



# Staff Report

Meeting Date: June 2, 2020

Planner: Andrea Mimnaugh, Senior Planner

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## APPLICATION SUMMARY:

<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>Littleton Post Office Landmark Designation</b>
<b>Case Number:</b>	<b>HP20-0001</b>
<b>Current Historic Designation:</b>	<b>Listed on the National Register of Historic Places</b>
<b>Proposed Additional Historic Designation:</b>	<b>City of Littleton Historic Landmark</b>
<b>Application Type:</b>	<b>Historic Landmark Designation</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>5753 S. Prince Street</b>
<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Littleton Post Office</b>
<b>Owner:</b>	<b>Federal Government</b>
<b>Owner Consent:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Applicant Request:</b>	<b>Designation of the Littleton Post Office as a historic landmark</b>

## PROCESS:

§4-6-6 of the Littleton Municipal Code (Powers and Duties of the Historical Preservation Board) states that the historical preservation board shall review properties nominated for designation as a historic landmark and make recommendations to the city council regarding historic designation. The following steps in the application process are summarized below.

### Pre-application Meeting

February 14, 2020 – Administrative with HPB chair in attendance

### Application Submission

February 24, 2020 – Administrative review

### Landmark Designation

April 20, 2020 – Recommendation of Approval by HPB

June 2, 2020 – First reading by City Council

June 16, 2020 – Second reading and public hearing by City Council

## LOCATION:

The Littleton Post Office is located at 5753 S. Prince Street in Downtown Littleton. Figures 1 and 2 provide vicinity map and current photograph, respectively, of the Post Office.



Figure 1.

Vicinity Map depicting Littleton Post Office in downtown Littleton and its proximity



Figure 2.

Recent photograph of Littleton Post Office Building  
5753. S. Prince Street

## BACKGROUND:

### Littleton Post Office History

The first location of the Littleton, Colorado Post Office was at the Harwood Inn, a building that once stood at the southwest corner of Rapp Street and Bowles Avenue. Town founder Richard Little served as the first postmaster. The Post Office remained at this location for approximately 10-12 years before moving to the nearby J.D. Hill General Store, a building that is still standing,

at the northeast corner of Rapp Street and Alamo Avenue. Over the next half century, the Littleton Post Office continued to move around, locating in as many as 8 different buildings on Main Street.

In 1931, the town learned that federal funds had been budgeted for a post office to be constructed in Littleton. The new, free-standing post office building was completed in 1939 with Works Progress Administration funds. Located at the northwest corner of South Prince Street and West Alamo Avenue, the one-story brick building represents the Colonial Revival style in its gabled roof with a center cupola topped by a weathervane. The main entrance to the building is through double doors facing South Prince Street. A thirteen-by-four-foot mural painted by WPA artist John Fraser originally graced the lobby wall. Fraser worked from photographs published in the Littleton Independent newspaper to create a composite scene of Littleton. The mural is now located in the council chamber in the Littleton City Center. Figures 3, 4 and 5 provide historic photograph of the Post Office and a current photograph of the mural.



Figure 3.  
Historic photo c. 1962

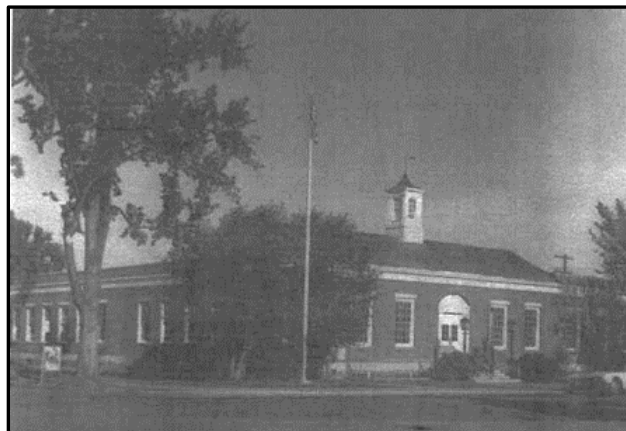


Figure 4.  
Historic Photograph c. 1962



Figure 5.

