

Proposed Grand Circus Park Local Historic District

Final Report

By a resolution dated November 30, 2001, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Grand Circus Park Local Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed Grand Circus Park Local Historic District consists of all the properties located on Adams, Witherell, and Park Avenues adjacent to Grand Circus Park, the major open space at the north end of downtown Detroit. Three buildings adjacent to the park, the David Whitney Building, Eaton (Broderick) Tower, and the Women's Exchange were previously designated by the City of Detroit, either individually or as contributing to another local district. All buildings are included in the Grand Circus Park Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

Boundary Description: The boundaries of the proposed historic district are shown on the attached map, and are as follows:

On the north, the centerline of the east-west alley lying north of and parallel to Adams Avenue, with extensions northward to Elizabeth Street to include the northern portions of the Stroh/Michigan Mutual Building at 28-36 West Adams and 25 West Elizabeth and the Adams Theater at 44 Adams.

On the west and south, the west lot line of the property containing the Park Avenue Building, eighty feet west of Park Avenue and parallel to it; and thence an irregular line running south and east and consisting of the interconnected boundaries of properties as follows: the western lot lines of lots 21 and 22 located in the block bounded by park, Adams, Clifford, and Bagley; the western and southern lot lines of the property occupied by the Statler/Heritage Hotel and bounded on three sides by Bagley, Park, and Washington Boulevard; and the rear lot lines of the property containing the David Whitney Building at 1553 Woodward Avenue; all said lot lines being connected by lines drawn through the public rights-of-way.

On the east and south, a line forty feet east of and parallel to Witherell Avenue running from the centerline of the alley forming the northern boundary of the proposed district to the centerline of Adams Avenue; thence an irregular line running

south and west and consisting of the interconnected boundaries of properties as follows: the eastern boundaries of lots 21 and 22 located in the block bounded by Adams, John R, Madison, and Witherell; the southeastern lot lines of the property occupied by the Capital Theater/Detroit Opera House; the southern lines of lots 21 and 22 contained in the block bounded by Witherell, Broadway, John R, and Woodward; all said lot lines being connected by lines drawn through the public rights-of-way.

History:

Significance:

The buildings in the Grand Circus Park Local District form a rim around Grand Circus Park, one of downtown Detroit's major open spaces which contains significant historic landscape features and public monuments. The result is an open-air "drawing room" for the city, defined by the open space and the structures which form a non-continuous wall at its edges. The district is significant for the design of the park and its civic functions over the years; as a collection of early twentieth century commercial buildings by noted architects including Albert Kahn, C. Howard Crane, George Post and Smith Hinchman & Grylls; for its Gothic Revival Church by Gordon W. Lloyd; and as the hub for the social, cultural and business activities that took place during the early decades of dynamic growth of the City of Detroit as the automobile-manufacturing capitol of the world.

The Park:

Grand Circus Park, consisting of 4.6 acres in two quarter circles, was created by Judge Woodward's plan for the laying out of streets and public spaces in 1805 after a great fire swept the small frontier town of Detroit. It was called "Grand Circus" after the name ancient Romans gave to circular areas where games and public spectacles were held. The Woodward Plan provided for two additional quarter circles on the north side of Adams Avenue to form a complete circle, but this was never carried out. Consequently, the park is a semi-circle bisected by Woodward Avenue. Adams Avenue became the northern boundary of Grand Circus Park and the last street laid out in the Woodward Plan before it was abandoned. Other parks and public squares were intended, according to the Woodward plan, but only Grand Circus Park, Campus Martius, Clinton Park and Capitol Park were initially set aside.

Although Grand Circus Park was identified as parkland on early maps (Hart Atlas, 1855), its east side was nothing more than a low and swampy marshland where the sound of bull frogs croaking was not uncommon, and the west side was a pond. The change from bog and goose pasture to parkland began after 1840 when H.H. LeRoy, chief engineer of the fire department, built his residence on the site of the present David Whitney Building. Through his gradual efforts and petitions to City Council to improve the park, the grounds of Grand Circus Park were filled in and raised from one to four feet. A walk, two planks wide, was reportedly laid down around 1841.

Other lots were sold at auction by the city in 1843 and more residences, including that of John Bagley, and the Church of Our Father were built. A wood market occupied the park about 1850, but because of protests was displaced by 1853. In 1853, gas lamps were

installed in the park and the City Council authorized the expenditure of \$1,500 to set out trees and build fences surrounding the park. The west side got the most attention. In 1855 water pipes were put in to ready the park for fountains, the first of which was installed in the center of the west half in 1860. In that same summer, the walks were installed. A fountain was placed in the east half of the park in 1874, but it was moved to another park two years later and replaced.

Locating various monuments was discussed early in the park's history; there was talk about putting the statue of Washington on one side of Woodward and Lafayette on the other. Although that was not carried out, the intent of two monuments facing each other on opposite sides of Woodward evokes the original placements of Pingree and Maybury many years later.

Grand Circus Park was kept closed until May, 1866 when it was opened to the public on Sundays only. Central Methodist Church opened in 1867, and its parishioners promenaded in the park after Sunday services. As late as 1873, a high board fence with gates that were padlocked kept the cattle and people from damaging the trees. In 1866, the city wanted to place the Soldiers Monument in Grand Circus park, but the public objected.

Until about 1870, the area above, or north of, the Campus Martius was used for residential purposes and below was commercial. Beginning in the 1870s, Adams Avenue gradually became the northern boundary of Detroit's commercial architecture; beyond that, mud-filled wheel ruts made travel difficult beyond the cedar block pavement of Lower Woodward Avenue. North of Grand Circus Park were the city's grand mansions, and beyond them, farmlands.

