



★ Central City ★  
COLORADO

DESIGN GUIDELINES

**These Design Guidelines represent the concerns and desires of the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council of Central City. Any adoption or modification of the Design Guidelines shall be solely the responsibility of Central City.**

**The Design Guidelines are intended as guidelines for projects within the City, but are not intended to provide the detail necessary to construct, remodel or repair any aspect of a project. Persons interested in developing a project within the City should consult with and rely upon appropriate design professionals. RNL Design and Winter & Company take no responsibility for the application of these guidelines to any project.**

**Cover Photo:**

**Central City Fourth of July Parade, 1890s.**

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## PREFACE

This book is the official set of design guidelines for Central City, Colorado. On September 5, 1966, the Secretary of the Interior placed Central City on the National Register of Historic Places as a National Historic Landmark, the highest level of significance for resources that contribute to the nation's history. Later on July 17, 1991, the National Park Service clarified the boundaries of the district, to include Black Hawk and Nevadaville. As a part of being a National Historic Landmark, the district is entered on the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's record of properties of national, state and local significance maintained by the Secretary of the Interior.

In 1981, Central City adopted an historic preservation ordinance to protect, enhance and perpetuate the historic district and its resources of historical, architectural or geographic significance. The ordinance designated all of the National Historic Landmark district within the city limits to be a local historic district, subject to protection through local police powers. The City Council also established an Historic Preservation Commission, whose duties include the review of all proposed alterations that may affect the integrity of the district. Design guidelines, developed by Community Services Collaborative, were also adopted at that time, and the Commission used these to make determinations of appropriateness. A new preservation ordinance was adopted in 1991 that clarified review procedures, established criteria for demolition and created special categories of significance, including "Victorian Landmark" interiors.

The local and national historic district designations are, in part, a recognition that the Central City-Black Hawk district is unique. Central City's built environment is a fragile system of historic and natural features, which can be diminished with inappropriate development. In order to assure the alterations and new development retain the integrity of the historic area, design guidelines are needed to monitor the character of change and to offer practical standards the community can use in making design decisions. The Central City design guidelines, therefore, were created to preserve the historic character of the community and to protect an important part of the heritage of the Rocky Mountain region.

