

Final Report

Proposed Broadway Avenue Local Historic District

By a resolution dated January 26, 2005, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Broadway Avenue Local Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed Broadway Avenue Local Historic District is composed of fifteen buildings (fourteen contributing, one non-contributing) located on parts of two noncontiguous blocks in downtown Detroit between Grand Circus Park (Witherell) and Gratiot Avenue. These commercial buildings range in date of construction from c. 1896-97 to 1926 and in height from two to fourteen stories. The northernmost noncontiguous portion in the 1500 block of Broadway is located in the National-Register-listed Grand Circus Park Historic District; and the southern noncontiguous portion in the 1300 block, is identical to the Broadway Avenue Historic District (NR 2004).

Boundaries: The boundaries of the proposed Broadway Avenue Local Historic District are outlined in heavy black on the attached map, and are as follows:

Southern noncontiguous portion: Beginning at a point, that point being the intersection of the centerline of East Grand River Avenue with the centerline of the alley parallel to and between Broadway Avenue and Center Street; thence southeast along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the northwest line of Lot 5, Plat of Section 9, Governor & Judges Plan, (L34 P552 Deeds, WCR), extended northeast; thence southwest along said northwest line of Lot 5 to its intersection with a line drawn parallel to and 39.15 feet southwest of the northeast line of said Lot 5; thence southeast along said line to its intersection with a line drawn parallel to and nine feet southeast of the northwest line of said Lot 5; thence southwest along said line to its intersection with the centerline of Broadway Avenue; thence southeast along the centerline of Broadway Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Gratiot Avenue; thence southwest along the centerline of Gratiot Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of the alley parallel to and between Broadway Avenue and Library Street; thence northwest along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the northwest line of Lot 6, Plat of Section 7, Governor & Judges Plan (L34 P544 Deeds), extended southwest and northeast; thence northeast along said line of Lot 6 as extended to its intersection with the centerline of Broadway Avenue; thence northwest along the centerline of Broadway to its intersection with the centerline of East Grand River Avenue; thence northeast along the centerline of East Grand River Avenue to the point of beginning.

Northern noncontiguous portion: Beginning at a point, that point being the intersection of Broadway Avenue with a line drawn parallel to and thirty (30) feet southeast of the northwest line of Lot 16, Plat of Sec. 7 - Governor & Judges Plan (L34 P544 Deeds); thence southwest along said line its intersection with the centerline of the alley lying adjacent to the rear of Lots 16 to 18, Plat of Sec. 7 - Governor & Judges Plan (L34 P544 Deeds); thence northwest along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the northwest line, extended southwest and northeast, of Lot 18, Plat of Sec. 7 - Governor & Judges Plan (L34 P544 Deeds); thence northeast along said northwest line of Lot 18 as extended to its intersection with the centerline of Broadway Avenue; and thence southeast along the centerline of Broadway Avenue to the point of beginning.

Historical Significance:

With its commercial buildings all constructed between the 1890s and the late 1920s, the Broadway Avenue Local Historic District typifies the evolution of formerly residential areas along the one-time downtown fringes into integral parts of Detroit's central business district and the rapid redevelopment with more intensive land uses that took place as the city's population exploded in the early twentieth century with the rise of the auto industry. Broadway Avenue served as the center of the women's trade in Detroit for a time in the first decades of the twentieth century, and several buildings within the district survive of those that once housed important shops that catered to that trade. Several of the district's buildings reflect Detroit's German and Jewish history, and the Breitmeyer (Tobin) Building, which is individually locally designated as an historic district, is important for its role as one of the first downtown buildings to rent office space to African American tenants. The Broadway Avenue district's building stock dates from c. 1896-97 to 1925-26 and includes commercial buildings that are both unique today within Detroit's central business district and representative of broader architectural trends within the downtown. The district, like the city's downtown as a whole, is also notable for its distinguished display of architectural terra cotta, used in a majority of the buildings. The block between East Grand River and John R, although once occupied by similar commercial and theater architecture as the blocks north and south, is now the site of a new construction project on the west and a parking garage with first floor commercial on the east.

Detroit's population grew more than seven-fold between 1890 and 1930, from 205,876 to 1,563,662. Michigan was in 1890 a leader in iron, copper, and lumber production, and convenient transportation on the Great Lakes and the network of railroads connecting Detroit with raw material sources and markets in all directions made the city a prime location for industry. Detroit's economy was based on manufacturing, and in 1890 the leading industries included railroad freight cars and car wheels, steam engines, machinery, stoves, medicines and pharmaceuticals, and tobacco products. In the early twentieth century the automobile industry, including trucks and the full range of auto components, quickly came to dominate the city's economy. The city's burgeoning population growth created vast areas of new low-rise housing around the city's fringes and caused more intensive land development in the older parts of the city as commercial buildings and apartment houses replaced older houses.

Detroit's downtown expanded dramatically during the same years. In the 1880s the downtown was still a relatively small area that focused on Jefferson, Fort, and other streets near the southern (Detroit

River) end of Woodward Avenue and on Woodward Avenue running northward toward Grand Circus Park and adjacent sections of major streets such as Michigan, Grand River, and Gratiot avenues. By the 1920s the downtown occupied substantially the same area as today's downtown whose boundaries can generally be described as the Detroit River on the south, the Lodge Freeway (Michigan Route 10) on the west, I-75 on the north, and I-375). Woodward Avenue remains today, as it has been since the 1840s and 50s, if not before, Detroit's "Main Street."

Originally named Miami Avenue, Broadway Avenue is one of the streets laid out in accordance with the 1805-06 "Governor and Judge' Plan" for Detroit adopted in the wake of the June 11, 1805 fire that destroyed most of the previously existing village (Farmer, pp. 26-30). At first isolated from the growing community located closer to the Detroit River, Miami Avenue was becoming more thickly settled by the mid-nineteenth century. The 1853 Henry Hart map shows the area solidly built up with detached buildings, presumably mostly or entirely houses (Farmer, p. 375). Photographs of Broadway in the 1890-1910 period reveal remnants of the street's late nineteenth-century residential character that included buildings running the gamut from simple clapboarded gable-roof houses to the mansard-roof townhouses on the sites of 1313-19 and 1326 Broadway, to the double bay Philips homestead at 1511 Broadway.

