

Final Report

Proposed Detroit-Leland Hotel Historic District

By a resolution dated October 25, 2006, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Detroit-Leland Hotel Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed Detroit-Leland Hotel Historic District consists of the single building situated on the northwest corner of Bagley and Cass Avenues addressed as 400 Bagley Avenue. It is in the northwest part of downtown Detroit, south of West Grand River Avenue and north of Michigan Avenue, Detroit's major diagonal thoroughfares extending westward from Woodward Avenue. AT&T is in the second block southward and the MGM Grand Casino and Hotel, currently under construction, are located westward. The Detroit-Leland Hotel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.



Detroit-Leland Hotel, Detroit, MI, 2005

Photo credit: Rebecca Savage

Boundary Description: The boundaries of the proposed Detroit-Leland Hotel Historic District are similar to the footprint of the building and extend out to the center of the public rights-of-ways. The boundaries are outlined in heavy black on the attached map, and are as follows:

On the northeast, the centerline of Cass Avenue;

On the southeast, the centerline of Bagley Avenue;

On the southwest, the easterly ½ of the vacated alley lying adjacent to the South 100 feet of Lot 10; and

On the northwest, a line drawn being the same as the north boundary of the south ½ of Lot 4, BLK 54--CASS WESTERN ADD L42 P138-41 DEEDS, W C R, extended northeasterly and southwesterly along that part of the vacated alley running between Bagley and Jones (Plaza Drive).

History:

The Detroit-Leland Hotel is the oldest continuously operating hotel in downtown Detroit, completed in 1927 at a cost of \$4.5 million dollars. Chicago theater architects C. W. and George L. Rapp were the designers of the twenty-story building which originally contained seven hundred and twenty rooms. The hotel opening was a major event in the city of Detroit, and the Detroit Times newspaper devoted several pages to the building in a “Detroit-Leland Hotel Section.” The hotel was built as part of the Detroit Properties Corporation’s Bagley Avenue development project. The development included three structures in total, all of which were built, completely changing the scale and function of Bagley Avenue.

The development of the Detroit-Leland Hotel can be credited to Edward Arthur Loveley (1879-1937), a Detroiter with vision for the city’s future. Loveley was born in Springfield, Massachusetts and moved to Detroit in 1904. That year he established Stormfeltz and Loveley Co., a real estate firm with Harry A. Stormfeltz, and began developing residential subdivisions. By 1920 the firm developed more than fifty subdivisions, including some of Detroit’s most prestigious in the Palmer Woods and Palmer Park areas. Loveley served as president of the Detroit Real Estate Board, as well as being president and a member of several country and riding clubs.

Stormfeltz and Loveley became interested in downtown properties, and specifically Bagley Avenue in the 1920’s. Their vision for Bagley Avenue was to completely change it from being a back street near the western edge of Detroit’s downtown to becoming a premier destination. The Detroit News credited Mr. Loveley’s development of Bagley Avenue as changing Detroit’s reputation as a “one-street town.”

In the early 1920’s, Bagley Avenue contained two and three-story Victorian era stables, commercial buildings and residences. The exceptions to this were the one thousand-room Statler Hotel (1914, architect George B. Post), and eight hundred room Tuller Hotel, both adjacent to Grand Circus Park. Stormfeltz and Loveley saw the opportunity to develop Bagley outward from Grand Circus Park and formed the Detroit Properties Corporation to build their “Bagley Avenue Development.” Leasing advertisements by the Detroit Properties Company promoted Bagley Avenue as an unusually wide avenue with freedom from traffic congestion since no streetcars ran down it.¹ The company’s buildings were promoted as being surrounded by open spaces with no gloomy shadows of over-towering buildings. By the late 1920’s one trade journal trumpeted Bagley as “a

¹ “A Worthy Headquarters For Your Business,” advertisement by the Detroit Properties Corporation, E&M file, Michigan Theater, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Main Library.

neighborhood that until recently was the least desirable part of Detroit, but which is now part of Detroit's better downtown business section."²

The Detroit Properties Corporation stated that the total amount to be spent on the Bagley Avenue Development project was thirty five million dollars.³ The first "unit" in the development project was initially called the Bagley Avenue Building and housed the Michigan Theater, a movie palace, plus office space, a building type commonly used in many larger cities by the 1920's. Located at Bagley and Clifford Avenues, it almost fills the entire block to Grand River Avenue. Designed by Chicago architects C. W. and George L. Rapp, the building, later named the Michigan Theatre Building, opened in 1926. Other existing examples of this building type already stood near Grand Circus Park including the Madison Theater (1917), the Adams (1917), the Capitol (1922) and the Palms (1925). The Michigan Theater was one of the premier movie palaces in Detroit if not the nation. Seating four thousand, and finished with marble, bronze gates and Louis XIV plaster decoration, it was a stop for music and show business royalty. The building itself still stands, but in 1977 the theater portion of the building was gutted and a parking structure for the office building was put inside the adjacent theater auditorium.