It is not known who designed the layout for the paths and if those laid out in 1860 were those that became permanent through 1956, but it is reasonable to assume that the fountain locations were determined in 1855 when water pipes were installed, and a path system was in place in 1866 when the park opened to the public. It can be said with certainty that the system of intersecting paths cutting through the park existed prior to 1885, when it is clearly shown on the Robinson Atlas. The paths were lined with wooden benches, flower beds, bushes and trees. In 1896, the Detroit Public Lighting Commission installed the first electric lights in Grand Circus Park. The light poles were of the ornamental pole (O.P.) type throughout the park, with the more decorative fluted iron pole with double globes later placed on Woodward (same type as today).

The Pingree Monument, installed in 1904, is located in the southeast corner of the west side of Grand Circus Park. The Maybury Monument, installed in 1912, was originally located in the southwest section of the east half of the park, facing the statue of Pingree. The Alger Fountain, dedicated in 1921, replaced an earlier fountain with three water nymphs in the east side of the park. The Edison Fountain, dedicated in 1929, remains in its original location on the west side of the park. The character of Grand Circus Park has changed tremendously with the growth of the City of Detroit in the last one hundred and fifty years, yet the original intentions of its early planners - that of a place of meetings for ■religious, moral, literary or political societies...• (John R. Williams) was left intact. Efforts by the city to build a library or a new city-county building in 1926 were shot down by a public who wanted the park to remain open space for thoughtful repose and exchange of ideas. During the Depression, the park served in the warm weather as an open air

dormitory, with as many as 500 sleepers nightly.

Drastic changes occurred in the mid-late 1950's when the park was completely dug up for the construction of an underground parking garage. Permanent structures relating to the parking function, such as ventilating structures and enclosed entrances, certainly changed the physical appearance of the park as modern intrusions. The redesign of the park with a few paths removed and modern paving, the relocation of the statue of Maybury, and a new landscape design, left little trace of the nineteenth century romantic landscape with the City Beautiful symmetry that had existed before. More recently in the mid-1990s, the Pingree Monument was relocated to the northwest corner of the east half of the park, moving it from its original location while restoring its important relationship to the Maybury Monument on the opposite side of Woodward Avenue.

The Buildings

Central Methodist Church, a splendid example of Gothic Revival architecture designed in 1867 by an English trained Detroit architect, Gordon W. Lloyd, on the northeast corner of Woodward at Adams, is the oldest building in the district and the only reminder of the nineteenth century neighborhood. Individually listed on the National Register, the building was shortened and the tower moved back when Woodward Avenue was widened in 1935. Continuing eastward on the east side of Woodward Avenue, Adams continues its distinctively English medieval, low scale with the Central Methodist Church Annex (1915) and the Women's Exchange Building.

The park's surroundings began to take on its modern day appearance in 1905, when the Tuller Hotel, the first of two of Detroit's major early twentieth century luxury hotels facing the park, was built. The eight story Tuller was enlarged upward to thirteen stories in 1909, becoming the first high-rise structure on the park, and outward in 1914, adding 325 rooms to the original 225 and expanding the hotel's park frontage to 140 feet, making it the largest single owned expanse on the park. In 1923 a fourteen-story addition was constructed on the north side, adding another 250 rooms, bringing the total to 800. The Tuller closed in the 1970s and was subsequently demolished, leaving a huge gap in the park rim that remains today.

Ground was broken on Park and Washington Boulevard, on the site of the former Bagley House, for the second luxury hotel on the park, the Hotel Statler, in 1913. Designed by George B. Post of New York City for Ellsworth M. Statley, owner of the Statler chain of hotels, the eighteen story hotel opened in 1914. Sold to the Hilton chain in 1958, the hotel was independently operated as the Detroit Heritage Hotel after about 1970. It has been vacant since 1975, and a major sale of its interior furnishings and fittings was held not long after it closed.

The organized labor movement impacted both the Statler and Tuller Hotels. In 1937 the Woolworth Store on Woodward Avenue was the scene of a major labor strike that received nation-wide exposure. The strike turned into an eight day occupation; management was evicted, and the doors were barricaded by the sitdowners, who were made up of approximately 250 young women and teenage girls. They worked a fifty-two-hour week, were paid twenty-eight cents an hour, and barely cleared fourteen dollars a week, about half the wage of many unskilled autoworkers. On March 6th, 1937, the workers won union recognition and a five-cent an hour raise. The Woolworth strike is

significant because it had a catalytic effect, as hotel workers in the Statler Hotel and Tuller Hotel also struck that year.

Most of the commercial buildings in the district were constructed during Detroit's boom period between 1915 and 1928. They generally contained high-end specialty retail and office space. The David Whitney Building (Daniel Burnham, architect, 1914) and the Eaton Tower (a.k.a. Broderick Tower, Louis and Paul Kamper, architects, 1926-28), located on opposite corners of Woodward and Park, replaced earlier commercial buildings on their sites. They are key buildings in the wall of buildings defining Grand Circus Park; the canyon-like effect of Lower Woodward Avenue to the south opens up to the park at that point.

The buildings on the west side of Adams Avenue form a continuous street wall with undulating building heights. As one of Detroit's destination entertainment and shopping avenues for much of the twentieth century, Adams Avenue exemplified the early decades of dynamic growth of the city.

Adams Avenue has seen several building cycles. First, as farmers claimed the land, the lots contained their homesteads of wood-framed houses, barns, chicken coops and outhouses. Then, as Detroit grew and prospered in the early 19th century, new larger frame Gothic Revival homes were built facing the street. Soon these houses on Adams were surrounded by encroaching commercial buildings. Brick and cast iron retail structures replaced the earlier two-story wood frame buildings on Adams Avenue beginning in the 1890's. Because Detroit was growing so quickly, there was a retail boom. The buildings on Adams in the 1890's were from three to four stories high, with brick and cast iron facades and neoclassical detailing, including arched windows, denticulated cornices, and terra cotta pilasters.

Detroit, as with other American urban centers, experienced a surge in growth from 1895 to 1910 in which skyscrapers replaced wood frame nineteenth century homes. By 1906, Adams Avenue was a mixture of residential and commercial structures. It was at that point that the street wall of Adams Avenue was defined and a continuous strip of architecture circled Grand Circus Park. The early 1900's marked a dramatic difference in the construction of commercial buildings on Adams. The three-story red brick buildings were demolished for new brick or white terra cotta elevator buildings.