The avenue was located near the southwest edge of Detroit's east-side German neighborhood. The city's largest ethnic community, the German neighborhood extended northeast from the downtown with its center along Gratiot Avenue. Today this area retains many of Detroit's most important German-heritage landmarks. These include numerous churches - among them St. Joseph Catholic Church (1870-73; Francis G. Himpler, architect), St. John's Evangelical Church, now St. John's-St. Luke's United Church of Christ (1873-74; Julius Hess, architect), St. Mary's Catholic Church, Greektown (1884-85; Peter Dederichs, architect), St. Anthony Catholic Church (1901-02; Donaldson & Meier, architects), and Trinity Lutheran Church (1930-31; W. E. N. Hunter, architect) - and commercial buildings - such as the Detroit Brewing Company and Ekhardt & Becker Brewing Company buildings and the Roth, J. Hirt, Jr., J. P. Schmitt, and Weyfarth Hall buildings that stand in a row in Eastern Market. They also include the Harmonie Club (1894-95; Richard E. Raseman, architect), located at the corner of East Grand River Avenue and Center Street, only a block east of Broadway Avenue. Much of Broadway Avenue's early commercial development was related to the nearby German community.

Broadway Avenue's evolution from a residential to a commercial street began in the later nineteenth century and proceeded in earnest in the 1890s as houses were renovated to serve as shops or replaced by small-scale commercial buildings. A mark of the rapidly evolving neighborhood character was the conversion of the public school building erected in 1889 on the lot north of 1342-46 Broadway to the Board of Education Building only seven years later (it was demolished in 1964 for a parking lot).

The assertively German Renaissance Abend Post Building, the home of August Marxhausen's German daily newspaper, built c. 1890 at the southeast corner of East Grand River, where the Merchants Building now stands, was the first large commercial building constructed along Broadway. It displayed a standing figure, presumably of Gutenberg, in a niche at the corner. Within

the Gratiot-to-Grand River block of Broadway, the Cary and Breitmeyer (Breitmeyer-Tobin) buildings, constructed in the 1905-07 period, were the next large commercial buildings. Another high, Flemish-gabled building next door to the Cary Building at 1307-9 Broadway soon followed, in 1907. It originally housed the Alt Heidelberg restaurant and buffet and the residence of its proprietor, Joseph H. Lume (the North German or Low Country Renaissance façade was removed in 1925-26 in the renovation project that gave the facade its present character).

Little evidence of the first generation of smaller commercial buildings remains today because of subsequent renovations and enlargements and demolitions. The oldest of these buildings that retains a substantial part of its historic appearance is the Reckmeyer Building at 1326 Broadway, reconstructed in its present form c. 1896-97, the next oldest the 1911 J. Breitmeyer's Sons Building at 1310-14 Broadway.

A *Detroit Free Press* article in 1906 called Miami Avenue “the Broadway of Detroit” (May 15, 1906). Miami Avenue was named after the Native American tribe; the name officially disappeared that year, replaced by Broadway to reflect Detroit’s growing theater district by associating it with that of New York City. Newspaper articles in 1906 and 1907 heralded the avenue's emerging role as the center of the women’s trade in Detroit. The March 24, 1907, *Detroit News* noted that,

Observers of the development of the business section of Detroit have watched with the keenest interest the gradual evolution of Broadway from a fashionable residence street into a fashionable and popular shopping district for the women of the city.

This broad avenue, 120 feet wide, which lies between Gratiot Avenue and Grand Circus Park, is so conveniently situated aside from yet near to the main arteries of traffic in the city that almost every available building on the avenue is occupied by shops catering to the trade of women. Florists, corsetieres, women's dress goods shops, modistes, notion shops, hair dressers, and other[s] who cater to [the] women's trade have pre-empted the avenue for themselves, and the women of the city have shown their appreciation of this move by making the avenue the headquarters for their shopping in these lines ("Broadway's Busy Marts," 1907).

A number of buildings on Broadway between Gratiot and Grand Circus Park housed “women’s” businesses - some of them German-American-owned - in the 1890s and early 1900s. The John Breitmeyer's Sons florist shop, which occupied the site at the northeast corner of Broadway and Gratiot now occupied by the Breitmeyer-Tobin Building, may have been the first, having opened shop at this location in 1883 in a two-story wooden building with attached greenhouse along the Gratiot frontage. The business was established in 1854 by John Breitmeyer, whose role as a pioneer florist in Michigan is commemorated by a bronze tablet in Agriculture Hall at Michigan State University. Philip Breitmeyer (1864-1947), John's son, served as Detroit's commissioner of parks and boulevards in 1907-08 and as mayor of Detroit in 1909-10. He expanded the business into what *The Detrouiter* called “one of the largest retail florist establishments in the United States” (May 16, 1927) and received national recognition within the field as president of the Society of American Florists, Florists' Telegraph Delivery, and other bodies (*Detrouiter*, May 7, 1928).

In 1906 the Breitmeyer florist shop moved into Philip Breitmeyer's new Breitmeyer (Breitmeyer-Tobin) Building, which occupied the site of the former shop and greenhouse. The building, built in 1905-06, housed rental office space as well as the family shop. Five years later J. Breitmeyer's Sons moved next door to a new building at 1310-14 Broadway that replaced an old Italianate house. The new building was designed to look like a florist shop, with a sunny stuccoed front and window and rooftop boxes for plantings. The florist shop remained in business there until 1927.

Philip Breitmeyer was also responsible for the construction in 1904 of the Michigan Cut Flower Exchange Building at 1332-36 Broadway. The exchange, which Breitmeyer served as president and director, occupied the building until 1913 or 14, when it moved to a new building a block away on Randolph. The building also housed a variety of small businesses, including tailor and millinery shops, an apron company, lighting store, piano company, and photography studio, at the same time.