The Detroit-Leland Hotel formed the second unit of the Bagley Avenue project. Hiring Rapp & Rapp again, the Detroit Properties Corporation began construction in 1926. The Detroit-Leland was located just two blocks away from the large Statler and Tuller Hotels in Grand Circus Park. It was also just five blocks away from the city's premier hotel – the twelve hundred-room Book-Cadillac. General contractors for the Detroit-Leland Hotel's construction were the Cleveland firm of Lundoff and Bicknell. Detroit Properties leased the hotel to the Continental-Leland Corporation. Directed by Edwin A. Sweet, Continental-Leland also operated hotels in Lansing, Michigan, Mansfield, Ohio, and Chimney Rock and Sedgfield, North Carolina, and later, the Richmond-Leland Hotel in Richmond, Virginia.

The third unit of the Bagley Avenue project was the 1928 Bagley-Clifford Building, later known as the United Artists Theater Building. United Artists Theater Building's office structure was 18 stories tall, and had 143,000 square feet of office and retail space not including the theater. This time Detroit architect C. Howard Crane was chosen to design the office building and theater. Crane was one of the country's premier theater architects and he designed over two hundred and fifty theaters in his lifetime. The two thousand seat United Artists Theater in Detroit was identical in design to the United Artists Theater that Crane designed in Los Angeles – thus realizing a cost savings in plaster molds, fixtures and architectural renderings. The United Artists Theater Building is the most northern of the buildings in the Bagley Avenue Project. It was built adjacent to the Tuller Hotel site near Grand Circus Park, and was completed in 1928. As with the Michigan Theater Building, it went on to be successfully leased with storefront space occupied by a large bank and other retailers.

² "Another Big One Bites the Dust," The Console, 1977, pp. 14.

³ Ibid.

An article in a 1927 issue of The Detройer stated that the total cost of the three buildings aggregated \$19,000,000. This is short of the original claim of thirty five million dollars, but still remarkable. Loveley went on to develop another large Bagley Avenue tower – the Pontchartrain Club. Although not promoted as part of the Bagley Avenue project, the Pontchartrain Club building was located just a block west of the Detroit-Leland at Bagley and Second Avenue. Designed by Detroit architectural firm Smith, Hinchman & Grylls' head designer, Wirt C. Rowland in 1928, it cost a reported four million dollars. Left an unfinished shell by the economic collapse of 1929, the building was mostly vacant until it was converted to the Town Apartments in the 1960's.

Building a hotel in Detroit during the 1920's was not without risk – but Detroit was an American boomtown. The population of 285,704 in 1900 had more than tripled by 1920. By 1926, it was at 1.5 million – making it the fourth largest city in the United States. The demographics of the city were a majority of U. S. born citizens, but 9.2% were Polish born, 6.7% Canadian, and 6.5% African Americans. Germans, Russians, and Italians also made up significant percentages of the population of Detroit in 1926. In addition to the influx of immigrants and population, there were other important reasons to add hotel rooms in Detroit.

The Detroit Convention and Tourist Bureau estimated that conference attendance was growing from the record 375 conferences held during 1927 to even greater numbers. In 1927, the Bureau stated that 450,000 delegates and visitors established a new convention record for Detroit. Convention attendees and tourists coming to Detroit were estimated to reach two million in 1927. These were all record numbers from prior years. The Detroit Convention and Tourist Bureau estimated that by 1927 Detroit had two hundred hotels with a total of 25,000 rooms within one mile of downtown.