The earliest extant building on Adams is Fine Arts Building, a six-story brick building facing Grand Circus Park designed by Louis Kamper, architect, in 1905. Built by Hugo Scherer, the Fine Arts Building accommodated the fine arts trade in Detroit, with initial tenants including the George R. Angell Company, an art gallery for display of foreign and American paintings, C.M. Hayes & Co., photographer studios, and the Gies Art School, located on the top floor.

In 1914 the Kresge organization moved to its new headquarters on Adams Avenue, having outgrown its old headquarters in the upper floors of its "dime store" on the corner of Woodward and State. When the Kresge Building at 76 W. Adams was sold in 1936, this white terra cotta faced Albert Kahn designed building became known as the Kales Building and housed mostly medical offices. William R. Kales, noted engineer and partner in Whitehead & Kales Company, a steel fabricating firm, was the new owner.

Stroh Tower, more commonly known as the Michigan Mutual Building (1950), was built as a speculative office building with several floors for high-end specialty retail in 1921. The

Fyfe Building was designed by Smith Hinchman & Grylls in 1918 for R.H. Fyfe & Company retail shoe store. When the company moved to its new building, it boasted that it was the largest shoe store in the country. Fyfe & Company advertised the building as the "shoe skyscraper," as ten stories were used entirely for the retail sale of shoes.

With the introduction of elegant theaters into the area during the period, the neighborhood evolved into an entertainment district as well. The Madison Theater (1917, demolished 2001), the Adams Theater (1917) and Grand Circus Theater (1922), all designed by the architect C. Howard Crane, are located within the district; the State and Fox Theaters are immediately to the north.

In 1917, movie theater mogul John Kunsky developed the Adams Theater with C. Howard Crane as his architect. Intended as a legitimate playhouse, it quickly switched to movies. Although its entrance and long lobby are facing the park, the theater itself is across the alley behind the Fine Arts Building, allowing for a prestigious Adams address while saving on real estate value.

The Madison, a major downtown showplace, was the first theater on what came to be called "Kunsky Circle." Built in 1917, it was an early C. Howard Crane "movie palace." Unprecedented fanfare surrounded its opening. John Kunsky was the man who first brought movies to Detroit, and C. Howard Crane was his architect. The theater was demolished in 2001; only the front of the building facing the park remains. During the 1920s, Monroe Street was replaced by Grand Circus Park as the center of Detroit's theater district. In 1922, The Capitol, with almost 3400 seats, arrived via Kunsky and Crane. It was the first of the truly grand movie palaces and vaudeville houses of the 1920s that surrounded Grand Circus Park. Today, completely restored, it houses the Michigan Opera Theater.

On the east side of Grand Circus Park, the rim of buildings along the park has been altered to include a recent addition to the Michigan Opera Theater (former Capitol Theater) and a view towards Comerica Park, the Detroit Tigers' baseball stadium. The loss of the Tuller Hotel in 1990 created a void in the west side of the rim, but the monumental Statler Hotel remains, although vacant for many years. However, Judge Woodward's original street pattern, that of spokes emanating from a wheel (a half-wheel) has been retained, enough of the building fabric exists, and the park itself maintains its original configuration and purpose - that of passive recreation and quiet repose.

Architectural Description:

2001 Park Avenue, The Park Avenue Building (1922), Architect: Albert Kahn

The Park Avenue Building was constructed as a speculative commercial office building in 1922. It was known as the General Necessities Building from November 23, 1923 to February 20, 1930. The original lease was made to Sherman Bond of Toledo, and O. H. Stimson of Mt. Clemens, both hotel owners, by the Wyman estate and Hugo Scherer. The lease was for 99 years at an estimated value of \$350,000. the General Necessities Company returned the building to its owners, the Park Boulevard Company.ⁱ The building was well occupied although the Depression severely reduced the occupancy in the 1930's.

The Detroit City Directory of 1929-30 lists the building as having an American State Bank branch and Fitzgerald & Sons Lunch & Sandwiches was another first floor retail tenant. In the

1936 City Directory, the building is listed as having 16 vacancies, with the entire 12th floor vacant. Tenants included the Detroit Council of Churches, and offices for insurance, advertising, real estate, engineers, a furrier, optometrist, tailor, physician and cosmetic studio.

In the 1941 directory, the Elmer Freed Cigar store occupied the lobby, and the building was approximately 75% occupied. The Park Avenue Building tenants also included a large number of religious-oriented associations such as the Detroit Council of Religious Education, the Detroit Guild of Church Missions and the Detroit Mission of Lepers. Other tenants included the Real Silk Hosiery Mills, a vacuum manufacturer, osteopath and a dictaphone company.

The 1956 directory lists offices as including the Detroit League for Planned Parenthood, Michigan Temperance Foundation, wholesale greeting card companies, an architecture firm, and the offices of the Detroit Skyliner Magazine, Guest magazine, Trafton Millinery School and the Carnegie Institute.ⁱⁱ

The Park Avenue Building fills the 80' x 100' lot at the northwest corner of Park Avenue and Adams Avenue. It is 12 stories tall and utilizes steel frame construction. The building is faced with brick and limestone. The Adams and Park Avenue facades are identical in composition and are symmetrically arranged. The Adams elevation is vertically divided into five bays by brick pilasters. The Park Avenue elevation is divided into six bays. The first floor of the Park Avenue Building originally contained storefront windows in each bay of the building. The windows have since been altered. An overhanging marquee of stainless steel surrounds the facades on Park Avenue and Adams.

The second story on both facades features large limestone segmental arch window surrounds. Above each arch are panels featuring two figural plaques. Between the two plaques is a fountain detail. A dentil course is above the spandrel space. The floors above the second are faced in buff brick. Floors three through eleven contain pairs of double hung windows in each bay. The transoms above the windows at the twelfth floor are completed in a round arch. A circular medallion is centered between each pair of arched windows. A denticulated cornice surrounds the flat roof. The western elevation is hidden from view by the Milner Park Apartment building. The northern elevation faces onto the alley and has one bay ornamented in the same manner as the Park Avenue facade. The remainder of the back façade is devoid of ornamentation.ⁱⁱⁱ

The building is currently vacant.