Another early women's trade-related business on Broadway Avenue was that of A. W. Reckmeyer, manufacturing furrier. Reckmeyer, a partner in Rasch & Reckmeyer from 1887 to 1891, moved to a house at 1326 Broadway in 1893 and stayed at that location until 1903; by that time the structure on the site was a three-story commercial building. After Reckmeyer, Gustave Zanger, another furrier, occupied the building from 1904 to 1913.

The MacDiarmid Candy Company also found a long-term home on Broadway. The company was founded by 1906 by Mrs. Hester MacDiarmid, who moved to Detroit from Carlisle, Ontario, in 1905. The company's first store was located in a former house that stood on the site soon to be occupied by the John Breitmeyer's Sons Building at 1310-14 Broadway. MacDiarmid Candy moved into a one-story building at 1322 Broadway in 1908 and transformed it into the present three-story building with its gleaming white terra-cotta façade and 'M' monogram four years later. A company advertisement described the spot as the "Chocolate Homestead" and urged potential patrons to "Afford a Freedom from the Ordinary and an Acquaintance with the Best" (1914 city directory). MacDiarmid, which operated a chain of nine stores and served Cleveland as well as Detroit as of 1926, occupied this location until 1927. Apparently by 1931 the company was defunct.

The growth of commerce probably drove out the last residential uses along the Gratiot-to-Grand River block of Broadway during the 1910s, and the last residence standing on the block between John R. and Witherell was the Phillips homestead at 1511 Broadway (Wurlitzer Building site), demolished in the early 1920s. In addition to the J. Breitmeyer's Sons Building at 1310-14 Broadway and the MacDiarmid building at 1322 Broadway, the Lafer Brothers Building at 1323-25 Broadway and the building at 1313-19 Broadway were constructed during those years. At the same time the street's earlier commercial focus on shops catering to the women's trade began to break down as a broader range of shops, offices, and other commercial enterprises, including banks, typical of an urban downtown as a whole moved in. Heralded by the earlier construction of the Abend Post, Breitmeyer, and Cary buildings, this commercial evolution gained momentum in the 1910s. Examples of the new type of development included the massive Broadway Market, a building of Neoclassical inspiration housing market stalls with shops and office space upstairs, that was built at the southwest corner of Grand River in about 1911, and the Broadway Strand Theater, another substantial structure, constructed next door about five years later. Both are gone and their sites, now

a large surface parking lot, stand just outside the district boundary.

The Broadway Market and Broadway Strand buildings epitomized the new development along Broadway Avenue in both the broad range of commercial uses they housed and the more intensive land use represented by the growing bulk of the buildings themselves over the small one and two-story houses and shops they replaced. In the 1910s and 20s, commercial buildings constructed only a few years before were expanded or replaced with larger structures. The MacDiarmid Candy Company Building at 1322 Broadway exemplifies the expansion trend while the Abend Post Building illustrates the trend toward more intensive land uses. The block's first "large" commercial building, it was replaced by the much larger Merchants Building in 1922 when little more than thirty years old.

The block's other "German" Renaissance building, at 1307-09 Broadway, was built in 1907 for the Alt Heidelberg Restaurant. Occupied (following the advent of Prohibition in 1920) by the Continental Bank beginning in 1921, it was entirely remodeled in 1925-26, probably for another bank, the Standard Trust Company, its brick front with Flemish gable transformed into a reserved limestone facade of vaguely classical inspiration. Not only the demands of commerce but also the public's hostility to all things German in the wake of World War I may have hastened the demise of these two assertively German landmarks.

The nine-story Lafer Brothers Building at 1323-25 Broadway was built in 1916. Replacing another house, the Lafer Brothers Building housed the operations of Lafer Brothers, which billed itself in its newspaper advertising and on its building's facade as "Detroit's Largest Grocery, Wholesale & Retail." John W. Lafer moved to Detroit from Toledo about 1887 and established the business in July 1888. His brother, Frank G. Lafer, became a partner the following March. In the firm's early days the store sold butter, eggs, "fruits in season and kindred commodities" (*Detroit of To-Day*, p. 232). By the 1920s coffee was also a company specialty. Eventually Lafer Brothers abandoned the grocery business and concentrated on coffee alone. The company occupied this building until 1946.

The two tallest and latest buildings in the district, erected in 1926, are the eleven-story Broadway Exchange Building at 1342-46 Broadway, and the Wurlitzer Building at 1509 Broadway. Built as an office building with commercial space in the lower floors, the Broadway Exchange Building replaced a three-story commercial building. It housed professionals such as architects, engineers, lawyers, and doctors, as well as firms such as marketing and insurance companies and realtors. The largest tenant of the first and second-story commercial space was the American Radiator Company and its successor, American Radiator and Standard Sanitary Corporation (following a 1929 merger with the Standard Sanitary Company), which operated a showroom/store in 1927 and, beginning in 1929, branch office in the building into the 1940s. The building soon acquired the name American Radiator Building.

The Wurlitzer Building, a fourteen story tall, narrow structure, is located next to a corner vacant lot just north of John R. In 1929, the Wurlitzer Building was occupied on its first eight floors by the Wurlitzer Company, makers and sellers of musical instruments owned by Rudolph Wurlitzer of Cincinnati. Also on the seventh floor, in room 703, was the Detroit Lodge of the Theosophical

Society. On the eighth floor were the Winn School of Popular Music, Christensen Studios, and Alf Caroselli, teachers of music; Irving Berlin, Inc., music publishers; and the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company's repair department and finishing shops. The M. Whitmark Publishing Company shared the ninth floor with several music teachers and the Capitol Academy of Music. Shapiro, Bernstein & Company, music publishers, shared the tenth floor with more music teachers; music teachers also occupied the eleventh floor. The Expression School of Speech and Drama occupied room 1204-05.

