



HISTORIC NOMINATION FORM  
 CITY OF AURORA, COLORADO  
 HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
 DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

Date: April 23, 1986

I.D.# SAN 316  
 (Staff Use)

Project Name: Curent William Smith H. S. Historic William Smith H. S.

Address: Street 10000 E. 13th Avenue  
 City Aurora County Arapahoe State CO

Legal Description: E<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> NE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> NE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Section 3, Township 4 Range 67 West of the 6th PM  
Arapahoe County

Date of Construction: 1931

Nomination Category: xxxx District xxx Building        Object  
xxxx Structure        Site        Other

Current Owner: Name Aurora Public Schools Notified ? Yes 6/13/86 (staff use)  
 Address: 1085 Peoria Street  
 City: Aurora State CO Zip Code 80011 Phone 344-8060

General Information

<u>Ownership</u>		<u>Status</u>		<u>Present Use</u>			
<u>xxxx</u>	Public	<u>xxxxx</u>	Occupied	<u>      </u>	Agricultural	<u>      </u>	Park
<u>      </u>	Private	<u>      </u>	Vacant	<u>      </u>	Commercial	<u>      </u>	Residential
<u>      </u>	Other			<u>      </u>	Government	<u>xxxxx</u>	Other
				<u>      </u>	Military		School

<u>Condition</u>		<u>Modifications</u>		<u>Location</u>	
<u>      </u>	Excellent	<u>      </u>	None, like original	<u>xxxx</u>	On original site
<u>xxxx</u>	Good	<u>xxxxxxx</u>	Slight	<u>      </u>	Moved (describe below)
<u>      </u>	Fair	<u>      </u>	Work in progress		
<u>      </u>	Poor/Deteriorating	<u>      </u>	Major (describe/below)		

General Description: Provide other relevant information to assist this nomination review process, including construction information, description and extent of modifications, reasons and dates of building moves, general architectural description (inc. size, height, stories, style, materials, etc.), names and other data for builder and/or architect, and any other relevant information.

see attached "Notes on William Smith School"

Application submitted by: Juanita Sparks and Bill Thomas  
 Address: 14659 E. 24th Ave. and 1124 Beeler Street  
 Phone: 366-7562 & 344-1301

Statement of Significance: Check those which apply and provide details as described below

Architectural Significance

- Represents the work of a master architect  
 Possesses high artistic values  
 Represents type, period or method of construction

Historical Significance

- Associated with significant persons  
 Associated with significant events  
 Contributes to an historic dist.  
 Geographically significant

Basically, why is this building or site historically or architecturally significant? Provide information on builder, architect, and original or subsequent owners. Discuss other important factors. Is building crucial part of overall historic district or area? Provide any other information leading to conclusion that this building or site may be of architectural, historical or geographical significance.

Builder: J. H. Corbin

Architect: Eugene Groves

Owner: Aurora Public Schools

again, see attached "Notes on William Smith School"

References: List specific sources for any factual information provided in this nomination including books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, interviews, etc.

Rolla Rissler, Principal, William Smith High School

Aurora Public Schools Archives

Aurora History Museum-Aurora Democrat-News, 10/30/31

General Notes: All applications should be accompanied by:

- 1) Sketch plan of site, building etc. May be neatly handdrawn on 8½" x 11" sheet showing adjacent streets, general building location and dimensions, plus other prominent site features.
- 2) Color photos of suitable number and size to document size, building etc.
- 3) Additional pages may be attached to respond to above application requirements.

Application Accepted by: Staff member FRANK MIZNER Date: 4/23/86

Application Complete:      Yes   x   No

If no, what is needed? Vicinity maps - compiled by F.M. (5/22/86)

Field Assessment: Eligible for nomination  
Public hearing scheduled for July 10, 1986

Other Designations: National Register No  
State Inventory SAH 316  
Other None  
Eligible for National Register?       
Local Inventory Yes

Staff Recommendation Schedule for Commission public hearing w/ favorable staff  
recommendation for Commission and Council designation as historic landmark  
-F.M. 5/20/86

Summary of Actions

1. Presented to Historic Preservation Commission: Date June 5, 1986  
Scheduled for Public Hearing   x   Yes      No  
If "No", reasons why     

2. Public Hearing: Date July 10, 1986  
Recommended for Approval: Vote: 10-0  
Not Recommended for Approval: Vote:       
Reasons for Denial     

3. City Council: Date 8/11/87  
Recommended for Designation: Vote       
Not Recommended for Designation: Vote       
Reasons for Denial

Notes on William Smith School:

3/12/86

I spoke with Mr. <sup>Rolla</sup>~~Raleigh~~ Rissler, Principal of William Smith.