76 West Adams Avenue, Kresge Company Building (Kales), 1914, Architect: Albert Kahn

The former Kresge Company Headquarters is an eighteen-story steel frame building located on the northeast corner of Park Avenue and Adams Avenue. The building is sheathed in near-white colored brick combined with terra cotta detailing. The building has a continuous floor plate for the first three floors. From the fourth floor up there is a light well at the eastern side of the building. Floors 4-18 are U-shaped, wrapping around the light well. The piers terminate in spandrels at the 18th floor. The roofline is formed in an unusual shallow gable with a suppressed cornice.^{iv} The name ■Kresge■ was inscribed in a plaque under the cornice of the building. Today the plaque is blank and the cornice has been denuded of ornament.

There are five bays of windows on the Adams façade. The Park Avenue façade has six bays of windows. The windows are double hung in sets of two. Spandrels between the windows

contain detailed terra cotta egg and dart and circular motifs. The window bays terminate at the 18th floor in rounded arch windows. The spandrels between the windows of the 17th and 18th floors are cast iron. At the base of the 17th floor windows, historic photos show a terra cotta balustrade running across the Adams façade of the building. Today only a belt course remains to designate this area as the ■capitol■ of this tall building shaft.

The second story windows on the Park Avenue façade are grouped together and cast iron mullions separate the window into three sections. A transom is above each section. Each window is surrounded by terra cotta detailing. The second story windows on the Adams Avenue façade are arranged in a continuous strip with a thin cast iron mullion between each window.

The first floor retail storefronts have been reconstructed with brown granite piers and aluminum surrounds for plate glass. A bulkhead of brown granite continues to the ground. The original overhanging marquee awning recently fell from the building and was removed. The shadow of the demolished Shurly Building, which was to the east of the Kales Building, is imprinted on the eastern façade.

The S. S. Kresge Corporation was founded by Sebastian Spring Kresge on Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit just three blocks from the Kresge Company Headquarters on Adams. In 1914, the S. S. Kresge Company moved its administrative offices from the upper floors of the retail store building at Woodward and State (Kresge Store #1), to this new building. The S. S. Kresge Company occupied the upper nine floors of the new building and restricted the lease of the remainder of the building to doctors and dentists; with a pharmacy in the first floor retail space. What began as Detroit's first "dime store" really was a five and ten cent store - in 1898, became an international successful business. The growth of the Kresge chain was phenomenal. By 1925 there were 304 Kresge stores in the U.S. and company sales were \$106 million. In 1977, Kresge, the multi-million dollar chain store, catapulted into the multi-billion dollar mass merchandising firm called the Kmart Corporation.

The Kresge family was well known in Detroit for their charitable donations and public consciousness. The Kresge Foundation was established in 1924 and is still in existence today and supports many non-profit organizations. In 1930, the Kresge Corporation built its new headquarters at 2727 Second Avenue on Cass Park.

In 1936 William R. Kales purchased the former Kresge Company Headquarter and changed the name to the Kales Building. William R. Kales was a noted engineer and successful businessman. His firm, the Whitehead & Kales Company, was a steel fabricating firm that grew from a small shop in Detroit at the corner of Randolph and Franklin to a 22-acre plant in River Rouge with almost 1,000 employees. Kales served as a City of Detroit Lighting Commissioner, Belle Isle Bridge Commissioner, and President of the City Plan Commission. He ran a losing campaign on the Republican ticket as a Congressman for Detroit's 1st District in 1924. William Kales died in his office in the Kales Building in 1942.

The Kales building leased primarily to businesses associated with the medical field. Tenants included companies like the Wayne Optical Company, a wholesale optical distributor. Colony Park Pharmacy sold prescriptions and surgical appliances at the southeast storefront on Adams. For many years there was a Cunningham's Drugs Store in the western storefront. In the 1970's and 80's, the Downtown Train & Camera hobby shop was located in the southwest storefront on Adams and a custom shoe store occupied retail space on Park Avenue. The building has been vacant since 1986.

In 1999 the Kales Building was marketed for redevelopment by its owner, the City of Detroit. The building was sold in November 2000 to a group of developers who plans are to convert the building to loft apartments.

44-58 West Adams, The Fine Arts Building (1905), Architect: Louis Kamper

The Fine Arts Building was designed in the Italian Renaissance style, and has many features of the Italian palazzo. The first floor's rusticated stone work was entirely replaced by renovations to the storefronts. Currently, black Vitrolite structural glass surrounds the western entrance to the Fine Arts Building, and the bulkhead of the storefronts to the east. Plywood boarding covers the recessed entrance to the Adams Theater lobby and the rotating theater marquee was removed in 1999.

The Fine Arts Building's Adams façade is divided into seven bays. The western-most bay consists of a single window which lights the stairwell on each floor. The other bays have double-hung windows grouped in pairs. The second story windows have a transom above each double window. The third story double-hung windows are formed into a segmental arch. The fourth and fifth floor windows are simple double hung, while the sixth floor windows are double hung with the upper transom window formed in an arch.

Eight Ionic pilasters run from the 4th through 6th floors, delineating the middle section of the building. There is an attic story, and bracketed cornice on the building. Underneath the cornice is a horizontal corrugated aluminum patch that once held a neon sign declaring the ■Fine Arts Building. Above the cornice is a strip of low horizontal windows and a stone balustrade.

The Fine Arts Building is sheathed in variations of red and yellow brick. The window sills and keystones in each arch are limestone. The western façade of the building is brick that has been painted. Three bays of windows puncture the western wall, above the portion where the four-story Shurly Building existed.