Beginning in the 1910s Broadway Avenue attracted a number of Jewish-owned businesses. The first may have been the D. Levy and Sons fish market that occupied the ground floor of the white terra cotta building at 1313-19 Broadway from 1913 to at least 1919 (directories). The street was located not far from the southwest edge of the section of Detroit - generally bounded by Woodward Avenue on the west, Gratiot Avenue on the southeast, Rivard Street on the east, and East Grand Boulevard on the north - that as of 1920 contained the greatest concentration of Jews in the city (Bolkosky, p. 42). Even as the Jewish community was gradually migrating northward and northwestward away from the downtown and old Jewish neighborhood over the next few decades, the number of Jewish-owned stores along Broadway Avenue grew. "By the 1960s, 50 or more Jewish merchants lined both sides of the busy thoroughfare." (Kandel and Waxenberg, p. 2). These businesses, primarily clothing, jewelry, and electrical appliance stores and delicatessens, served a general downtown market.

Broadway Avenue's flowering as a center of Jewish-owned businesses took place in the 1950s and early 60s. In the wake of Detroit's decline following the 1967 riots, Broadway Avenue as a street of Jewish-owned businesses also went into decline as shops closed or moved away. However, several long-time Jewish businesses remain to represent this important era in the avenue's history. One of these, Simmons & Clark, jewelers, stands in northern portion of this proposed district; another, J. L. Stone, men's fashions, is just south of this proposed district.

One long-time Jewish-owned business within the proposed district is the Detroit institution known as Henry the Hatter, which has occupied the storefront at 1307 Broadway since March 1953. Henry W. Komrofsky founded the store in 1893, and Sy Wasserman purchased it following Komrofsky's death in 1941. "Wasserman's love of fedoras, passed down to his son Paul, saw them through the ups and downs of retailing in Detroit. Throughout the years, the store remained a popular shopping spot with countless Detroiters, including Mayor Coleman A. Young and his aides, who often swooped into the store to pick up a hat or two, their large limousines idling outside" (Kandel and Waxenberg, p. 3).

The previously designated Detroit historic district at the southeast corner of Broadway and Gratiot is the Breitmeyer or Breitmeyer-Tobin Building, which possesses significance in terms of African American history in Detroit as one of the first downtown buildings to rent office space to African American tenants, beginning about 1936. Benjamin Tobin, who became owner in 1944, continued and expanded this policy. The 1945 (sixth) edition of the *Official Business & Professional Guide of Detroit*, published for the African American community, carried a full-page advertisement for the building, then known as the Tobin Building, containing the line, "Best Professional Address." As a result, many of Detroit's prominent African American professionals were associated with the building, among them attorneys Hobart Taylor, Jr., Charles A. Roxborough, Lloyd Loomis (and the Loomis, Jones, Piper and Colden firm), Charles Jones, Harold E. Bledsoe, and Wade McCree. This

group includes the first African American Recorder's Court judge, Wayne County Circuit Court judge, assistant Wayne County prosecutor, and attorney on the state attorney general's staff. Hobart Taylor, Jr., served as associate general council to President Lyndon Johnson, and Judge McCree as a U. S. District Court judge, member of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, and Solicitor General of the United States.

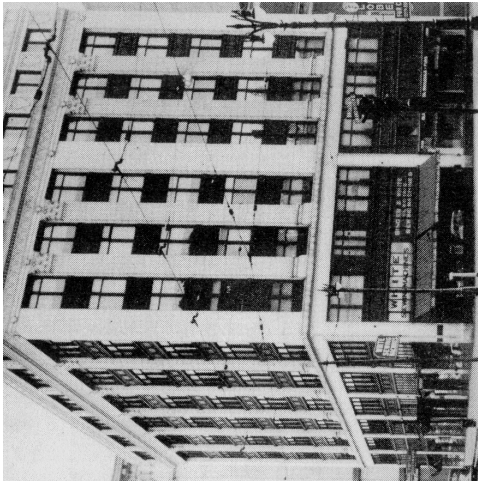
Architecture

The Broadway Avenue local district contains buildings that are both unique and representative within the context of Detroit's central business district. The district's buildings represent a relatively short time period, beginning in 1896-97, when, it appears, the small, narrow-fronted Reckmeyer Building was built or renovated with its present facade, to 1926, when the fourteen-story Wurlitzer Building, the district's tallest, was constructed. This period coincides closely with the early twentieth-century building boom period in downtown Detroit that saw the construction of most of the large-scale buildings along leading streets such as Woodward Avenue, Washington Boulevard, and Adams and Griswold streets that give the downtown its character today.

The prolific use of architectural terra cotta is one of the visual delights of Detroit's commercial architecture dating from the 1910s and 20s. Downtown Detroit as well as the city's neighborhood business districts contain an abundance of buildings from those years with facade trimmings or entire facades of the material, despite the lack of any company in Detroit that produced it. Terra cotta's appeal was its low material and construction cost in comparison to building with cut stone, the ease of maintenance, and the variety of visual effects in the way of colors, textures, and designs that were possible. Large-scale terra-cotta-clad commercial buildings in downtown Detroit built, like those on Broadway, prior to the ascendancy of Art Deco at the end of the 1920s, illustrate a broad range of styles, from the Classical, 1909 Ford Building by D. H. Bumham & Co. to the Sullivanesque of the 1915 T. B. Rayl Company Building by Baxter, O'Dell & Halpin to the "Gothic" of the 1919 Fyfe Building by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls and 1927 Barlum (now Cadillac) Tower by Bonnah & Chaffee to the Italian Romanesque-inspired Vinton Building of 1917 by Albert Kahn and the "hybrid Baroque-Beaux Arts-Moorish" (*AIA Detroit Guide to Detroit Architecture*, p. 98) of the 1911 National Theater facade by Albert Kahn and Ernest Wilby.

The block between the noncontiguous blocks of the proposed Broadway Avenue local historic district, that between E. Grand River and John R, although originally built of similar commercial and theater architecture, is now occupied by a new construction project for the YMCA on the west and a parking garage with first floor commercial storefronts on the east.

Seven of eleven buildings in the southern block of the district use architectural terra cotta in their exteriors, and four have facades largely clad in it; three out of five of the buildings in the north block of the district have decorative terra cotta. These buildings display a similarly broad stylistic variety, from the Commercial Style elegant simplicity of the c. 1912-15 facade on 1313-19 Broadway to the Georgian Revival styling of the 1908 Simmons & Clark jewelry store at 1535 Broadway and the



The Merchants' Building about 1941.