--Architect: <sup>Eugene</sup>~~Sam~~ Groves, a graduate of Dartmouth College, who designed four schools, all in the same pattern, with the same materials used in construction of each. Other three: One in Golden, and two of them east of Aurora.

The school is unique because of theme:

--octagonal angles on ceilings and doorframes, and in leaded glass in windows above main door.  
--symmetry throughout building--with corresponding arches and doorways.

The school is unique because of building materials used:

--terazzo flooring in main hallway and on stairs.  
--cork flooring in all classrooms and second floor hallway to reduce strain on teacher's feet.  
--concrete walls throughout the building and comprising gymnasium roof.

The school is unique in that it has been a great source of community pride, as evidenced by the fact that each octagonal joint in the ceiling of each room has a flower painted on it, each archway and threshold for each classroom has flowers painted on it, and the ceiling of the gym has every sport depicted on it.

Every one of these flowers and other depictions was hand painted.

--There is a fireplace in the old principal's office, meant to provide a "homey" touch, I presume.

The school is unique in its construction:

--Each classroom on the second floor has a curved ceiling, perpendicular to the ceiling of the classroom next to it.  
--The Gym ceiling and roof are built entirely of concrete and supported by concrete pillars and a continuous ellipse of concrete around the gym.  
--The heating pipes for radiators were put into the walls when the concrete was poured, thereby adding some energy efficiency to the school, and heating the walls as well as the areas occupied by the radiators.

Further Notes:

--building built in 1930.  
--cost: \$110,000.00.  
--building dedicated on 11/6/1931 at 8:00 pm. Presented by L.J. Sollenberger, School Board President.  
--William Smith was Board Secretary then.  
--addition built in 1946 by Industrial Arts teacher Slim Place, using a great deal of student labor for the project.  
--There are several apertures designed to hold statuary and fire extinguishers and other such school memorabilia. The building was designed with these apertures already in mind.

- Last graduating class was 1949.
  - First Aurora Junior High in 1951.
  - Capacity: 250-300 students.
  - The school colors were green and white
  - It was known as "Aurora High School."
  - Mr. J. A. Corbin did the construction of the school, supervised closely by architect <sup>EVERETT</sup> Don Groves through every step of the construction.
  - The land was bought on 7/26/1922 for \$3500.00 total.
  - The school was described as a "thoroughly modern, splendidly equipped and fireproof building" by the Aurora Democrat in a special edition, published on Friday, 10/30/1931.
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- The William Smith School is located on Block 5, Aurora Gardens Subdivision.
  - It is further located by bounds as follows:  
"The East half, Northeast half, Southwest quarter, and Northeast quarter, Section 3, Twpnship 4, Range 67 West of the 6th P.M., Arapahoe County."

*William C. Thomas*

# WILLIAM SMITH HIGH SCHOOL CELEBRATES ITS 50th ANNIVERSARY

by Elizabeth Johnson

The population of Aurora in 1830 was 2,295 persons consisting of 1,154 males and 1,141 females, all whites except for two who were blacks. The 325 students and 15 teachers used the same building. High School students had no gym, so the basement of the Community Church on Colfax Avenue (now the site of Nobel's) was used for basketball practice and games. The ceiling was so low basketball games were rather strange. There was no place for spectators. When the basement flooded, games had to be cancelled. The "Trojans" were big winners in the basketball conference that year in spite of their inadequate facility. This situation prompted the students to go door-to-door begging for a new school. The resulting slogan, "Vote School Bonds", became so popular that the community voted bonds in the amount of \$55,000 at 4%.

After the bonds were approved, the school board immediately began to make plans for the new school to be located at 10000 E. 13th Avenue. As is usual in any community, there were those who opposed. In one instance, the location was "too far out". Most of the students lived north of Colfax Avenue or several blocks to the west. Some objected in another way saying it was "too elaborate". Many thought the gym was a frill and began to dub it "The Gym School". Those who had children and an interest in the athletic program were the enthusiastic supporters.

Contracts were let. The cornerstone was laid by Aurora Lodge No. 156 A.M. and F.M., of which William Smith was a member. A Mr. Groves, who also designed the Old Golden High School, was the architect. The entire school was constructed of poured-in-place concrete, reinforced with steel --- the gym dome, doors, windows --- the entire building. It bears the symbol of a fallout shelter because of this built-in strength.

