

National Historic Landmark status for Civic Center could mean money

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Now that the Civic Center is officially a National Historic Landmark — the first in Denver — there is more leverage for getting federal funds for improvements.

“It doesn’t come with money, but it comes with opportunities,” said Annie Levinsky, executive director of Historic Denver. “There is the potential to compete for federal grants that wouldn’t be available if it were not a National Historic Landmark.”

The only hitch is that the federal grant that local preservationists really wanted — the “Save America’s Treasures” program, run by the National Park Service’s Historic Preservation Grants division — wasn’t funded by Congress in FY 2012.

“Who knows. Down the road the funding could be restored,” Civic Center Conservancy executive director Lindy Eichenbaum Lent said. “And there are probably other pockets of federal money where being a National Historic Landmark could improve your odds.”

On Wednesday morning city and state officials gathered at a plaque-unveiling ceremony at the McNichols Building in Civic Center Park to celebrate the distinction.

The National Historic Landmark designation, announced last year, puts Civic Center in the same elite group the Empire State Building, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Library of Congress and the Alamo. There now are 24 National Historic Landmarks in Colorado.

“This places the heart of our civic, business and cultural community up there with the most significant landmarks in our nation’s history,” said Denver Mayor Michael Hancock. “It shines a light on Denver and its growing importance in the eyes of the entire country.”

The designation extends from the State Capitol on Broadway to the City and County Building on Bannock Street, and includes the State Office Building, the McNichols Building, the Greek Amphitheater, Lincoln Park and Veterans Park.

History Colorado president Ed Nichols said Civic Center, “one of Colorado’s great historic preservation success stories, is now officially one of our nation’s great stories.”

Over the past three years, about \$15 million — mostly from the 2007 Better Denver bond initiative — has been invested in restoring structures in Civic Center, which was placed on Colorado’s Endangered Places list in 2007.

Civic Center Conservancy plans to leverage these public funds with private money from a \$25 million capital campaign it will launch to help the city continue with renovations specified in [the 2005 Civic Center Park Master Plan](#).

“That includes an iconic central feature — an anchor for the park — along with additional improvements to the Greek Amphitheater, the McNichols Building, enhancement landscaping and site amenities that would support the everyday, organic use of the park,” Lent said.

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