81912 MacDiarmid Candy Company Building's facade to the Italian Romanesque-inspired 1925-26 Broadway Exchange Building at 1342-46. Like most of the city's terra-cotta buildings, there is rarely anything "pure" about the styling in Broadway's buildings: historical styles serve as points of departure into more inventive forms appropriate in scale and character for the day's modern commercial buildings. One such building, already listed in the national register, is the 1922 Merchants Building. It uses a superficially "Classical" vocabulary, but with details such as elongated pilasters, that outline the banks of two and four windows forming much of the facades, a frieze above the "Corinthian" capitals displaying a continuous raised pattern that seems to be a take-off on anthemions, and a parapet that reads like a highly stylized triglyph and metope band. The Merchants Building is similar in scale and in the playful lightness of form of its white terra-cotta facades to the nearby 1910-11/1926 L. B. King & Co. Building - also individually listed in the National Register - that stands one block away, outside of the

Broadway Avenue district, at the corner of East Grand River Avenue and Library Street.

In addition to the Merchants Building, two other buildings within the district are already individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Breitmeyer (Breitmeyer-Tobin) Building and Cary Building. Both were the work of Detroit architect Richard E. Raseman (the Breitmeyer during an apparently brief association with architect Reynolds Fisher), one of a number of German-American architects practicing in Detroit in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Raseman (1855-1944) was born in Detroit and began the practice of architecture in 1883 or 84. A partner with Detroit architect Julius Hess from 1885 until about 1893, according to the city directories (Hess died in 1899), he "was primarily an industrial specialist who is remembered for his many now demolished Detroit breweries and industrial buildings" (Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board, Madison-Harmonie Historic District report, p. 3). Raseman designed the c. 1890 Abend Post, 1894-95 Harmonie Club, 1908 Hinz, and 1911 Hemmeter Building - the latter three in the Madison-Harmonie district - and Eastern Market's 1898 Shed No. 2 in Detroit. Like other Detroit German-American architects such as Peter Dederichs, Raseman presumably did much work for German-American clients both in Detroit and elsewhere in the region - for example, Ann Arbor's 1894-96 Bethlehem Lutheran Church (Story of Bethlehem Church, pp. 33-34). Raseman's 1905-06 Breitmeyer Building stands out among downtown Detroit's early tall buildings as the downtown's only Beaux-Arts-classical building. While small compared with much taller buildings built before or only a few years later -including the now much altered 1895 thirteen-story Chamber of Commerce Building by Detroit architects Spier & Rohns and the 1909 eighteen-story Ford Building and 1910 twenty-three-story Dime Building, both by D. H. Bumham & Co. - the eight-story building towered above its low-rise surroundings east of Woodward when it was built.

The 1916 Lafer Brothers and 1925-26 Broadway Exchange buildings are representative examples

of middle-height Detroit commercial/office buildings of the 1910s and 20s that are also seen in the Lower Woodward district and elsewhere in the downtown. Both are the work of long-time Detroit architects - the Lafer by Joseph E. Mills and Broadway Exchange by George D. Mason & Co. Joseph E. Mills' name first appears in the 1877 Detroit directory with his profession listed as draftsman. In 1879 and subsequent directories through the 1885 edition, he is listed as a draftsman with architect Elijah E. Myers, best known for his many county courthouses in Illinois and other Midwestern states and for the state capitols of Michigan, Colorado, and Texas. The directories from 1886 through 1912 list Mills as an architect in practice on his own. The 1914 through 1919 directories list the architecture firm of Joseph E. Mills & Son, with Byron E. Mills.

George D. Mason, whose firm designed the Broadway Exchange Building, is better known. Mason (1856-1948) came to Detroit with his parents in 1870. After completing high school in 1873, Mason worked with Detroit architect Henry T. Brush until 1878 and then as a partner with Zachariah Rice in Mason & Rice, architects, from 1878 to 1898. Mason maintained his own practice from 1898 until 1910, except for a period in 1902-03 when he had Albert Kahn as his partner. He then formed George D. Mason Architects with A. C. McDonald as associate, in 1920 he established George D. Mason & Company, Architects, with McDonald and H. G. Wenzell. Mason's practice produced such notable examples of Detroit and Michigan architecture as Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel (1887), Detroit's First Presbyterian Church (1889) and Trinity Episcopal Church (1892), Pontchartrain Hotel (1907-16), Detroit Masonic Temple (1922-26), and Century Club and Gem (Little) Theater (1902 and 1927) over a career that lasted more than sixty years. The firm designed a broad range of building types. The Broadway Exchange Building takes something of a hint in its broadly Italian Romanesque-inspired styling and low-gabled, tall-and-narrow facade from Kahn's earlier Vinton Building (1916-17), but it also falls into the broader regional and national fad for Italian Romanesque for bank and office building design in the later 1920s that gave rise to Italian Romanesque-inspired bank and office tower buildings in Lansing, Grand Rapids, Battle Creek, and other Michigan cities and elsewhere.

Another Detroit architectural firm represented in the Broadway Avenue's building stock is that of Burrowes & Wells, which designed the 1911 stucco-clad florist shop building at 1310-14 Broadway Avenue for John Breitmeyer's Sons. Marcus R. Burrowes (1874-1953), born in western New York state, came to Detroit shortly after the turn of the century after working in Ontario for about fifteen years. After several-year stints with Detroit architects Albert Kahn and Stratton & Baldwin, he with Dalton R. Wells formed the firm of Burrowes & Wells in 1909. Burrowes was in practice by himself by 1914, but formed a new partnership with Frank Eurich in 1920 (Fox, pp. 1-2). Burrowes and his partners were known primarily for their large houses, libraries, and civic and institutional buildings in Detroit and its suburbs.