Developer Hugo Scherer had the Fine Arts Building constructed to accommodate the ■fine arts trade in Detroit and made sure the design of the building reflected that fact. A local newspaper article called it ■one of the most elaborate and modern. Initial tenants included the George R. Angell Co., an art gallery for the display of foreign and American paintings, C. M. Hayes & Co. photographer studios, and the Gies art school which was located on the top floor. Physicians and other professionals also found the Fine Arts Building a desirable leased offices.

In 1917, movie mogul John Kunsky developed the Adams Theater in the Fine Arts Building. The lobby of the theater was sited in the eastern storefront of the Fine Arts Building, and the theater auditorium connected under and above the alley to Elizabeth Street. Because the property values on Grand Circus Park were expensive, it made sense to have only the lobby face the park, and the large auditorium portion of the property on the secondary street. This type of theater design was executed in other cities and is known as an ■alley jumper.

The Adams Theater's architect was C. Howard Crane, and it was originally designed with 1,770 seats. The Adams opened as a legitimate playhouse, but a year later it was fitted for moving picture presentations. The theater's style is that of an Adamsesque vaudeville palace. There were boxes on each side of the proscenium. The theater's balcony and loge were designed utilizing a cantilever and had no obstructed view seats ■ an innovation at the time. In 1935 the theater closed briefly for remodeling and re-opened as ■the Greater Adams.

A 1960s renovation altered the lobby, auditorium and box office. The boxes were removed from the auditorium, and the lobby was completely redesigned. The number of seats was reduced to 1,488. In 1986 the balcony was ■twinneD into two auditoriums. New state-of-the-art projection equipment was installed and a new booth was built on the loge level for movies shown in the original auditorium. Film fare through the years at the Adams was diverse, from first run reserved seat films to spaghetti westerns to karate movies in the 1970s. The Adams closed in November 1988 after showing films continuously for seventy years.

The tenants in the western portion of the Fine Arts Building's first floor were restaurants. In the 1940s Marco's Chop House, a dinner-dance supper club, occupied the first floor adjoining the theater. Later, Victor Lim's, a Chinese restaurant and cocktail lounge was in that space. In the 1980s a cabaret theater theme restaurant called ■On Stage was the first floor tenant.

Mike Ilitch's Olympia Development purchased the property in 1992 and announced that the building would be renovated into additional office space for his employees. The long-range plan was to create a cabaret theater in the Adams Theater. The plans have yet to be realized, and building remains vacant today.

28-36 West Adams & 25 West Elizabeth, The Stroh Tower (1920), Architectural firm: Glaver, Dinkleburg & Ellison

The Stroh Tower is a twenty-story high-rise structure clad in buff brick with limited terra cotta trim. More extensive terra cotta trim was removed and replaced with buff brick when the building was remodeled in the 1950s. Its aluminum storefronts and plate glass windows date from the 1970s. The windows at floors 3 through 18 are double-hung 3-over-1 units. Floors 19 and 20 were added in the 1950s replacing a rooftop gazebo. These floors are clad in buff brick and aluminum panels in a simple utilitarian style. The windows are aluminum. The building faces south onto Adams.

The first and second floors have a rectangular footprint measuring eighty feet four inches wide and one hundred feet deep. Floors 3 through 18 are L-shaped with a light well at the northwest quadrant. A penthouse at floors 19 and 20 is set back approximately two feet from the east, west, and south elevations and approximately twenty feet from the north elevation with a roof-top veranda at the 19th floor.

The first and second floors have recently been renovated, and an awning from the 1970s was removed. The windows on the second story are now seen as they were originally, grouped into four shallow bays with a center window flanked by two narrow windows. The center window contains a divided window. At the second story, on each of the five piers is a bronze vertical plaque containing a projecting lion's head. These are the remnants of the building's architectural detail before the renovations removed the rest of it.

The Elizabeth Street Annex, constructed in 1950, is ten stories in height and is comprised of six floors of office/service space above four floors of parking. It is said to be the first ■International Style building in Detroit. The annex has a rectangular footprint measuring 120 feet by ninety feet. It is clad in buff-colored brick with aluminum ribbon windows at the north and south elevations. The annex has a simple aluminum canopy at the entry to a small lobby at the northwest corner. The annex has no decorative trim. It is connected to the Stroh Tower to

the south across an alley by a bridge connecting floors from 2 through 10.^{vi}

In 1920 Julius Stroh, president of the Stroh Products Company, announced plans for the building of an 18-story skyscraper at a cost of \$2,000,000. The *Stroh Building* had several floors devoted to high-end specialty retail shops. Tenants included the Rollins Co. a furrier, Merrill's Exclusive Hat Shop, Picard & Picard, makers and importers, Mlle. Milne, Modiste, Mme. Guideau, Modiste, Sanderson & Doran, Jewelry and Stationery.

The building was completed in 1922. The overhanging marquee held lettering naming it the ■Stroh Building. It appears that the executive offices of the brewery remained at the brewery site; it is likely that the Stroh Building was solely an investment property and an image-builder for the company.

Uhleman Opticians were a second floor tenant, and a ■Foot Comfort Shop was in the first floor retail space. The building was occupied by various commercial tenants including the Detroit Convention & Tourist Bureau.

The basement space housed a beautiful brew-haus finished with a verdigris marble stair entrance, vaulted ceiling and elaborate plaster detailing. The 1926 City Directory lists Briggs Restaurant in the basement space. Briggs leased and operated the Belden Hotel (at 114 West Adams) in the 1920s. After Lester Briggs died his businesses were dissolved and the basement space was occupied by Fisher's Prince German Restaurant.

In the early 1950s the building was sold to the Michigan Mutual Insurance Company and the building became known as the Michigan Mutual Building. A Michigan National Bank was located on the first floor of the building. Michigan Mutual Insurance Co. donated the building to the Detroit Public Schools in March 1995. The school board sold it, the addition, and three other parcels to a private developer in June 2000. The name of the building changed again to the Grand Park Centre.

18-24 West Adams, First National and Central Savings Bank (1924), Architect unknown

This two story commercial building with a mezzanine fills the lot line on this parcel of property.