Of course, the Detroit-Leland Hotel entered a market already established with hotels. A Detroit Free Press article from 1925 stated that twenty new hotels had opened up in just eighteen months at a cost of twenty five million dollars. This influx added 5,900 rooms to the city's available stock. The Convention Bureau promoted the fact that this amounted to "the completion of more than one new hotel a month." The big daddy of all these hotels was the Book-Cadillac located on Washington Boulevard in downtown Detroit. With 1,200 rooms, it was built at a cost of \$17 million and opened in 1924. It was without question Detroit's grandest and most significant hotel for the next fifty years. It was also the most expensive at four dollars a night for a single room. Other large downtown hotels included the Statler with 1,000 rooms and the Tuller with 800. The rest of the downtown hotels were smaller: Wolverine – 500 rooms, Fort Shelby – 400 rooms, Madison-Lenox – 300 rooms, Norton – 250 rooms, Royal Palms – 180, and Library Park – 135 rooms.

Famed Chicago theater architects Cornelius W. and George L. Rapp were the designers of the twenty-two story, 720 room Detroit-Leland Hotel. Most likely, they were hired to design the Leland because Stormfeltz and Loveley worked with them on the Michigan Theater Building in 1926. The Rapp brothers began designing for Chicago theater operators Balaban and Katz in 1916. When Balaban & Katz merged with Famous Players

to become Paramount Pictures, the studio relied on Rapp & Rapp to design their new movie palaces all over the nation. Hundreds of movie palaces were their creation. The Rapp brothers received the commission to build the Paramount flagship theater (1926) on Times Square in New York City. This famous landmark included a thirty five story office tower on Broadway.

Rapp & Rapp's success went on to land them theater design work from Warner Brothers Pictures as well. Rapp & Rapp branched out into the field of non-theater architecture with such notable structures as the Bismark Hotel and the Windemere Hotel in Chicago and Sigma Chi fraternity houses in Champaign, Illinois and Oxford, Ohio. They designed banks, auto showrooms, office buildings and churches. And as a final gesture for their former client, they designed the Balaban Mausoleum in Chicago. In addition to the Michigan Theater and the Detroit-Leland Hotel, the only other Rapp & Rapp firm design in Detroit was the renovation of the Fisher Theater in 1961.

The Detroit-Leland Hotel opened in 1927 at a cost of \$4.5 million. The hotel opening was a major event in the city of Detroit, and the Detroit Times newspaper devoted several pages to the building in a "Detroit-Leland Hotel Section." The hotel included the expected ballrooms, lobby and restaurants, but the Detroit-Leland also had a great sense of style. Because Rapp & Rapp designed opulent movie palaces, they gave the Detroit-Leland exceptionally memorable rooms and furnishings. The building had entrances from both Cass and Bagley Avenues, and from there the hotel guest ascended a staircase to the main lobby. The large round arched windows flooded the lobby with light and deep rich colors were used on the walls, coffered plaster ceiling and carpets. Furniture in the public spaces was designed in various French and European classical revival styles. Opening day press described the ballrooms as being "similar to early Italian rooms with a trace of Greek classic inspiration, and broken pediment overdoors reminiscent of Sir Christopher Wren's finest design." The main dining room incorporated an "atmospheric" movie palace feature of false windows containing murals depicting Italian gardens at night. The six huge panels were designed by A. F. Adams of Rapp & Rapp and executed by George Hamilton Thomas of Chicago.⁴

The Detroit-Leland provided guests with modern conveniences. A five-position twenty four-hour switchboard was installed to handle calls to the 1,200 extension phones inside the hotel. There was also a "turret position" for special long distance and hotel information calls. While air conditioning in hotel rooms was not yet available in those days, there was a refrigeration unit used to cool air in the lobby, dining rooms and ballrooms. The modern convenience of kitchen refrigerators was front-page news in the Detroit Times section on the Detroit-Leland, which described the fifteen refrigerators in the hotel kitchens. Each guest room had a private bath with hot, cold and circulating ice water faucets. A staff of 550 employees worked at the hotel to see to the needs of the guests.

The Detroit-Leland Hotel incorporated ground floor retailers for the convenience of their guests, and the retail also provided additional rental income to the Detroit Properties

⁴ "Civic Pride Builds New Hostel," The Detroit Times, April 17, 1927, Part 8, pp. 1-5.

Corporation. Eleven stores were connected by an arcade inside the Bagley Avenue elevation. They included a men's barbershop and woman's beauty shop. A coffee shop occupied a portion of the basement. Because Prohibition was still in effect, there were no cocktail bars in the original plan (but of course that would change over time).