Former Mural in the Lobby, now located in council chamber at the Littleton Center

By 1948 the post office had twenty employees and served three rural routes. The original part of the 1939 Littleton Post Office building has had only minor changes since its construction. An addition of wings to the north and west in 1962 tripled the floor space. The 1939 building is the major public works project of the Depression era in Littleton. It continues to serve Littleton residents.

#### List of Alterations

1939: Construction of the original post office

1962: Construction of the “L” addition to the north and west of the original building

c. 1998: Replacement and installation of additional postal boxes and matching terrazzo floor

c. 2003: Construction of the ADA entrance ramp and installation of the entrance canopies.

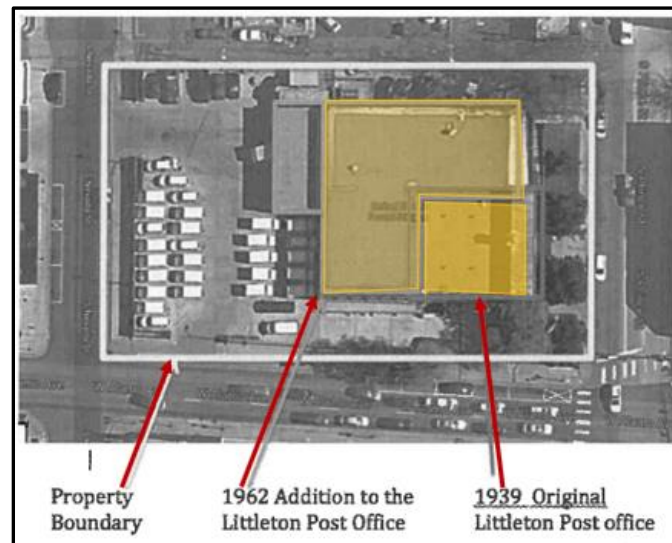


Figure 6.

Post Office aerial photograph depicting original structure and 1962 addition.

#### Historic Designation

In April 2019, the Littleton Post Office was listed on the National Register of Historic Places following submission of an application by Historic Littleton, Inc. Under Federal Law, the listing of a property in the National Register places no restrictions on what an owner may do with their property up to and including demolition.

Under local historic landmark designation, property owned by the federal government is not subject to local land use regulations, including those regarding the preservation of historic structures.

**APPLICATION DETAILS:**

The application for historic landmark designation of the Littleton Post Office includes the following items (see Attachment)

- a justification for the nomination
- description of features that should be preserved
- legal description of the property depicting the boundary for historic landmark designation

**CRITERIA & STAFF ANALYSIS:**

§4-6-8, §4-6-9, and §4-6-11 of the historic preservation code establishes criteria for nomination and designation of historic landmarks. An analysis of the criteria follows.

**§4-6-9(A): Who May Nominate:** The board, city council, or owner(s) may nominate a property, area or structure for designation as a historic landmark or historic district. Maureen Sanchez has signed the nomination of the Littleton Post Office on behalf of the United States Postal Service for historic landmark designation.

**§4-6-9(B) Nomination Requirements:** Upon inquiry for nomination, the director and at least one member of the board shall contact the owner or owners of such historic properties outlining the reasons and effects of designation as a historic property and, if possible, shall secure the consent of the owner or owners to such designation before the nomination is accepted as complete for review.

Board Chair Mike Price and the director's designee, Senior Planner Andrea Mimnaugh, met with Maureen Sanchez, Postmaster of the Littleton Post Office, on February 14 and outlined the reasons and effects of designation. Ms. Sanchez expressed support for the nomination and agreed to proceed.

**§4-6-11(C) Public Hearing Before the Board:** Any application for designation shall be promptly referred to the board. The board shall hold a public hearing on the proposal not less than thirty (30) days, nor more than sixty (60) days after the filing of the application to consider the adoption of the designation resolution.

A complete application was submitted to the city on February 24, 2020. The application was heard by the historical preservation board on April 20, 2020, which is 56 days from the date of submittal. The application timeline requirement for public hearing before the historical preservation board is met.

**§4-6-11(C)3 Review:** The director shall review the proposed designation with respect to: a) its relationship to the comprehensive plan; b) the effect of the designation on the surrounding neighborhood; and c) such other planning considerations as may be relevant to the proposed designation.