The building's façade is constructed of limestone and articulated with three centered pilasters between two end piers. There is a denticulated cornice and parapet along a flat roofline. Above the two end piers, the frieze contains two plaques each with two heraldic shields in two different patterns. A gray granite base rises six feet from the sidewalk.

The storefront entrances have been completely covered with reflective glass panels divided into rectangles by muntins and mullions. Today the only access to this building is through the the Grand Park Centre Building.

The 1926 City Directory lists the building at 14 West Adams as housing the First National and Central Savings Bank. The other three storefronts remained vacant until 1929. In the 1935 City Directory, the Doubleday Book Shop had replaced the bank. At 20 West Adams storefront, the directory lists Gulian Rug Co. and at 22 West Adams was the Zinke Shoe Repair. The shoe repair placed an oversized boot hanging from the frieze to signify their business trade. At the 24 West Adams storefront, the ■Bungalow Restaurant Sandwich Shoppe was a first floor tenant in the 1930s and 1940s.

In the 1950s ■ 1960s the Brass Rail was a chain of three bars in Detroit's downtown. Their exterior signage included a carved wood relief by the local sculptor Gustave Hildebrand. The

wooden signage depicted one man in a stovepipe hat lifting a beer stein while another other man in a kilt carves a turkey. This decorative element is now located at a bar in Rochester, Michigan.

This structure, for much of its history, featured a large seven-story outdoor sign on the roof.

The sign featured advertising for various automotive firms such as DeSoto and Willys. The sign became a downtown Detroit landmark for years featuring cigarettes and had smoke puffing from the mouth of a huge face on the sign.

In the 1970s the building housed a franchise of the Roy Rogers chain restaurant and the Doubleday bookstore was still in the eastern storefront. The building has remained vacant for the past twenty years.

10 West Adams, The Fyfe Building (1919), Architectural firm: Smith, Hinchman & Grylls

This 14 -story tower is sited at the northwest corner lot of Woodward Avenue and Adams Avenue. The building fills the lot line at 43 wide on Adams Avenue and 105 feet deep on Woodward. The building's structure is steel frame and it is faced with terra cotta on the Adams Avenue and Woodward Avenue Facades. The eastern façade and alley façade to the north are both faced with brick.

The first floor storefront has been renovated and is now faced with brown aluminum and plate glass windows. There is a canvas canopy over the entrance to the apartments. The three stories above the storefronts are faced with a light buff colored terra cotta formed in blocks with mortar joints to replicate sandstone. The floors above the three-story base are faced with cream colored terra cotta.

The Fyfe Building was designed in a commercial gothic revival style and utilized much gothic detailing. Above the second story, gargoyles are leering from the ledge on both the Adams and Woodward Avenue facades. A stone segmental arch is above the windows on the third story. At the fourth floor, just under the belt course, two heraldic crests flank each side of the end windows. The crests contain two lower-case 'fs' for Fyfe.

At the eastern and western piers of the Adams façade, two elongated niches rise for seven stories. At the top of the niches are decorative detailing and a 2 over 2 window. Decorative details include a segmental arch at the 14th story windows, which has fretwork in the spandrels. The fretwork continues up to an arched peak at the roofline. Two herald crests are at the roofline on the eastern and western piers. Two short finials are centered in the flat arch of the roof.

The building was constructed by the R. H. Fyfe & Company retail shoe store. The Fyfe Building replaced two three-story retail brick buildings. The pace of development in Detroit was rushing past the 19th century architecture that had been built even just 30 years earlier. Excavations for the Fyfe Building were started in May 1918, and the top was reached in November 1918, a construction time of seven months. When the company moved into their new building, it was the largest shoe store in the country. Fyfe & Co. advertised the building as the shoe skyscraper, ten stories were used entirely for the retail sale of shoes.

The business was founded in 1865 by Richard Henry Fyfe when he was just 26 years old. Mr. Fyfe had started in the business as a shoe clerk, saving his money until he could set up shop on his own. The firm began in a shop at 83 Woodward Avenue, and expanded to its fifth location was at 183 Woodward Avenue ■ now the site of the Lener building. On March 4, 1917

a fire struck the block which resulted in the planning and construction of the Fyfe Building at Adams and Woodward. Mr. Fyfe stayed in charge of the business until his death in 1931 at the age of 92.

The Fyfe Company billed itself as the ■World's Largest Shoe Store• and a promotional brochure from 1929 claimed that Fyfe's always had a stock of more than 150,000 pairs of shoes on hand. The ■Shoe Skyscraper• stacked up as follows: The street-level space offered men's shoes, riding boots and hand-made shoes. Hosiery for men, women and children was also on the street level. The mezzanine floor was devoted to boy's shoes and men's and boy's slippers. On the second floor were infants, children's misses' and women's shoes. There was a children's barber shop and play room (with a merry-go-round) for children to pass the time while their mothers shopped. The third floor housed women's shoes, galoshes and slippers. The fourth floor had women's high-end expensive shoe styles and evening slippers.

The ■most unique feature ever introduced in a retail shoe store• was on the fifth floor ■ a putting green and driving range. Golf lessons were offered by appointment, and there was a charge of 50 cents for the driving range. Of course that was where they sold golf clubs, bags and golf shoes. This was later converted to a large auditorium for company meetings of the firm's 140 employees.

The sixth floor housed the shoe repair and service department, while the seventh contained the shopping service, mail order department and an expert Chiropodist's office. On the eighth floor were the general offices, while ninth and tenth were reserve stock rooms. The first basement housed retail space as well and carried only women's shoes. This where they sold the lower-end retail shoes, and a brand called ■Fyfe's Health Shoes• for women. The second basement contained the building's heating and utility systems.