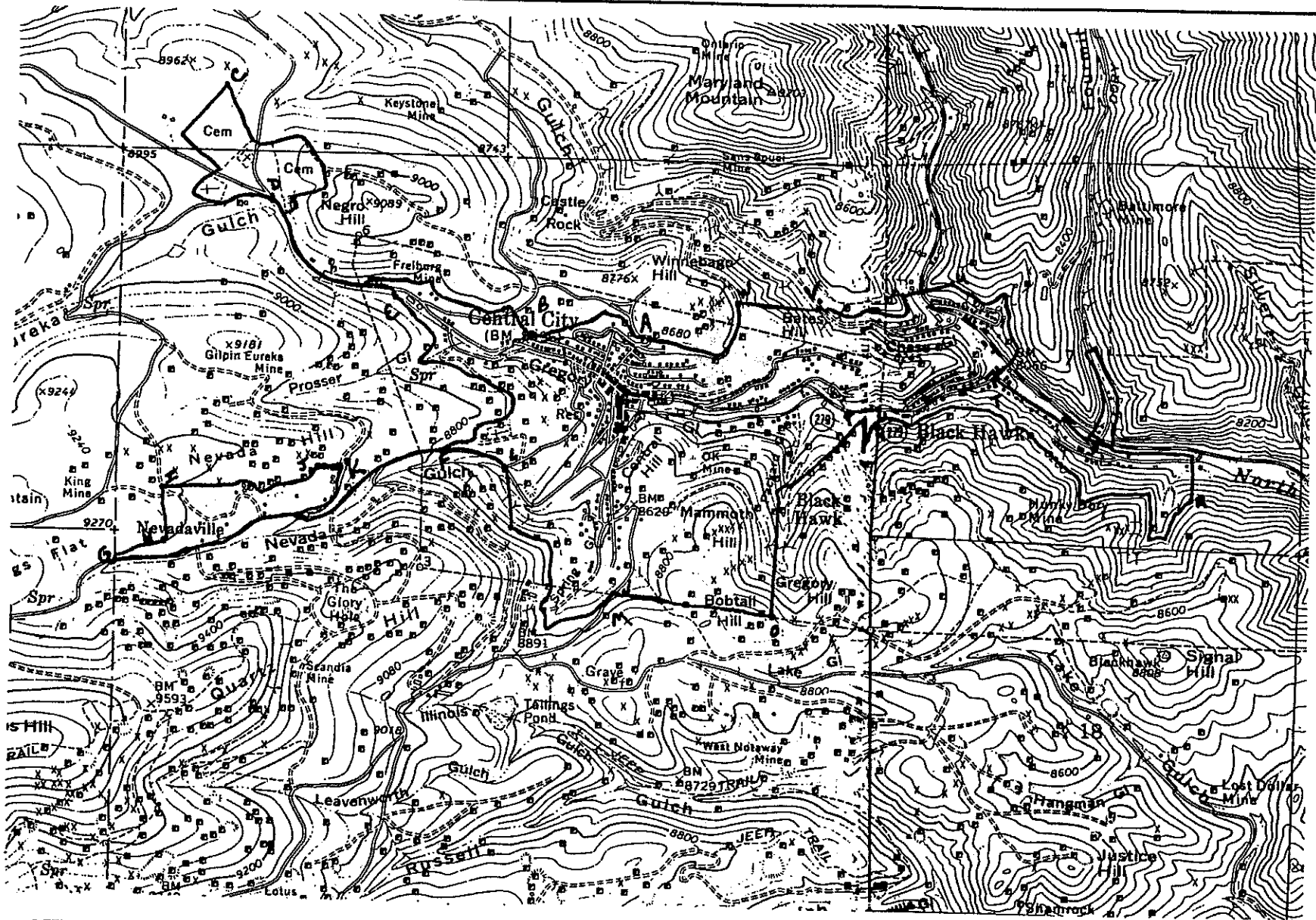
### How the guidelines were developed

The design guidelines were developed as a community effort. Members of the Historic Preservation and Planning Commissions directed the project, and the City Council played an active role in establishing policies. Members of the community also participated in a series of meetings to develop and refine the guidelines. RNL Design, architects and planners, with the assistance of Winter & Company, preservation and urban design consultants, provided technical expertise and assembled the materials.

In the process of developing the guidelines, the historic character of Central City was closely studied. Current conditions were documented and compared with the historic conditions to gain a clear understanding of the basis of character in the district today. While major portions remain relatively intact, substantial areas of Central City have changed since the period of historic significance, primarily due to the loss of many buildings. Some buildings were destroyed by fire, others were lost to the elements, and a few were purposefully demolished by their owners to avoid taxes. These variations in context within the district are reflected in the design guidelines.