**Comprehensive Plan: Its relationship to the Comprehensive Plan**

The following section addresses the application's compatibility with the comprehensive plan. Excerpts of applicable sections are set forth below, followed by staff analysis. Note that the texts

included in this section are excerpts from larger sections of the plan. The entire Envision Littleton Comprehensive Plan is available on the city website.

**Unifying vision and guiding principles**

**Vision 2040** (page 11)

We recognize that our vision for Littleton's future is framed differently than many communities as we are a largely built-out city. As we focus on managing change amid this reality, we envision a Littleton in 2040 that has:

- Maintained the integrity of its established neighborhoods and historic areas.

**Future City** (beginning on page 11)

**Chapter on Land Use and Community Character** (beginning on page 14)

**Key Issues for Consideration** (page 41):

- Littleton's heritage focus and the need to protect historical and cultural assets

**Littleton's Core Values** (page 12)

- A passion and commitment to architectural heritage and landmarks

**Guiding Principles: Authentic** (page 13)

The essential threads that will continue to sustain this community fabric include Littleton's historic character and architectural heritage, its varied neighborhoods and residential options, a robust and service-oriented faith community and inviting atmosphere.

**Chapter on Heritage, Arts, Recreation and Tourism**

**Key Issues for Consideration** (page 65):

- Threats to Littleton's historic legacy and architectural heritage

**Goal**

**HART 2** (page 65)

- Continued protection and promotion of Littleton's heritage, especially where it is tangibly visible in historic architecture, designated district and landmarks, and distinctive neighborhoods and buildings.

**Transportation Masterplan Goal: Connected** (page 34)

Connect people conveniently to the community, resources, and opportunities.

A connected Littleton is one where people have convenient ways to get from home to school, work, and popular destinations such as downtown and the Mary Carter Greenway. Achieving this goal will require creative approaches to crossing existing barriers and closing existing gaps in the transportation network, with a focus on comfortable and convenient networks as well as improved connections for all travelers.

The Littleton Post Office is significant for its association with the history of mail service in Littleton for the last 81 years. It is an excellent representation of the Colonial Revival style

with its gabled roof and cupolas, symmetrical façade, double-hung windows and elaborate entrance flanked by pillars. As a public building in downtown Littleton on a prominent corner of the intersection of Prince Street and Alamo Avenue, the Post Office is a familiar visual feature of the community.

Designation of the Littleton Post Office will help protect the historic character and integrity the structure for the enjoyment and appreciation of future generations. Although properties owned by the federal government are not subject to local land use regulations, including the city's historic preservation requirements, landmark designation will serve to highlight the significance of the structure and raise awareness of its importance to the historic character of the community. Landmark designation runs with the land, meaning that a change in ownership does not change its status as a landmark designation. Under local government or private ownership, preservation regulations would require city review of any exterior modification for compliance with historic preservation criteria. Further, demolition of the structure would be prohibited, except for cases where unusual circumstances exist, as defined in the city's historic preservation code.

The location of the Littleton Post Office in downtown Littleton brings additional significance in that it is part of the historic fabric of the city's oldest neighborhood and it exemplifies the architectural and social heritage of Littleton.

The city's commitment to enhancing multi-modal connections to downtown supports the ongoing access and visibility of one of the city's most significant historical areas. Should the federal government sell the property in the future, convenient access to the building will be a key element to attracting potential re-adaptive uses of the building, thus helping to perpetuate the preservation and use of the historic landmark.

The historic fabric of downtown Littleton has been identified in the comprehensive plan as an essential thread to the authenticity of the city, and its preservation is identified as a crucial element in the vision of the future of Littleton. Designation of the Littleton Post Office appears to further the vision and goals of the city's comprehensive plan and the transportation master plan.

**Impacts: The effect of the designation on surrounding properties**

Designation of the Littleton Post Office will bring the number of locally designated properties in the downtown neighborhood to 40. Designating the Littleton Post Office will add additional predictability and stability to the historic fabric in the downtown neighborhood. Designation of the Littleton Post Office does not, however, affect the development or redevelopment of surrounding properties, the provision of city services, or other neighborhood-related issues.

**Other Planning Considerations: Such other planning considerations as may related to the designation**

None identified.