Today the old commercial buildings in the Gratiot-to-Grand River segment of Broadway Avenue, like those in much of Detroit's downtown, stand largely vacant, the result of several decades of population loss and disinvestment in the city. The ½ block on the west side of Broadway north of John R has fared a bit better, with new and existing businesses joining the growing wave of re-investment in the city's old downtown buildings, especially in the historic districts, where the federal Investment Tax Credits have proved a critical part of the financing. Nomination of this

district is intended to further encourage and facilitate rehabilitation of the street's worthy historic buildings.

Architectural Description:

The Broadway Avenue Local Historic District is comprised of fifteen commercial buildings located in two noncontiguous blocks of Broadway Avenue between Gratiot Avenue on the southeast and Grand Circus Park (Witherell) on the northwest. The southern block of the district includes six buildings and a parking lot on the east side of the avenue and four buildings on the west side at the southeast end of the block. The northern block contains five contiguous buildings on the west side of the avenue; across the street is the Capitol Theater (1921-22), now refurbished as the Detroit Opera House, is included in the Grand Circus Park Local Historic District. The buildings included in the proposed Broadway Avenue Local Historic District range in date of construction from c. 1896 to 1926 and in height from two to fourteen stories.

Broadway Avenue is a three block long street in the northern portion of Detroit's central business district. Located two blocks east of Woodward Avenue, it runs southeast from the southeast edge of Grand Circus Park to intersect Gratiot Avenue and Randolph Street at Pingree Square, a public space created by the Woodward Plan but no longer extant. At the Broadway Avenue district's opposite (southeast) end, Broadway intersects Gratiot Avenue at a right angle and continues southeast another 100-150 feet to the point where it merges into the southward-running Randolph Street. The intersection of Broadway, Gratiot, and Randolph was known as Pingree Square, but concrete traffic islands and the raised concrete viaduct of the People Mover mass transit system that cuts diagonally across the intersection have destroyed the square as an open space.

The Broadway Avenue Historic District is all but surrounded by existing National Register and locally designated districts within the city's broader central business district. The national register-listed Randolph Street Commercial Buildings Historic District, comprising a row of Late Victorian commercial buildings, stands just south of the district, along Randolph's east side, its red brick buildings terminating the view, southeast on Broadway Avenue over the top of the People Mover structure. Along its northeast edge the Broadway Avenue district immediately adjoins the city's Madison-Harmonie Historic District, which includes the Harmonie Club, individually listed in the National Register, along with other mostly early twentieth-century buildings. One block to the Broadway district's northwest is the Grand Circus Park area, which is both listed in the national register and designated as a city historic district (the two with somewhat different boundaries). At the east corner of the East Grand River/Library Street intersection, one block west of the Broadway district, is the L. B. King & Co. Building, also listed in the national register; two buildings to the southeast, at 1250-54 Library, the National Register-listed Remick Building; and, across the street from the Remick, at the Library/Gratiot intersection, the downtown Detroit Public Library (now known as the Rose and Robert Skillman Branch), eligible for listing in the National Register. A block further west stands the Lower Woodward Historic District, much of which is currently undergoing rehabilitation as a single project. Immediately beyond (west) is the Capital Park national register district, and then the Washington Boulevard national register district - both to the southwest of the Grand Circus Park district. These districts, along with the national register-listed Park Avenue

Historic District and State and Fox Theater buildings north of Grand Circus Park and west of Woodward Avenue, together comprise a large part of the north end of downtown Detroit.

The Broadway Avenue right-of-way is 100 feet in width (ten feet of the original 120' right-of-way vacated on either side of the street), wide enough for four traffic lanes plus a parking lane on each side. Despite its width, the street carries a relatively low traffic volume. The People Mover's structural columns occupy the center of the street at its northern end. Ample sidewalks front the buildings on either side, and the buildings stand directly on the sidewalk line.



The district contains the following buildings:

South Block, even-numbered (east) side:

1308 Broadway, Breitmeyer-Tobin Building
Raseman & Fisher, architects; 1905-06

Excluded from proposed Broadway Avenue Local Historic District because it was previously designated historic as an individual building by the City of Detroit.

1310-14 Broadway, John Breitmeyer's Sons Building

Burrowes & Wells, architects, 1911 (Detroit building permit # 1730, May 17, 1911)

Built to house John Breitmeyer & Sons, florists, this 2-story brick commercial/office building has a simply detailed stuccoed façade that originally displayed flower boxes beneath the 2nd story windows and along the roof line and potted plants atop the roof line piers. The building's design and the copious plantings no doubt intended to provide a suggestion of Italian villas and gardens as well as advertising the shop's business. While the 1st floor storefront has been entirely redone in 1929 (Alt. permit #24345-A, 5/15/1929), the 2nd story with its paired transom windows in the northern 3 bays and simple double-hung sash window in the narrow southern one remains partially intact.

1322 Broadway, MacDiarmid Candy Company Building

1912 renovation (Detroit alteration permit #2834-A, Aug. 5, 1912).

This flat roofed, three bay, three-story commercial building sports an elegant symmetrical Neo-Georgian façade in white terra cotta that displays a broken pediment center entrance at street level, applied Ionic columns in the 2nd and 3rd stories that subdivide the façade into three bays, an entablature with dentils and egg-and-dart molding below the cornice, and a roof line classical balustrade. Swag panels separate the 2nd and 3rd floor windows. An urn-crowned pedestal in the center of the entrance pediment displays a large M, (presumably for MacDiarmid). The building appears to reflect a 1912 expansion into a three-story building and remodeling with the current terra-cotta façade of a one-story building that MacDiarmid was occupying by 1908.

1326 Broadway, Reckmeyer Building

Architect Unknown, Date Unknown

Built as a manufactory for the furrier, A.W. Reckmeyer, who occupied the house previously on the site, this narrow, three-story brick building features a bracketed cornice with a set of paired brackets at each end above raised brick quoins that outline the outer edges of the facade. An alteration permit for a new storefront was issued in 1925 (Permit #16067-A, 3/30/1925). Some researchers have theorized that the present building is an alteration of the previous house, but this seems very unlikely on structural grounds, including an apparent difference in first floor levels. Old photographs depict a triple window in each story, but the openings were boarded up in 1969.