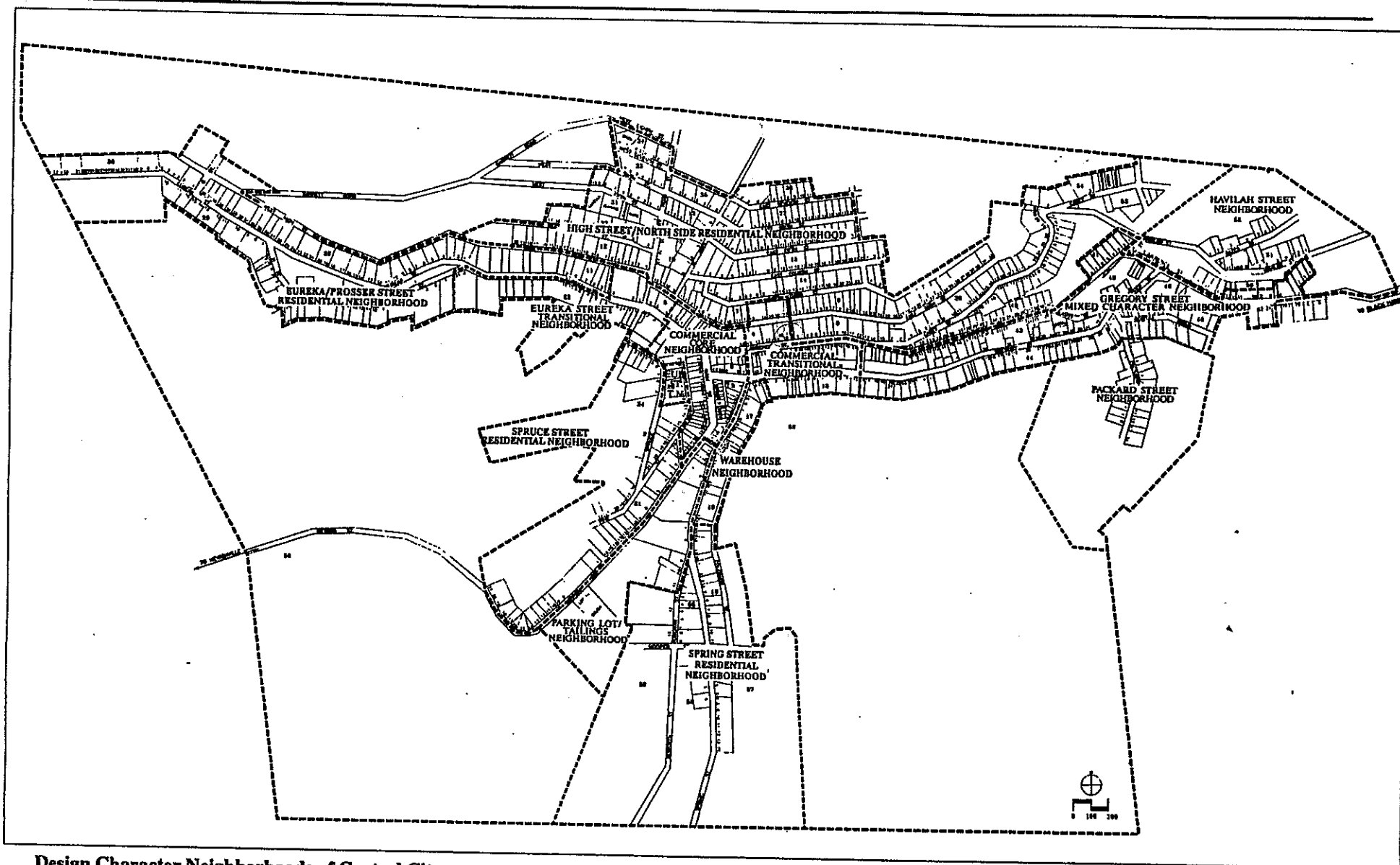
Increased development pressures are now evident that were not addressed in the earlier guidelines. Experience from the administration of the original design guidelines over the past years has also identified areas of information that need clarification. This has mandated the need for new guidelines.

The new design guidelines replace the earlier document which has served the City for the past decade. However, the new guidelines are firmly founded on the earlier design guidelines. The new guidelines provide amplified detail to the general principles that were outlined in the earlier document, as well as retaining some of the original language.