The double front doors were made more attractive with panels of

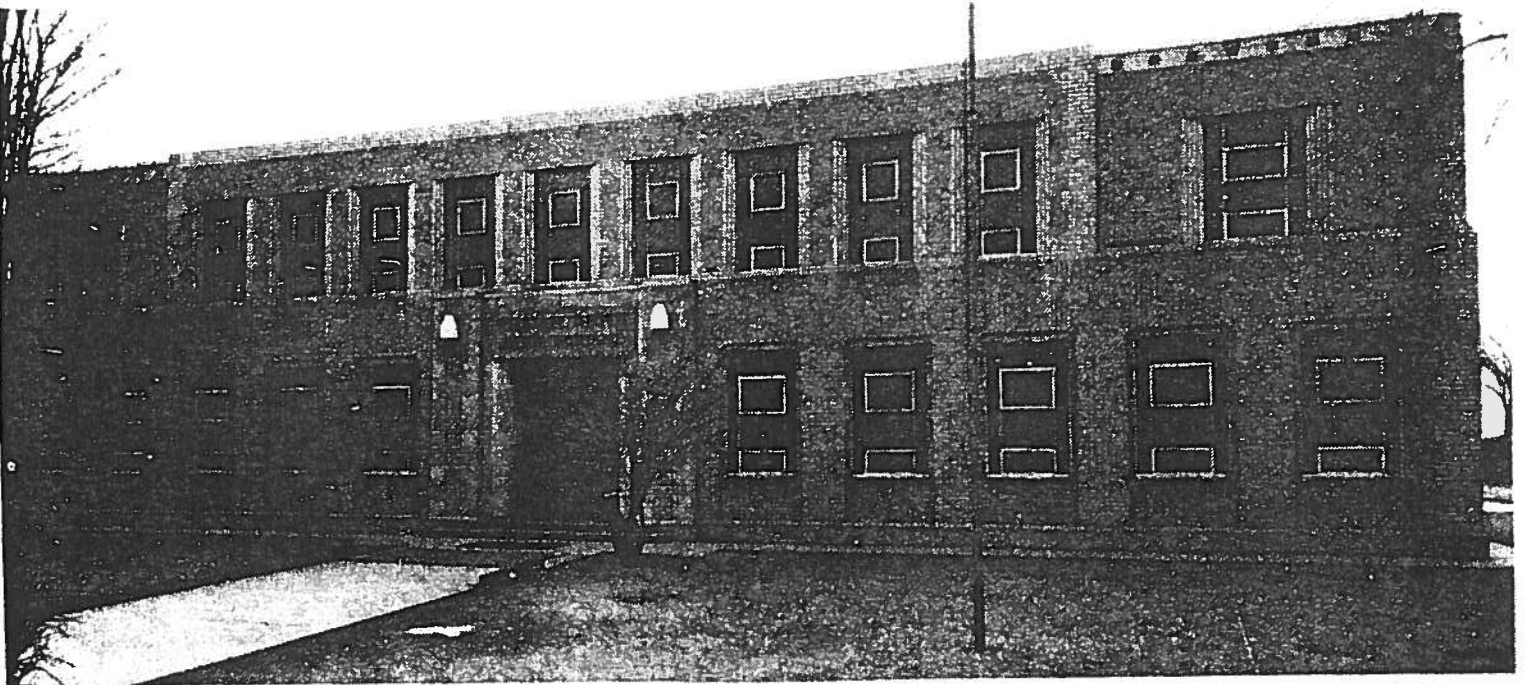
stained glass. The upstairs windows are outlined with panes of leaded glass. The buff brick work is ornately done with accents of red brick in geometric arrangements.

Inside, the principal's office boasted over-stuffed furniture and a grandmother clock. Curving stairways on either side of the principal's office led to the library, classrooms and the spectator balconies for the gym. There are niches in the concrete stair walls.