1332-36 Broadway, Michigan Cut Flower Exchange Building

Louis Kamper, architect; 1904 (Detroit building permit #292, April 9, 1904); Alteration permits 1715-A, May 2, 1923 and #14471-A (Nov. 24, 1924).

Non-contributing due to lack of architectural integrity.

A permit for a two story building was taken out in 1904 by architect Louis Kamper, but old photographs show a symmetrical three-story, three-bay commercial building with broad outer bays and a narrow center bay, the outer bays containing box bay windows in the 2nd and 3rd stories. By 1925 the bay windows were replaced with large multi-light windows placed flush with the façade, presumably part of the work for which an alteration permit was issued in 1923. It appears that the façade was renovated or rebuilt in 1923 and was subsequently covered by the present metal skin. How much of the earlier facade/facades remaining in place underneath the metal is unclear.

1342-46 Broadway, Broadway Exchange Building; a.k.a. American Radiator Building

George D. Mason & Company, architects; Everett Winters Company, general builders; 1925-26 (Detroit building permit #68921, July 10, 1925).

Eleven stories in height, the Broadway Exchange Building has a concrete and steel frame clad in buff terra cotta, with variegated mauve-hued marble in the mezzanine level on the street façade and in concrete and beige brick on the other façades. The tall and narrow Italian Romanesque -inspired façade displays three vertical banks of paired windows that, flanked by elongated “columns,” rise from the 4th through the 11th floor; at the top of each bank is a pair of round-headed windows below a centered rondel. The whole capped by an arch springing from the capitals beneath. Crowning the façade is a low gable. The façade, virtually unaltered above the modernized street level, displays a wealth of decoration in terra cotta.

206 E. Grand River, Merchants Building

Otto Misch Company, builder; 1922

The Merchants Building, individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 25, 1983, is a reinforced concrete frame eight-story commercial building with white terra-cotta clad façades fronting on Broadway and Grand River Avenues that display modernized classical styling. Non-street facing façades display the exposed concrete frame and plain brick. The ground dimensions are 110 feet along Grand River and sixty-six feet along Broadway. Above a two-story base, five-story high multi-window banks flanked by “fluted” colossal pilasters with Corinthian

capitals (undecorated piers mark the corners and center of the Broadway façade) rise to a decorative entablature that, in turn, supports an attic story.

South Block, odd-numbered (west) side:

1301 Broadway/229 Gratiot, Cary Building

Richard E. Raseman, architect; 1906.

Individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 25, 1983, The Cary Building is a buff brick and like-colored terra-cotta trimmed, five-story commercial/office building with a reinforced concrete frame. Extending 112 feet along Gratiot Avenue and thirty-four feet along Broadway, the building displays broad, round, segmental-arched and square-headed window openings in its 2nd through 4th story portion and paired square-headed windows in the top floor. In the 4th floor a small ionic column separates the windows in each window pair in the Broadway façade and each end window pair on the Gratiot façade. The windows in the 2nd through 4th floor center bays on the Gratiot side are set into segmental-arched head recesses, while the 3rd story windows on the Broadway façade and ends of the Gratiot façade are arched. The recesses and arched windows all display boldly projecting keystone devices. A projecting main cornice of simple design has been removed.



The Cary Building

1307-09 Broadway, Standard Trust Company Building

1907 (Detroit building permit #1987, July 13, 1907); renovated 1912-13, 1925 (alteration permits #1254-A, Oct. 4, 1912; #12947-A, Sept. 16, 1924; #22576-A, Dec. 8, 1925).

The Standard Trust Company Building is a limestone-clad, four-story commercial style commercial building. The facade above the street level is divided into two bays of tripartite windows. A metal cornice with shallow brackets is topped by a solid balustrade with end and central piers and smaller piers aligned with the window dividers below. The top of a side-gabled tiled roof is visible above the parapet. The present storefronts may dated from the mid-1950s when Henry the Hatter moved into the southerly storefront. The building permits suggest that this building's first two stories were constructed in 1907 and the upper two stories added in 1912-13 but a photograph of the street taken before the construction of the buildings at 1310-14 and 1322 Broadway, built 1911 and 1912, respectively) shows the building with its full four story facade. The original facade was of North German or Low Country Renaissance design and crowned above the 3rd story with a high Flemish gable. It was replaced with the current facade in 1925-26.

1313-19 Broadway

Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, architect, 1912 (Detroit building permit #69, Jan. 15, 1912)

Another white terra cotta commercial style building, this four-story edifice began its life as a two-story building in 1912 and grew to four stories in 1915 (alteration permit 2002-A, March 5, 1915), which would not have been that unusual for buildings of its period (see Garfield Building NR

nomination). The architect did a good job unifying the whole façade stylistically, matching the top to the bottom. The storefronts were remodeled in 1927 (Alt. permit #13562-A, 10/1/1927). The façade above the storefronts of the first story consists primarily of a broad horizontal six-unit window with transoms above. A low gabled parapet with central raised pedestal crowns the facade.

1323-25 Broadway, Lafer Brothers Building

Joseph E. Mills, architect, 1916 (Detroit building permit #11714, Nov. 26, 1915).

The exterior of the nine-story reinforced concrete framed Lafer Brothers Building is pleasantly decorative. Its red brick façade is trimmed in cream-colored terra cotta with deep blue accents. Its two lowest stories, faced in terra cotta around the sides and top and beneath the window band that fills most of the 2nd story, serve as the base for the seven-story upper section with its central segmentally arched recess filled with tripartite double transomed windows. The 9th floor window rises into the head of the arch, and is flanked by narrow windowed brick bays. A low gable with raised central pedestal and a flat section of parapet at each end once topped off the facade, but it has been replaced with a plain flat-topped brick parapet. Below, the façade remains virtually unaltered except for the storefronts, which were remodeled in 1925 (Alt. permit 16067-A, 3/30/1925). The buildings fully exposed northwest side wall now displays a deteriorating mural depicting a straight-on perspective image of a boulevarded avenue, painted c. 1980.