A tragic accident involved the Fyfe Building during the celebrations of the end of World War I. On Armistice Day, Monday, November 11, 1918, tens of thousands of Detroiters jammed downtown streets for a parade. At about 4 p.m., Lieutenant K. C. Morrow, piloting one of five planes flying formation over the peace parade on Woodward, clipped the flagpole on top of the Fyfe Building and crashed. He was killed, one of last casualties of the war to end all wars.^{vii}

In the 1920's, 30's, 40's and 50's a 7-story vertical neon sign for ■Fyfe's Shoes• hung from the Woodward façade at the corner of Adams. There is still a painted sign on top floors of the western façade. The Fyfe Company used a line drawing of the building as an image in advertising promoting their business. Downtown retail business was changing, and in 1956 a section of floor space in the ■Temple of Shoes• was set aside for the sale of women's hats.^{viii}

A Detroit *Free Press* article in 1968 stated that the Fyfe Company had sold the building although they would still retain a shoe store in the lower floors. The article reported that an insurance company was occupying the eighth floor, and that the upper floors would be converted into luxury apartments. In the late 1970's, the building was converted to sixty-six apartment units. Sibley's Shoes for men moved into the first floor retail space and is still there today.

The Fyfe Building has been sold twice since the 1980s.

Central United Methodist Church, Architect: Gordon W. Lloyd (1867); Annex ; Architect: Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, (1915)

The Central United Methodist Church is located on the northeast corner of Adams and Woodward Avenues. The church property is composed of two buildings: the church building on

the corner and an annex on the east side of the church along Adams. The architect, Gordon W. Lloyd, designed the church in the Gothic Revival style was built in 1867. The annex designed by the firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls in the Tudor Revival style with Gothic elements incorporated in the design was built in 1915.

This church is constructed of gray limestone ashlar blocks, and the annex is constructed of a similar gray stone. The most prominent feature of the church building is the corner tower which rises four stories and is topped by a broach spire with clocks on each face. The tower contains a Tudor arched entrance on the first floor of the south elevation and a window on the west elevation. The upper three stories also contain windows on the third, and arched windows with a trefoil in the fourth.

The west, gabled elevation is symmetrical and contains the main double door entrance flanked by arched windows. A large stained glass arched window which measures 18 feet wide by 28 feet tall is located over the door. The south elevation of the intersecting gabled wing is also symmetrically arranged and features two Tudor arched windows on the first and second floors. •

A small window is within the gable peak.

The church and annex are connected by a thin, two-story section with a double entrance on the first floor and a series of arched windows on the second.

The annex to the church is a five-story symmetrically arranged building with an ashlar face granite façade. The façade is divided into six bays on the first three floors. The first floor, containing commercial storefronts underwent a renovation which applied polished granite facing, stainless steel awnings and large plate glass windows. The second and third floors contain a triple window in each bay. The spandrel between the second and third floors contains three panels, each with a stone shield in the center. The two outer bays on the east and west of the annex rise into gables which contain two double windows on the fourth floor and a small double window on the fifth. Two dormer windows with Gothic detailing are located over the central bays and project from the side facing gable roof.

The Central United Methodist Church, located on the northeast corner of Woodward and Adams Avenues, was constructed in 1867, however, its parish dates back to the early 1800s in Michigan. Talk of constructing a new church began after the parish church, then called the Congress Street Society, burned down in 1863.

The Congress Street Society united with the First Church in 1864. The two parishes combined their resources to build a stone edifice on the site already owned by the Congress Street Society at Woodward and Adams. The location included five lots and was purchased for \$8,600. The decision to move to the new location was controversial because the site was considered to be too far north of the urban core. Later the area became known as Piety Hill, clustered with churches from a variety of faiths.

The first building erected on the site was wood frame chapel. The cornerstone of the Central United Methodist Church building was laid on July 3, 1866 and the completed building was dedicated on November 17, 1867. Spanning 100 feet on Woodward Avenue and fronting 190 feet on Adams, the church and chapel cost \$136,000.

Gordon W. Lloyd was allowed a great opportunity for originality in the design of Central United Methodist. Unlike other faiths, Methodists were not bound to a traditional architectural concept. Advantageous for both seating and lighting are the broad semi-octagonal transepts.

Large gables on the faces of the transepts serve to break up the external mass of the building. An interesting three-dimensional quality was achieved in the structure's design and a strong vertical accept was provided by a corner tower with a broach spire. The spire is 180 feet high and the bell weighs 4,600 pounds, and there is a clock in the tower that has a seven foot diameter dial. The church seated a body of 1,140 people.

Central United Methodist was considered an architectural gem of its day and it was praised by the *Northwestern Christian Advocate* of Chicago. In 1883 the church erected a parsonage on two Adams Avenue lots and in 1892 work continued on the church building itself. The chapel was enlarged and an extensive remodeling and redecorating of the interior was completed. At this time, the church was one of the most prominent in the Detroit area, drawing an average of 600 people every Sunday.^{ix}

However, Central Church's position in the community changed greatly. When it began at the Woodward and Adams location, it was considered to be on the outskirts of town. Within three decades, it became a downtown church as members of its parish moved to suburban areas such as Brush Park. The church adopted a position that if it were to remain an influence in the community, it would have to adapt to the human needs of the time. The church's mission was to assist in the social life of Detroit's new arrivals. To fill this need, plans for an expanded church began in 1912. On the site immediately adjacent to the church on the east was erected a six-story building. Designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, it supplied the site of the varied social, philanthropic and religious activities that were an important part of the church's program.

Extensive remodeling of the Central Church annex has taken place over the years. When the addition was completed and dedicated in 1916, there were six retail stores on the ground floor that provided an income used to reduce the indebtedness of the building. The second and third floors were devoted to a Sunday school auditorium that, with its balcony, could seat 2,000 people. Open from the auditorium were various rooms for prayer meetings, class meetings, and motion picture equipment. The fourth floor was divided into classrooms, club rooms, kitchen and pantries. The banquet hall was capable of accommodating more than 500 for dinner. The fifth floor of the Central Church building was devoted to a gymnasium, showers, lockers, bowling alley, hand ball courts, and living space for a custodian.