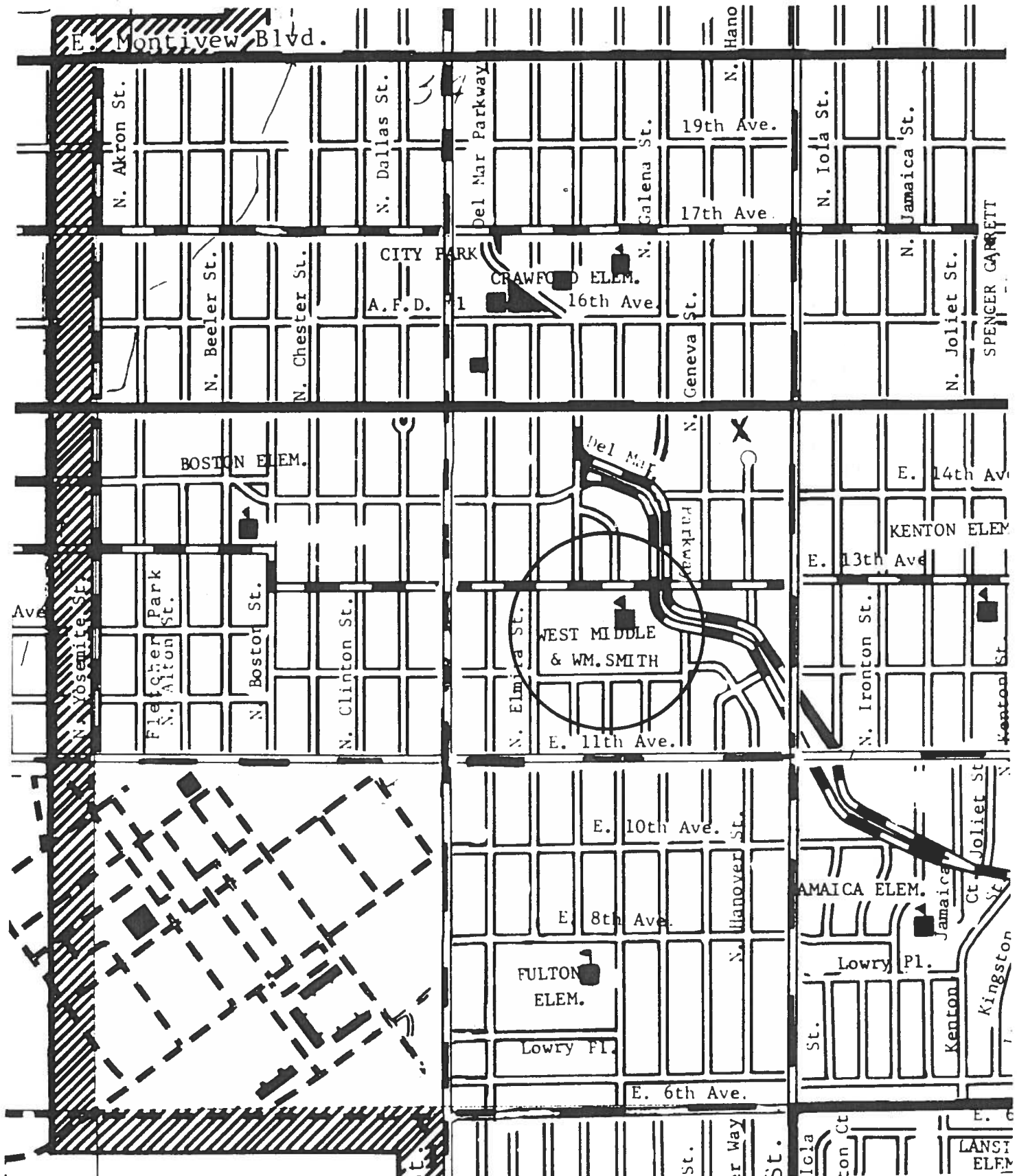
The walls were adorned with murals painted by Albert Christen, a local rancher and artist, who has worked in several locations in Denver and Aurora. His athletic scenes in the gym ceiling still remain, but the garlands of flowers over and alongside the arched doors and on the crosspieces in the ceiling of the classrooms have been covered by many coats of paint. Even so, they are faintly visible.

The school is named for William Smith, the man who farmed the quarter section south of 8th Avenue and west of Peoria Street and who rode his horse to organize School District 28, which ran west as far as Colorado Boulevard. Mr. Smith spent one-half a century as secretary of the School Board. In an article recognizing Mr. Smith four years before he retired from the Board, *The Democrat News* carried the tribute: "Forty-six years ago you founded and organized the school district and since that time you have given faithful, efficient service to the people of our community".