North Block, odd numbers (west side) only

1509-11 Broadway, Wurlitzer Building

Robert Finn, Architect, 1926 (Detroit building permit #11159, 6/22/1926)

The Wurlitzer Building is the latest and tallest building on this block of Broadway. It replaced the three-story red brick house of Mrs. Sara E. Phillips, who lived there until her death in 1921 at the age of eighty-one. It was built at an estimated cost of \$217,000 in 1926.

The first story of the fourteen-story Wurlitzer Building is composed of a curving storefront windows flanking the double-door, recessed entrance. Overhanging the ground floor is a projecting marquis-like structure bearing the name, “Wurlitzer Building,” likely put on when the first floor was remodeled. Above the first floor, at mezzanine level, is a tall, classical temple front with fluted columns dividing the façade into five bays, each containing a large double-hung sash window. Elaborately decorated spandrels with cartouches and blue colored terra cotta, and a decorative Adamesque entablature support the ten more austere stories above. Rope moldings line the sides of the tall pilasters of the mezzanine level and continue up the rest of the stories. The upper story is crowned with a raised pediment over a large window.



West side of the 1500 block

1515 Broadway

Harry S. Angell, architect, 1925 (Detroit building permit #56551, 2/2/1925)

J.E. Scripps Company, real estate, was responsible for building at 1515 (1513-17) Broadway. It was built at a cost of \$112,000 under a permit issued on February 2, 1925. Among the early occupants were the Safety Washing Machine Company, Safety Oil Burner Company, the Broadway Grill, Schmansky Brothers Company, tailors, and the Kimball Piano Company.

The first floor of this very plain, two-story, brick building was modernized with metal panels, probably in 1946-47 (Alt. permit #35355, 11-1-1946), which have since been removed. Its recessed entrance is still intact. A row of five windows spans across the second story.

1521-25 Broadway, Eureka Building

1919 (Detroit building permit #11286, July 15, 1919); rear addition 1926

The building at 1521-25 Broadway served as the retail store for the Eureka Vacuum Cleaner Company; its factory was at the corner of Hamilton and Dewey. Fred Wardell was president of the company and, also in the building soon after it was built, was Wardell & Son, auctioneers.

The Eureka Building is a highly ornamented, small scale (three-story) commercial building with white terra cotta, banded decorative molding framing two stories of regularly arranged double-hung sash windows beneath a bracketed cornice. Its ground floor storefronts are recessed to provide maximum display area; they were remodeled under an alteration permit issued on March 2, 1948 (#13566) at a cost of \$10,500.

1529 Broadway, Hartz Building

Malcomson & Higginbotham, architects, 1902

J. Frederick Hartz, the namesake of this building, was Chairman of the board of the J.F. Hartz Company, suppliers of medical supplies and surgical instruments for physicians, nurses, hospitals and sick rooms. Malcomson and Higginson, architects, were issued the building permit for the construction of the building for Hartz. It was to cost an estimated \$15,000. Also located in the Hartz Building in 1907 were Silverman Bernd, cigar manufacturer; the Detroit Medical Journal Company; E.C. Moore & son Company, dental specialties; Ideal Belt Company, Illustrated medical Journal Company, and J.H. Bishop Company, clothing manufacturers.

The Hartz Building was originally built as a three-story brick building articulated as a single bay. A fourth floor was added in 1926/27 (Alt. permit 7433-A, 11/30/1926) at a cost of \$25,000. Stone quoins frame its front facade and bands of seven windows with transoms fill the single horizontal opening per floor above the store level. The first floor was remodeled but still retains its recessed entrance...

1535 Broadway, Simmons & Clark, 1908

A building permit was issued to the Vinton Company, contractors, for the construction of this two-story commercial building in 1908. McNaughton-McKay Electric Company, electrical supplies, were the first owners. Archibald McKay was president of the company. While its small, finely

detailed terra cotta, Classical Revival facade featuring an entablature of swags, festoons and wreaths and fluted pilasters with leafy capitals is perfectly intact above the first story, the building is most recognizable for its remodeled first floor. Simmons and Clark, a subsequent owner of the building, replaced the original storefronts in 1935 (Alt. permit #19949, 2-15-1935) with an exquisite structural glass with silver aluminum highlights in an art deco style. The single recessed entrance is flanked by horizontal storefront windows that curve around the corner to the doorway without interruption. Black structural glass frames the windows and spans the wide surface at mezzanine level, highlighted at the corners by a simple geometric step-like pattern and, in the center above the doorway, a highly stylized geometric motif with curves extending from its top. Above this is the name, *SIMMONS & CLARK*, in moderne typography. A centered, hanging metal and neon sign at the second story level advertises the jewelry store still there today.

Fred Foss Simmons, cofounder and chairman of Simmons & Clark jewelry stores, opened his first in downtown Detroit in 1925. He later opened outlets in Eastland and Northland malls. The stores are now run by the third generation of Simmons’.

The building to its north, the Madison Theater (1921), was demolished in 2001.

Criteria: The proposed historic district meets criteria A, B, & C as provided in the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act and in local ordinance. These criteria refer to resources:

A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;

Composition of the Historic Designation Advisory Board: The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine appointed members and three ex-officio members, all residents of Detroit. The appointed members are: Russell L. Baltimore, Melanie A. Bazil, Robert Cosgrove, De Witt Dykes, Edward Francis, Lucile Cruz Gajec, Marie M. Gardner, Calvin Jackson, Harriet Johnson. The ex-officio members, who may be represented by members of their staff are: the Director of the Historical Department, the Director of the City Planning Commission, and the Director of the Planning and Development Department.

RECOMMENDATION: The Historic Designation Advisory Board recommends that City Council adopt an ordinance of designation for the proposed historic district. A draft ordinance is attached for City Council’s consideration.

Note: This report is substantially derived from the National Register of Historic Places certification form for the Broadway Avenue Historic District, nominated in 2004, with additional information added to reflect the inclusion of Block 2, the 1500 Block of Broadway Avenue.