Nearly 100 rooms at the Detroit-Leland were suites designed for long-term guests and business travelers. One advertisement for the hotel noted, "a feature that must appeal to sales travelers is the large sample rooms – all outside so that goods may be shown under natural light."⁵ This meant the sample rooms' windows did not face the alley or rear of the building, but the street. These sample rooms also contained "in-a-door" beds that could be folded up to provide more floor space. The advertisements promoted the fact that the Detroit-Leland Hotel's rooms were much larger than the tiny rooms at the Statler Hotel, and even larger than the average room at the Book-Cadillac Hotel. Each of the rooms at the Detroit-Leland had a private bathroom and shower.

The Detroit-Leland Hotel opened in 1927 with much fanfare, but just a few years later the building was back in the headlines when ownership and management were having major problems. In 1929 the hotel was in receivership and newspaper reports reveal that it continued to be in bankruptcy until 1936.⁶ All through the hard times the Detroit-Leland continued operation.

In 1937 the wave of union organizing in Detroit set off a series of strikes in the major hotels. On March 6, 1937, the first sit-down strike to tie up a Detroit hotel began at Webster Hall when a union organizer named F. A. Lowe appeared on the dance floor and shouted, "Strike!" A week later, organizers from AFL unions entered the Statler Hotel and organized the workers in a sit-down strike. To prevent further sit-downs, the Detroit Hotel Association announced a lockout of all employees in the downtown's major hotels. But before the buildings could be cleared, the Waiters and Waitresses Union's activists led the Book-Cadillac Hotel workers in a strike, and later that day the Fort Shelby Hotel and the Detroit-Leland Hotel's services were halted by strikes.⁷ Initial negotiations between the Detroit Hotel Association and the Detroit and Wayne County Federation of Labor were hopelessly deadlocked. Michigan Governor Murphy called an arbitration board and appointed Detroit Mayor James Couzens to referee. The hotels reopened under a union agreement on March 17th.

It wasn't long after Prohibition was repealed that the Detroit-Leland Hotel opened a cocktail bar. Situated in the prime storefront location of the building at the corner of Cass and Bagley, it was called the Grenadier Dining Room and Lounge Bar in the 1930's, and by the late 1950's was renamed the Grenadier Room. Operating for at least three decades, this Detroit nightspot was known for live lobster, custom cut steaks, fried shrimp and live organ-piano music.

⁵ "Larger Rooms and Suites – Larger, Lighter..." Leland Hotel E&M File, Burton Collection, Detroit Public Library.

⁶ "Detroit-Leland Debt \$11,100 for Each Room," The Detroit Free Press, 1936, pp. 1.

⁷ "Sit-Down Ends, Hotel Again Has Food, Heat and Service," The Detroit News, March 8, 1937.

The Detroit-Leland Hotel was an important part of the city of Detroit's social and civic history – but mainly hosted typical hotel conventions. For example, in 1930 the eighth annual national meeting for the Association for the Study of Allergy was held at the Detroit-Leland. Major league baseball teams stayed at the hotel including the New York Yankees and its Hall of Fame legend Babe Ruth, who in 1929 reportedly “wiped the floor” of his room with roommate and rookie Leo Durocher, whom he accused of pilfering his and teammates' property.⁸ In 1934 the Standard Club was founded in a room at the Detroit-Leland by a group of Jewish businessmen. In 1935 automobile entrepreneur Preston Tucker and his partner had an office in the Detroit-Leland Hotel.

The owner of the Detroit-Leland in the 1950's and early 60's was Robert J. Sterling with his two brothers Oliver and Edward. They renovated the hotel, instigated by the opening of the new convention center called Cobo Hall in downtown Detroit. The refurbishment of the Detroit-Leland included fresh paint, new rugs and furniture. Other renovations were made to accommodate special auto shows in the Detroit-Leland. In 1959 a six-ton freight elevator was built into the back of the hotel so that 1960 model automobiles could be brought up and placed in the lobby and ballrooms.⁹ The entrances to the ballrooms and passageways were widened to accommodate the cars for these special auto shows.

What was undoubtedly the most significant renovation to the Detroit-Leland Hotel occurred in 1964 when the building was sold to Robert K. and Donald Werbe.¹⁰ The Werbes renamed the building the Leland House, and renovated it to have four hundred and seventy three apartments in addition to hotel rooms. The Werbes hired architect Nicholas S. Pastor to work on the conversion of part of the hotel into apartments. The former “sample” rooms were each large enough to create two bedroom apartments, and kitchenettes were installed in every hotel room and apartment. Air conditioning units were installed in all the rooms. Other renovations in 1964 included the construction of a large swimming pool and patio on property at the west side of the building. The Bagley Avenue entrance was updated with new glass and aluminum frame doors and travertine marble was installed on the first floor of the Bagley and Cass facades.