Through the years additions have been made to the east and west sides of the building, and it has housed classes for many grade levels. It is again known as the William Smith High School, offering an opportunity for students to complete requirements for graduation. The gym has been used for many civic functions including the Firemen's Balls, plays and musical productions as well as athletic events. For many years it was the largest auditorium in Aurora.



William Smith was called the "Gym School" by some. Does your school have a nickname?



1" = 1000'

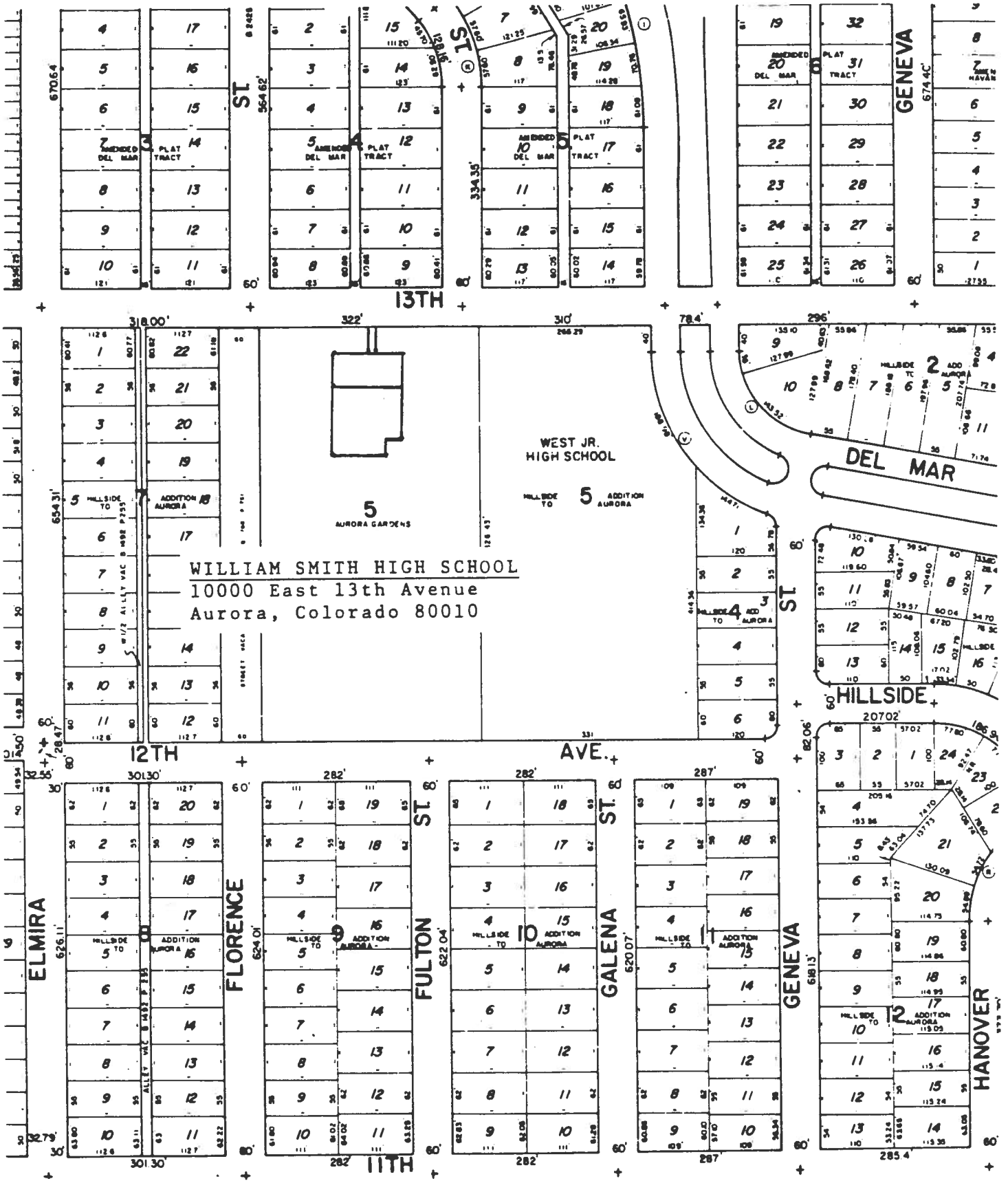


City of Aurora, Colorado Department of Planning

application no. \_\_\_\_\_ agenda item no. \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION MAP





William Smith High School  
 application no. \_\_\_\_\_ agenda item no. \_\_\_\_\_

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LOCATION MAP