**National Historic Landmark Map**

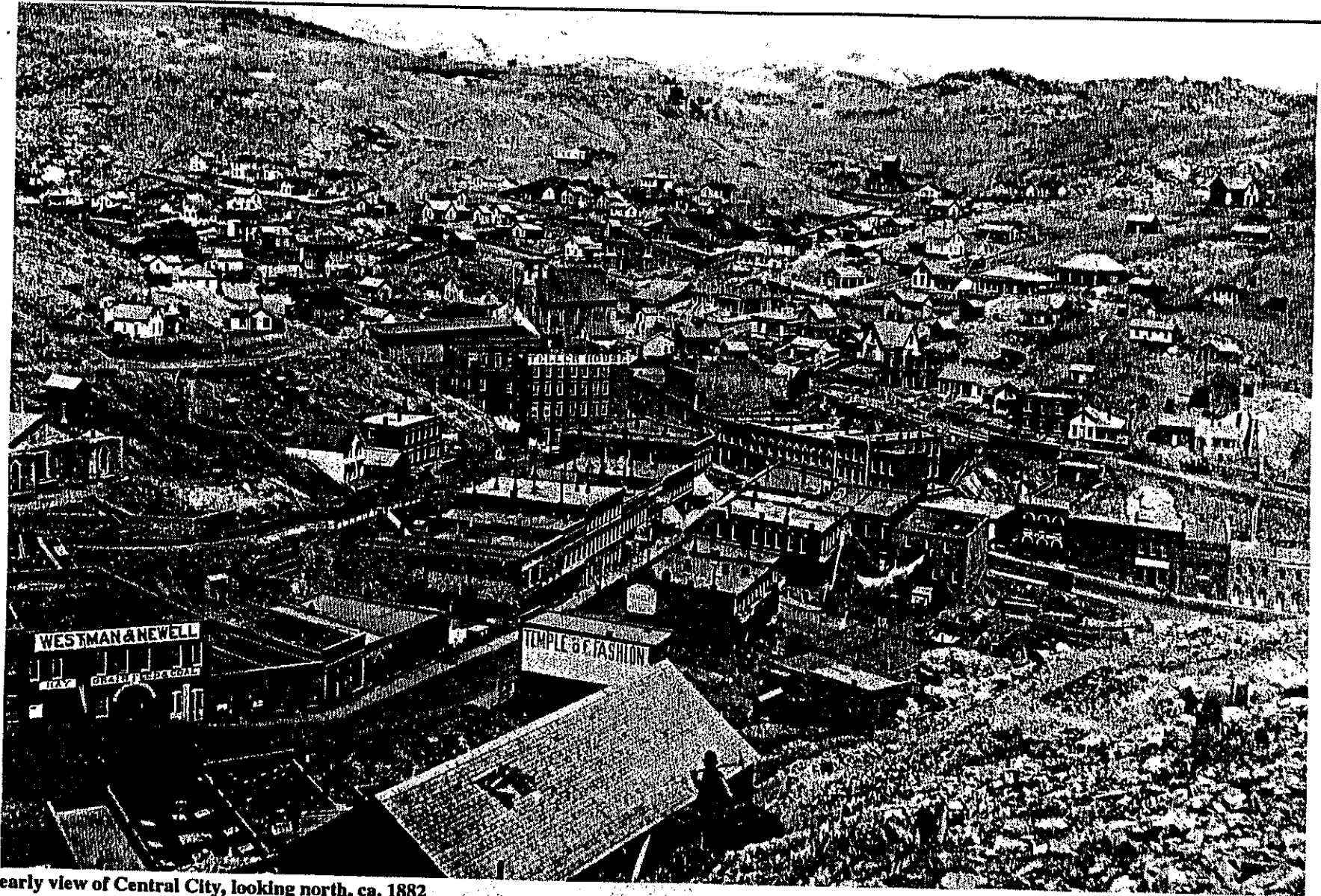
The boundary of the National Historic Landmark district includes portions of Gilpin County as well as Central City and Black Hawk.



**Design Character Neighborhoods of Central City**

The locally-designated historic district includes all of the National Historic Landmark land within the limits of Central City. This is in turn divided into a series of "Design Character Neighborhoods" for which special design guidelines apply.

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An early view of Central City, looking north, ca. 1882  
Storefronts align along Main Street (running diagonally upward from the lower left corner) in this early photo of the core of Central City. The High Street and Eureka/  
Prosser neighborhoods are in the background. (Photo: City of Central)