A grand-scale renovation came to the church in the 1930's. The City decided to widen Woodward Avenue from Adams northward, only affecting buildings on Woodward's east-side, including Central United Methodist Church and St. John's Episcopal Church. The west-side of the street, comprised mostly of theaters, was left intact.

Central Church's administration decided it would not be necessary to demolish the building, but that a 30-foot section between the transept and the front of the church could be removed. The courts awarded the church a settlement of \$514,650 in 1932 with which it could accomplish this feat. The exact amount of the property to be removed was 28.4 feet. In newspaper reports of the time, moving of the 183-foot spire and front segment was called an engineering feat unparalleled in the city's history. The 100 by 27-foot section of the church was estimated to weigh more than 2000 tons. The project was believed so perilous that no insurance company in the United States would accept a risk on its success. Finally, Lloyd's of London consented to underwrite the job and the move was a success.

Central United Methodist Church was a leader in demonstrations in support of peace and against war, the arms race, nuclear weapons, and universal military training. These activities,

coupled with a church policy that allowed rental of the church hall to any group not seeking to overthrow the government by force, brought protests to the doors. The church, however, prides itself in adapting to the physical and sociological needs of the City through the years.^x

47 East Adams, Women Exchange Building, Architectural Firm: Smith, Hinchman & Gyrlls, 1915 (Local Historic District-designated in 1983)

1526 Broadway, Capitol Theater (Detroit Opera House) 1921, Architect: C. Howard Crane

Located on the corners of Broadway and Madison at Grand Circus Park, the Capitol Theater was the first in a series of palatial vaudeville and moving picture houses built in the Grand Circus Park area in the 1920s. Designed by prominent Detroit architect C. Howard Crane, the building was constructed in the style of Europe grand opera houses. The 4,250 seat theater claimed to be the fifth largest in the world when it opened on January 12, 1922. Crane went on to design other theaters in the city. His most notable commissions included the Fox Theater, Gem Theater, and the acoustically perfect Orchestra Hall. His genius for theater design took him to cities around the world.

The Capitol Theater was decorated in the Italian Renaissance style with lavish Tiffany chandeliers, frescoes, brass fixtures, marble stairways and drinking fountains. Rich rose-red Italian damask was used for the main stage curtain and draperies throughout the house. Most of these features are present today in the Detroit Opera House.

In the fall of 1929, the Capitol Theater became the Paramount Theater and in 1934, was renamed the Broadway Capitol Theater. A variety of entertainers such as Will Rogers, Louis Armstrong, Betty Hutton, and Duke Ellington performed at the theater during the 1930s and 1940s; and later many of the rock and roll stars of the 1950's. In 1960 the theater was reconfigured to 3,367 seats and began to show movies. The name was changed again to the Grand Circus Theater and it remained open until 1978. From 1981 to 1985, the theater ran intermittently presenting diverse entertainment, from mainstream artists to alternative rock bands. After a small fire in November of 1985, the theater remained closed for the next three years. In 1989 building was purchased by the Michigan Opera Theater.

Since its inception in 1971, Michigan Opera Theater has called three different theaters home prior to the opening of the Detroit Opera House. In 1971 the Company became the catalyst for the revitalization of Detroit's celebrated Theater District as it reopened the Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts. In 1985, in an effort to accommodate its growing audience and increase production needs, the Company, began performing the fall season at the Fisher Theater and by spring they had moved to the 4000 seat Masonic Temple.

In the spring of 1993, the Roberts Fur Building located at on the south side of Madison Avenue near the park was razed for the 75,000 square foot stagehouse and patron service areas. The adjoining office towers underwent adaptive reuse into dressing rooms, and offices for Michigan Opera Theater's administration, production, and community outreach departments. The company moved into its new offices in November 1998.

10 Witherell, Eaton Tower (David Broderick Tower) -(1928), Architects: Louis & Paul Kamper (This building is located in the Lower Woodward Avenue Historic District-Local

District- Designated October 2001)

1553 Woodward Avenue, David Whitney Building (1914), Architect: Daniel Burnham

(This building is located in David Whitney Building Historic District - Local District-Designated June, 2000).

1539-65 Washington Boulevard, Statler Hotel (Heritage Hotel) (1914). Architect: George B. Post

Ellsworth Statler was born in 1863 and spent his life in the hotel business. His first independent venture was a temporary hotel for the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. Profits from that and another temporary venture at the 1904 St. Louis Exhibition enabled him to build his first permanent hotel in Buffalo in 1908. His second hotel, opened in 1912 in Cleveland, was designed by George B. Post, who remained a favorite architect as Statler built his chain of major-city hotels.

The Detroit hotel was also designed by Post, and was opened in 1914; an addition on the south on Washington Boulevard followed very shortly thereafter. The massive block of the red-brick building rests on stone base three stories high; the second and third floors are divided into bays by shallow pilasters two stories tall surmounted by a cornice. The fourth floor windows rest on that cornice, and have stone surrounds, providing a transition to the brick curtain wall above, which is articulated only by alternating paired and single windows.

Above the fourteenth floor the facade is further detailed to provide an appropriate termination for the top of the building. The windows of the top three stories are all paired opening, and are contained in two-story aedicules, every other of which rests on a balcony; the alternating bays have only a recessed balustrade imitating the balconies. The triangular pediments of the aedicules support the paired windows of the seventeenth floor, above which is a frieze and cornice supporting a balustrade with urns at the divisions between bays.

Although the building had a reputation for grand interior spaces, the sale of interior fittings after the closing of the hotel and the many years that the building has stood vacant suggest that there may be no significant interiors remaining within. The building was closed in 1975, and was recently the subject of an RFP by the City of Detroit seeking redevelopment. It remains to be seen whether the structure is economically viable.

Criteria: The proposed historic district meets all four criteria contained in section 25-2-2: (1) Sites, buildings, structures, or archeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is particularly reflected or exemplified; (2) Sites, buildings structures, or archeological sites which are identified with historic personages or with important events in community, city, state or national history; (3) Buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style or method of construction, and (4) Notable work(s) of a master designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age.

