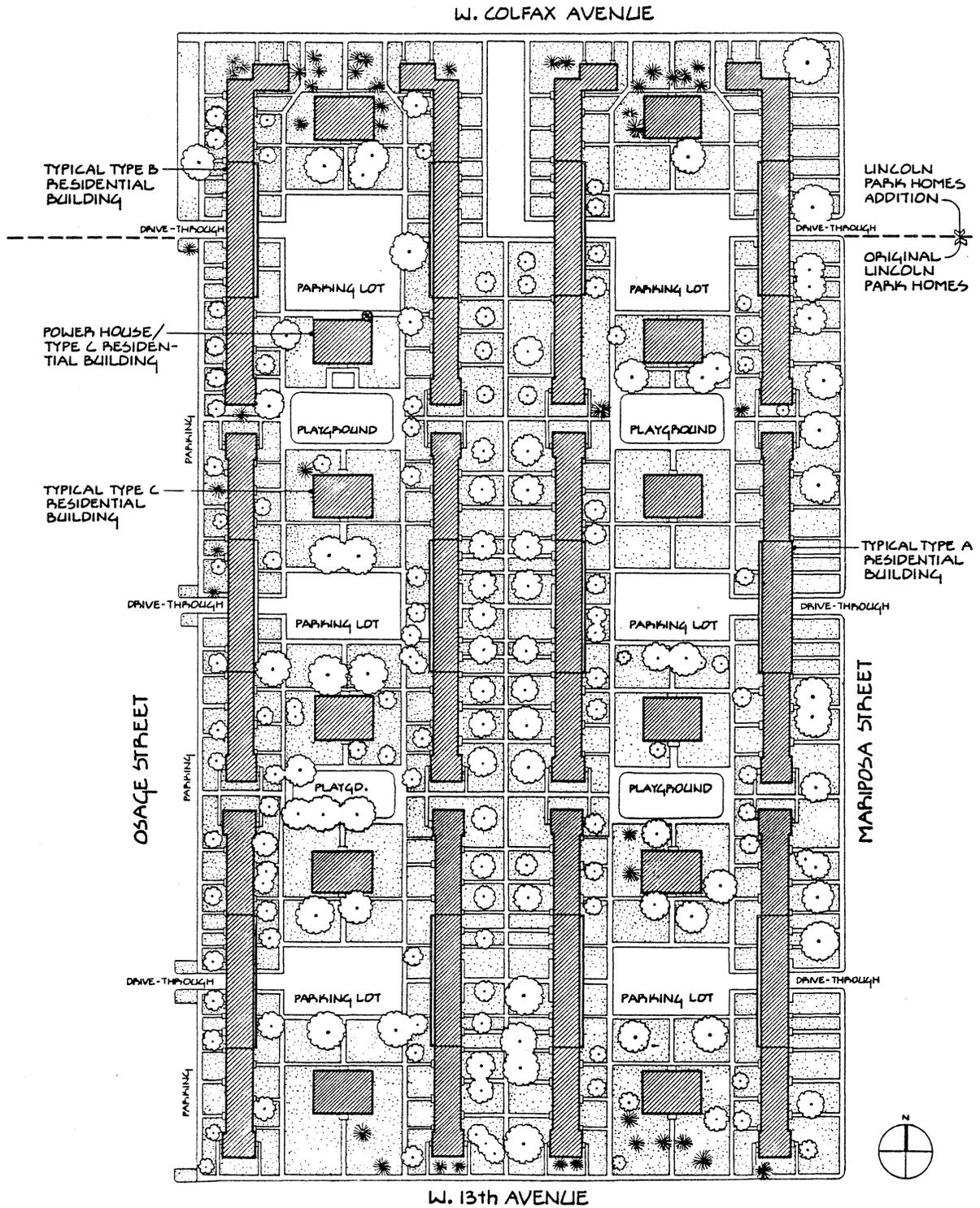
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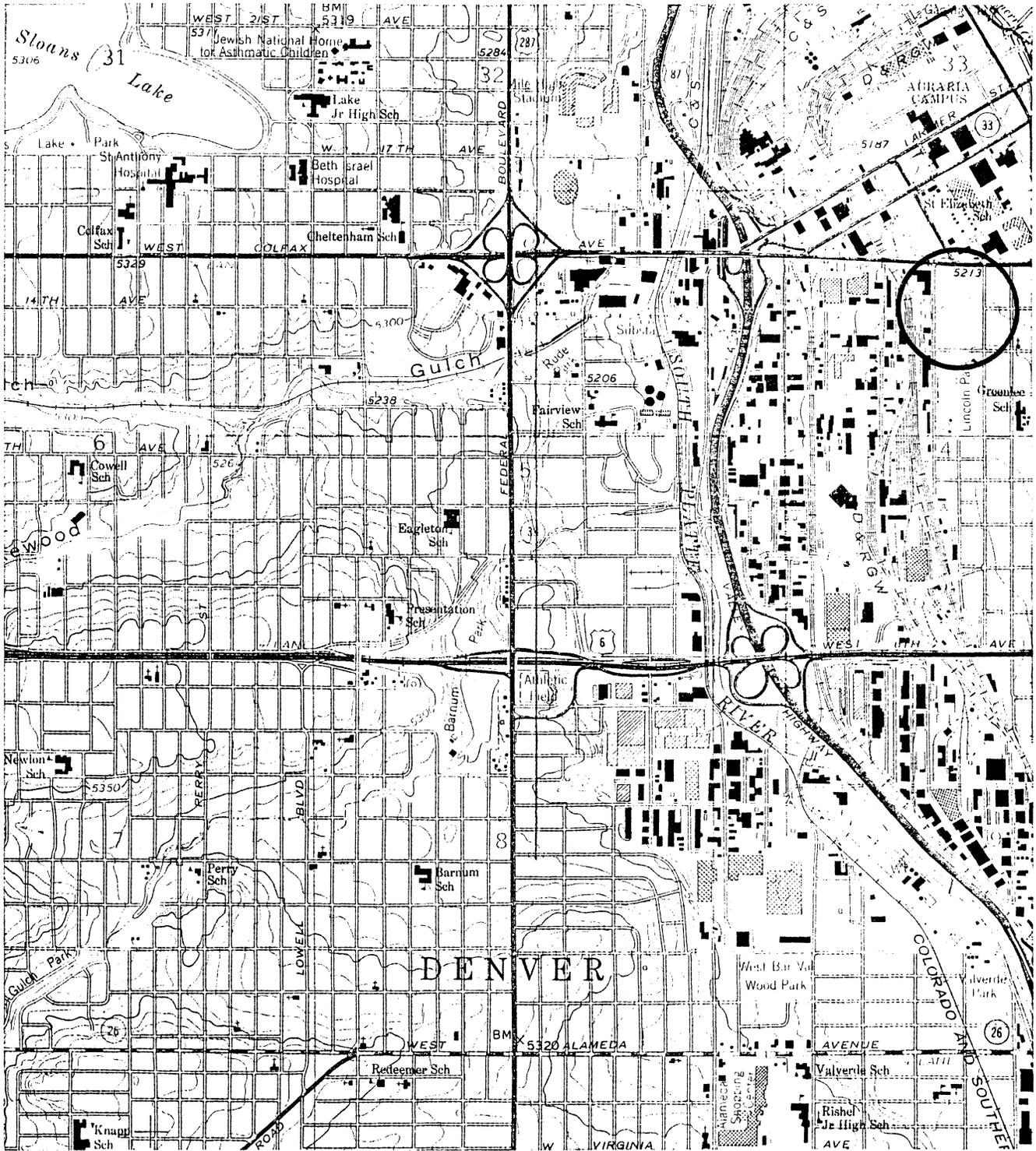
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■ Figure 4. Site plan of Lincoln Park Homes, based on original construction drawings by Temple Buell, 1939-41, and field inspection by Clayton Fraser, November 1993.



■ Figure 5. Location Map of Lincoln Park Homes, from Fort Logan Colorado, USGS Quadrangle Map (7½ Minute Series, 1965).