**§4-6-8 Criteria for Designation**

The board will consider the following criteria in reviewing nominations of properties for designation:



**Properties receiving historic designation shall be at least forty (40) years old except as otherwise provided herein.**

Littleton Post Office was built in 1939 and is 81 years of age. This criterion is met.

**Importance: properties receiving historic designation must possess architectural, social, or geographical/environmental importance by meeting one or more of the following [categories]:**

- 1. Exemplifies specific elements of an architectural style or period;**
- 2. Is an example of the work of an architect or builder who is recognized for expertise nationally, statewide, regionally, or locally;**
- 3. Demonstrates superior craftsmanship or high artistic value;**
- 4. Represents an innovation in construction, materials or design;**
- 5. Represents a style particularly associated with the Littleton area;**
- 6. Represents a built environment of a group of people in an era of history;**
- 7. Represents a pattern or grouping of elements representing at least one of the above criteria;**
- 8. Has undergone significant historic remodel;**
- 9. Is the site of a historic event that had an effect upon society;**
- 10. Exemplifies cultural, political, economic or social heritage of the community;**
- 11. Represents an association with a notable person or the work of a notable person;**
- 12. Represents a typical example/association with a particular ethnic group;**
- 13. Represents a unique example of an event in Littleton's history;**
- 14. Enhances sense of identity of the community;**
- 15. Is an established and familiar natural setting or visual feature of the community.**

Historic landmark designation of the Post Office appears to have architectural, social and geographical/environmental importance as reflected in 4 of the categories set forth above: 1, 8, 13 and 15.

**Category 1. Exemplifies specific elements of an architectural style or period**

The Littleton Post Office exemplifies the Colonial Revival style public building. One of six buildings identified as Colonial Revival in Littleton, per the Colorado Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation's database of historic sites, the Post Office is the only public, non-residential building in the city utilizing the style. Character-defining features include its brick construction, side-gabled roof with center cupola, and symmetrical façade with evenly spaced twelve-over-twelve multi-light double-hung sash windows and elaborate entrance. Other Colonial Revival style elements evident on this building include a strong cornice decorated with dentils with little overhang. The accentuated front entrance is topped by a decorative metal eagle situated directly under the arch above the double door front entrance. The building retains a high level of integrity while still functioning as a modern post office. The 1962 addition continues the Colonial Revival styling with more restrained use of detail, as is typical of that era.

**Category 8: Has undergone significant historic remodel**

The 1962 "L" addition to the north and west of the original building tripled the size of the original structure. The addition closely matches the materials of the original building, using a slightly lighter



color modular red-brown brick. It has a flat roof with a brick parapet. The windows match the materials and design of the original structure. The addition is compatible with the original structure, maintaining the Colonial Revival architectural style. The increase in size of the Post Office is historically significant in that it reflects the growth of the city in the post-war era.

**Category 13: Represents a unique example of an event in Littleton's history**

The Littleton Post Office has significance for its association with President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It is among the ranks of other Depression-era public works projects having been constructed with WPA funds. In the 1930's, the Federal government built hundreds of post offices with federal funds. This construction helped spur the local economy in Littleton through the purchase of local construction materials and through the employment opportunities the project provided. The building was the first constructed solely for use as a post office in Littleton. The construction of the addition in 1962 demonstrates the need for larger facilities to serve the growing population of Littleton in the post-World War II era.

**Category 15: Is an established and familiar natural setting or visual feature of the community.**

The Littleton Post Office is located at a prominent location on Prince street between Main Street and Alamo Avenue. It is an established and familiar visual feature of the contemporary city for both its visible location and its size as one of Downtown Littleton's larger structures. Further, the Post Office has been a well-known government building for generations as the place to visit to obtain postal services.

**HISTORICAL PRESERVATION BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

On April 20, 2020, the Historical Preservation Board held a public hearing and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the designation of the Littleton Post Office as a historic landmark.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff finds that, in compliance with §4-6-8 and §4-6-9 of the Littleton City Code, the historic landmark designation of the Littleton Post Office, 5753 S. Prince Street, appears to meet the criteria for approval and recommends that City Council support the ordinance approving the landmark designation of the Littleton Post Office located at 5753 S. Prince Street