Owners of the building in the 1970's were Mayer Morganroth, a Detroit attorney, and John R. (Jack) Ferris, of Farmington, Michigan. They allegedly brought the Leland House into the world of 1970's Teamster Union mob corruption. Jack Ferris was connected to Teamsters Local 299 in the 1970's, and allowed Teamsters to stay in the Leland frequently. Teamsters Local 299 in Detroit was brought into power by Jimmy Hoffa, and had a long history of militancy and violence. Federal investigators suspected that Teamster Local 299 official Rolland McMaster was a partner in the Leland House. McMaster had been convicted of extortion, and after his release from prison was appointed chief executive officer of Local 299. McMaster admitted that he was trying to legalize gambling in Michigan and wanted the Leland House to receive the state's first

⁸ Auker, Elden with Tom Keegan, “Sleeper Cars and Flannel Uniforms,” Triumph Press, 2001, Chapter 3.

⁹ Watts, Ralph R., “Hotel Is Altered to Admit Autos,” The Detroit News, May 28, 1959.

¹⁰ Carlisle, John M., “Detroit-Leland Sold: Apartments Planned,” The Detroit News, March 9, 1964.

gaming license. After Jimmy Hoffa's 1975 disappearance, several of the teamsters living at the Leland House were questioned by the FBI.¹¹

The Leland House still attracted new commercial tenants as well as hotel guests and apartment residents. It was popular for airline employees and actors from the touring shows that played at the Fisher Theater, Music Hall and the Masonic Temple for extended runs. For example, Lauren Bacall stayed there in 1981. The Fisher Theater and Michigan Opera Theater casts often used the Leland's ballrooms for rehearsals.

Nightlife and restaurants have always been an important component of the hotel's success, and the Leland House had restaurants that were a destination for Detroiters as well as the residents and hotel guests. In 1973 Yamato, an elegant Japanese restaurant, opened, the less upscale Dirty Helen's Saloon was located in the basement, and another unusual drinking establishment called the Hideaway Bar (later the 400 Bagley Club) was on the fourth floor of the building, and featured a billiard room. It was mainly used by hotel guests and residents (Teamster union leader Jimmy Hoffa was known to frequent it). Additionally, there was the Carriage Club lobby bar, and the twenty-four hour Biff's Coffee Shop on the Bagley and Cass corner. By 1976 a new nightclub, Detroit's own Studio 54 disco, opened in the Leland House.¹²

In 1980, the building changed hands again. The new ownership went to Leland House Limited Partnership Company, headed by Michael W. Higgins, still the property owner today. At the time of the sale, the Leland House had about 100 permanent residents and booked about ten or fifteen transient guests per evening.¹³ The 1980's recession affected Detroit dramatically and the hotel's occupancy and all of downtown's buildings suffered. The Leland House adapted to the change by temporarily becoming part of the Ramada hotel chain in 1988.

The bars in the Leland also changed to reflect the trends of youth. In 1984 "Liedernacht" opened in the former kitchen and Colonial Ballroom spaces. This nightclub was for the New Wave/punk/Goth crowd and featured cutting edge live acts as well as disk jockeys. It was rechristened the "Leland City Club" in 1985, and twenty years later, the nightclub is still going today – a record in the usually short lifespan of nightclubs. The former Dirty Helen's Saloon in the basement was converted to the underground Labyrinth Bar in 1998 and "Goth" night clubbers in Detroit had another venue where they could dance to electronic and industrial music.

The Detroit Downtown Development Authority loaned \$1 million to Leland House Ltd. for a restoration of the lobby and interior spaces in 1989. Architectural conservators from the A. C. Bouchard Company worked to remove white paint from every surface of the lobby, and also removed carpet and glue, which had been applied to the rose-colored marble floors. Gold paint was reapplied to plaster details and a taupe paint color was applied to the lobby ceiling. One hundred of the four hundred and forty hotel rooms were

¹¹ Moldea, Dan E., "The Hoffa Wars," Paddington Press Ltd., 1978, pp. 399.

¹² Brown, June, "Detroit Studio 54 Swings to Rhythm of too Hard Times," The Detroit News.

¹³ "Investors' group buys old Leland," The Detroit News, January 20, 1981, pp. 2-B.

painted and redecorated. Leland House Ltd. decided to discontinue the use of the swimming pool and had it filled in to become a surface parking lot. The restoration of the lobby was a wonderful reclaiming of the Leland's historic past.

Today the Leland Hotel has 278 residential apartments and 150 hotel rooms. The Leland still has the "underground" City Club packing in young punk rockers, and the corner coffee shop still is in operation. None of the other historic downtown Detroit hotels have survived. The Statler Hotel closed in 1975 and was demolished in 2005, the Tuller was demolished in 1990, and the Book-Cadillac closed in 1984 but is presently under redevelopment as a grand hotel with condominiums. The Detroit-Leland Hotel is the only survivor of the historic downtown hotels, and it has never closed. While its history has been rocky, the Leland Hotel has survived and has remained a functioning business in downtown Detroit for the past seventy-eight years.

Architectural Description:

The Detroit-Leland Hotel is a twenty-story steel frame hotel building located on the northwest corner of Bagley and Cass Avenues in Detroit. The terra cotta trimmed brick exterior is Italian Renaissance in inspiration. The building's plan is nearly rectangular in the first five stories, with a small projection at one of the narrow ends. Floors five through twenty have floor plans shaped in the form of a broad "u." The building originally housed 720 guest rooms, and today contains 428.

Vertically the building forms a three-part composition including a four-story base and two-story attic. The base, on the Bagley and Cass Avenue facades, above the street level, which was refaced in marble probably in the 1960's, is finished in buff terra cotta. The terra cotta is formed into large-scale masonry blocks and displays Italian Renaissance details. Large two-story rounded arch windows light the ballrooms, lobby and other public spaces on the second floor. At the third floor, each pair of double hung windows is separated by a terra cotta plaque comprised of a cartouche containing a fleur-de-lis. A projecting denticulated cornice and decorated frieze of small circles caps the third story. At the fourth floor, squares of terra cotta containing brickwork panels alternate between the windows.

Between the fourth floor and the two-story attic, the building is faced with buff colored brick. A belt course separates the attic stories from the thirteen stories beneath. At the roofline, brick coping tops a classical cornice and frieze. The building has a flat roof. There are two flagpoles on the roof, one centered over the Bagley Avenue entrance, the other centered over the Cass Avenue entrance.

In 1927, a two-story building stood to the north of the hotel on Cass Avenue; thus today that side of the Detroit-Leland Hotel is windowless for the first four stories. There are three bays of windows for the hotel rooms above the fourth floor on this portion of the rear (north) facade. The rear (northern facade) of the building faces a parking lot enclosed with a wrought iron fence. The lot line of the parking lot property continues to Plaza Drive. The rear facade of the building is faced with common brick that has been painted a light beige color. There are several rear entrance service doors, and doors to what was

once a large capacity elevator. The rear façade of the base of the building is four stories high and, set back from the rear façade on the fourth floor, is a service corridor. Set back farther on this side is the upper section of the hotel containing the rooms rising to twenty stories in height, the footprint of this part of the building taking the form of a broad “u”.

The building’s western façade also faces the parking lot, which extends from the western façade to First Street. The western façade is faced in common brick and has been painted light beige. A blue awning with lettering for the “Ramada Inn” crowns the entrance on the western façade. Terra cotta and beige brick wraps slightly around the corner from the front (Bagley Avenue) façade.

The original metal overhanging marquees remain in place over both the Bagley Avenue and Cass Avenue entrances. Both the Bagley and Cass Avenue facades have large plate glass shop windows. One retailer still occupies space at the corner of Bagley and Cass Avenue, and signage for Luci and Ethel’s Restaurant appears above the windows on each side of the building. Travertine marble surrounds the storefronts, entrances and windows on both the Bagley and Cass facades. The entrance to the building from Cass Avenue has been boarded up and is not used today. There is a storefront entrance to the Liedernacht bar to the south of the Cass Avenue entrance. Decorative black lamps are located on each of the building piers on the Bagley Avenue façade.

The Bagley Avenue entrance is composed of three doorways, the center one a revolving door, and the two side ones of aluminum and plate glass. Each glass door is flanked by a sidelight. Transom windows are located above each of the three doors. Original detailed metalwork divides the doors and windows. The walkway in front of the Bagley entrance is of red brick in a herringbone pattern.

Upon entering the Detroit-Leland Hotel, a long corridor runs along each side of the entrance. To the left (running west) is a corridor that formerly provided access to stores along the front facade. Today none of the stores are in use. To the right (running east) of the entrance is a corridor that retains its original finishes and has a counter that possibly was formerly a coat and hatcheck. Through a doorway is an entrance to the “Luci and Ethel’s” restaurant. The restaurant has been renovated and now has a drop ceiling, but still has old-fashioned counter seating. An additional restaurant space at the northeast end of the building has been closed for several years.

From the entry, a set of six stairs rises to a much larger and wider turned staircase leading to the main lobby. To the left (west) of the staircase is a counter desk, which may have been used for the purpose of hotel security. Also to the left (west) of the entrance, at the top of the first set of stairs is a restroom. The plaster ceiling in the entrance area is finished in a buff color and has detailing picked out in jewel tones and gold paint.

The second floor of the hotel is entered by the main staircase which projects into the center of the two-story lobby area. Facing the staircase is the entrance to the ballroom, and a new wall, which was installed to create a leasing office. To the south of the leasing offices is a lobby bar and game room. A former ballroom located on the southeastern

portion of the second floor has been converted to a conference room with a dropped ceiling. On the north end of the second floor, the former kitchens and ballroom have been converted to a nightclub but can only be accessed through an employees' entrance. To the north of the staircase is the registration desk. On the northeastern side of the second floor, a short hallway leads to a glass door through which the hotel and residential elevators and staircase can be accessed.

The grand staircase that rises to the main lobby and public spaces on the second floor retains the original wrought iron banisters and railings, now restored to their original black color. The two-story lobby is Italian Renaissance in style and has rose-colored marble floors that have been polished and restored. Its walls are lined with fluted pilasters. Between them are plaster panel reliefs now painted a taupe color that has been sponge and rag painted with another shade of beige. Two large Palladian windows flood the lobby with light. Above the staircase is an original clock. The lobby is decorated with many of the hotel's original antique furnishings, as well as new sofas and tables. To the left (north) of the staircase is the check-in desk, which has been installed between two wall piers. To the right (south) of the staircase is the lobby area and a fireplace is located between two seventeen-foot tall Palladian windows.

Original brass chandeliers hang from the coffered plaster ceiling of the lobby. There is a conference room located through an entrance on the east side of the lobby. The conference room is a former ballroom that has been reduced in size, and a drop ceiling hides the full ceiling height. On the west side of the lobby, adjacent to the lobby sitting area is the lobby bar and game room area that contains a pool table, video games, jukebox and bar. Also on the west side of the lobby area, an office has been created for the apartment-leasing agents.

Located to the west of the lobby and near the check-in desk is the large formal ballroom of the Detroit-Leland Hotel. The two-story ballroom has been restored and features a plaster coffered ceiling and brass chandeliers. The walls have been painted with the rag rolling technique used in the lobby. Three blind arcades on each side of the ballroom once featured original artwork of Italian garden scenes, but these no longer exist. Two large Palladian windows also light this space. To the north of the ballroom was once the kitchen space of the hotel. This is no longer in use as a kitchen, and is now a storage area.

On the north side of the second floor, adjacent to the former kitchen space, are restrooms, and the former Colonial Ballroom. This ballroom and a portion of the kitchen were converted to the "Leland City Club" in the 1980's, and the walls are painted black from the floor to the ceiling and covered in graffiti. This "underground" nightclub has been running for twenty years, and is still functioning.

To the east of the registration desk is the entrance to the elevators. This area also features plasterwork in cove moldings, pilasters, and a rounded arch featuring a fountain. The elevator lobby also has original corbels and plaster moldings which have now been painted white. Original rose-colored marble floors have been polished and restored.

The hotel's guest rooms are in the "u"-shaped-footprint upper portion of the building. The hallways are carpeted and retain their original widths and ceiling heights. The hotel rooms have been reconfigured in varying arrangements, although all rooms are fitted with kitchens and sitting rooms and separate bedroom areas. Floors five through nine house rental apartments, and floors 10-17 are used for the Ramada Hotel. The upper three floors (18, 19 and 20) are used as apartments.

The basement of the Detroit-Leland Hotel contains the various mechanical and laundry rooms and repair shops along with employee locker rooms and toilets. One other unusual feature to the basement is the "Liedernacht" nightclub, which is located in the former coffee shop space in the northeast corner of the basement.

Criteria:

The proposed historic district meets criteria A & 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; and

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.

RECOMMENDATION: The Historic Designation Advisory Board recommends that the Detroit City Council adopt an ordinance of designation for the proposed Detroit-Leland Hotel Historic District. A draft ordinance is attached for City Council's consideration.

This report was taken from "Detroit-Leland Hotel," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, nominated in 2005.

Bibliography – Detroit-Leland Hotel Historic District

Auker, Elden with Tom Keegan, "Sleeper Cars and Flannel Uniforms," Triumph Press, 2001, Chapter 3.

Babson, Steve, "Working Detroit," Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1986, pp. 78-79.

Burton, Clarence M., "History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit," Volume 3, S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Detroit - Chicago, 1930 pp. 249.

"Another Big One Bites the Dust" The Console, 1977, pp. 14.

The Detroit Free Press

Livingstone, David, "Labyrinth Bar, Detroit," October 30, 1998.

"Detroit Opens 20 New Hotels in 18 Months Costing \$25,000,000." April 6, 1925.

"Detroit-Leland to Open April 20." March 20, 1927.

"Newest Hotel Opens Doors," April 21, 1927.

"Writ Enjoins Leland Landowners," August 4, 1929.

"Employees Back; Will Get Full Pay," March 17, 1937.

"Crash Is Fatal to E. A. Loveley," July 27, 1937.

"Detroit-Leland Debt \$11,100 for Each Room," Page 1.

"The Home Front; Detroit-Leland to Open Club for City's Military Officers," July 30, 1942.

"Leland House sold," January 20, 1981.

The Detroit News

Brown, June, "Detroit Studio 54 Swings to Rhythm of Too Hard Times."

Carlisle, John M., "Detroit-Leland Sold; Apartments Planned," January 9, 1964.

Carlisle, John M., "New Leland Hotel Owners Plan Garage for 1,000 Cars" January 10, 1964.

Richards, Louis L., "Edward A. Loveley Biography," April, 1929.

Watts, Ralph R., "Previews Possible; Hotel Is Altered to Admit Autos," May 28, 1959.

"\$4,500,000 Leland Hotel is Opened," April 21, 1927.

"Leland Hotel Changes Hands," March 30, 1929.

"Receiver to Operate Hotel is Appointed," August 13, 1929.

"Hotel Reports Profit in 1931," January 28, 1932.

"Names Leland Bond Trustees," July 16, 1935.

"Discuss Hotel Reorganization," August 26, 1936.

"Sit-Down Ends, Hotels Again Has Food, Heat and Service." March 8, 1937.

“4 Hotels Reopen in Agreement; Arbitration by 3-Man Board Due,” March 17, 1937.

“Collision Occurs at Crossing,” September 26, 1937.

“Leland Joins New Group of 6 Hotels.” October 22, 1958.

“Investors’ group buys old Leland,” January 20, 1981, pp. 2-B.

The Detroit Times

Owens, J. D., “Dining Out: He’s Spending a Bundle to Spruce Up the Leland.” April 20, 1959.

“Civic Pride Builds New Hostelry,” Detroit-Leland Hotel Section, April 17, 1927, Part 8, pp. 1-5.

Detroit City Directory, 1927, pp. 42, 43, 299.

The Eccentric Newspapers

Boram, Joan, “Leland House: A glorious comeback,” December 28, 1989, pp. 4.

Ferry, Hawkins W., The Buildings of Detroit,” Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1968, pp. 324.

Fischhoff, Martin, “Detroit Guide: A Young Guide to the City,” Fourth Edition, Speedball Productions, Detroit, Michigan, 1973, pp. 69, 78, 92.

Fischhoff, Martin, “Detroit Guide,” Fifth Edition, Detroit, Michigan, 1983, pp. 431.

Hall, Ben M., “The Best Remaining Seats,” Da Capo Press, New York, New York, 1988, pp. 121, 136, 138, 201-2.

Metro Times

Klein, Sarah, “Concierge Overkill.”

Klein, Sarah, “20 Years of Underground,” November 26, 2003, pp. 107.

Moldea, Dan E., “The Hoffa Wars,” Paddington Press, New York, 1978, pp. 370- 371, 382-385, 399.

Naylor, David, “Great American Movie Theaters,” Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington D. C., 1987, pp. 18.

Naylor, David, “American Picture Palaces,” Prentice Hall Press, New York, New York, 1981, pp. 31, 36, 47-48, 134, 148-149.

