



## **Final Report:**

### **Proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District**

By a resolution dated October 5, 2010, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District consists of approximately 110 buildings (eighty-nine of which contribute to the significance of the proposed district) generally located in the vicinity of West Willis and Selden Avenues between Woodward Avenue and Third Avenue, about one and one-half miles north of downtown Detroit. The contributing buildings were erected between 1875 and 1959 and include thirty-three apartment buildings, twenty-five houses, fourteen small commercial buildings, ten buildings which originally housed light industrial, manufacturing, repair, or warehouse businesses, as well as seven buildings of other uses. The proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District is based on the Willis-Selden Historic District as listed on the National Register of Historic Places; however, the local district includes a somewhat greater number of contributing buildings than the National Register district.

## **BOUNDARIES**

The boundaries of the proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District are shown on the attached map, and are as follows:

Beginning at a point, that point being the intersection of the centerlines of Selden Avenue and Third Avenue; thence north along the centerline of Third Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of West Willis Avenue; thence east along the centerline of West Willis Avenue to its intersection with the west boundary, extended north and south, of Lot 21 of Block 98 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 259; thence north along said extended west property boundary to its intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley lying between West Canfield Avenue and West Willis Avenue; thence east along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the east property boundary, extended north and south, of Lot 20 of Block 98 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 259; thence south along said extended property boundary to the centerline of West Willis Avenue; thence east along the centerline of West Willis Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Second Avenue; thence north along the centerline of Second Avenue to its intersection with the north property boundary, extended east and west, of a parcel described as the south 40 feet of Lots 15 and 16 of Block 97 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 259; thence east along said extended property boundary to its intersection with the east boundary, extended north and south, of Lot 15 of Block 97 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 259; thence south along said extended property boundary to its intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley lying between West Canfield Avenue and West Willis Avenue; thence east along the extended centerline of said alley to its intersection with the centerline of the north-south alley lying west of and parallel to Cass Avenue; thence north along the centerline of said alley to the centerline of West Canfield Avenue; thence east along the centerline of West Canfield Avenue to the centerline of Cass Avenue; thence south along the centerline of Cass Avenue to the south boundary, extended east and west, of Lot 23 of the Subdivision of Part of Park Lots, Liber 1, Page 128; thence east along said extended property boundary to its intersection with the centerline of the north-south alley lying east of and parallel to Cass Avenue; thence south along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the centerline of West Willis Avenue; thence east along the centerline of West Willis Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Woodward Avenue; thence south along the centerline of Woodward Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Selden Avenue; thence west along the centerline of Selden Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of the north-south alley lying west of and parallel to Woodward Avenue; thence north along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the centerline of West Alexandrine Avenue; thence west along the centerline of West Alexandrine Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Cass Avenue; thence south along the centerline of Cass Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Selden Avenue; thence west along the centerline of Selden Avenue to its intersection with the east property boundary, extended north and south, of Lot 9 of Block 91 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence south along said extended property boundary to its intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley between Selden Avenue and Brainard Avenue; thence west along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with a line running 5 feet west of

and parallel to the western boundary of Lot 9 of Block 91 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence north along said line to its intersection with the centerline of Selden Avenue; thence west along the centerline of Selden Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of the west property boundary, extended north and south, of Lot 24 of Block 93 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence north along said extended property boundary to the centerline of the east-west alley between West Alexandrine Avenue and Selden Avenue; thence west along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the centerline of Second Avenue; thence south along the centerline of Second Avenue to its intersection with the northern boundary, extended east and west, of Lot 3 of Block 92 of Milo A. Smith's Subdivision, Liber 4, Page 15; thence east along said extended boundary to its intersection with the centerline of the north-south alley lying east of and parallel to Second Avenue; thence south along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley lying between Selden Avenue and Brainard Avenue; thence east along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the eastern boundary line, extended north and south, of Lot 21 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence south along said extended boundary line to its intersection with the centerline of Brainard Avenue; thence east along said centerline to its intersection with a line lying 10 feet east of and parallel to the eastern boundary of Lot 11 of Block 89 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence south along said line to the centerline of the east-west alley lying between Brainard Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard; thence west along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with a line lying 10 feet west of and parallel to the western boundary of Lot 20 of Block 89 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence south along said line to its intersection with the centerline of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard; thence west along said centerline to its intersection with a line lying 10 feet west of and parallel to the western boundary line of Lot 20 of Block 89 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177, as extended north and south; thence north along said boundary line, as extended, to its intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley lying between Brainard Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard; thence west along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with a line lying 10 feet east of the east boundary of Lot 15 of Block 89 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence north along said boundary line to its intersection with a line lying 38 feet south of and parallel to the northern boundary of Lot 14 of Block 89 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177; thence west along said line to its intersection with the western boundary line of Lot 14 of Block 89 of the Cass Farm Subdivision, Liber 1, Page 175-177, as extended north and south; thence north along said boundary line, as extended to the centerline of the east-west alley lying between Selden Avenue and Brainard Avenue; thence west along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the centerline of the north-south alley lying east of and parallel to Third Avenue; thence north along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with the centerline of Selden Avenue; thence west along the centerline of Selden Avenue to the point of beginning (Legal Description: Lots 4-9, 16-22, 32, 34-35, 39-45 of the Subdivision of Park Lots 61 & 62, as recorded in Liber 1, Page 128 Plats, Wayne County Records; also, the west 10 feet of Lot 10, Lots 11-13, the east 40 feet of Lot 14, the east 10 feet of lot 19, and Lots 20-21 of Block 89, Lot 9, the east 5 feet of Lot 10, and Lots 19-21 of Block 91, Lots 9-16 of Block 92, Lots 1-16 and 24 of Block 93, Lots 1-12, 15-16, and 20-24 of Block 94, Lots

1-20 of Block 95, and Lots 1-10 and 12-22 of Block 96, Lots 1, 5-8, and the south 40 feet of Lots 15-16 of Block 97, Cass Farm Subdivision, as recorded in Liber 1, Page 175-177 Plats, Wayne County Records; also, Lots 20-21 of Block 98, Cass Farm Subdivision, as recorded in Liber 1, Page 259 Plats, Wayne County Records; also, Lots 1-4 of Fales Subdivision, as recorded in Liber 1, Page 287 Plats, Wayne County Records; also, Lots A-F of Block 94, Cass Farm Subdivision, as recorded in Liber 4, Page 11 Plats, Wayne County Records; also, Lots 1-3 of Block 91 of Milo A. Smith's Subdivision, as recorded in Liber 4, Page 15 Plats, Wayne County Records; also, the north 30 feet of Lot 2, and Lots 3-5 of the Resubdivision of Part of Cass Farm, as recorded in Liber 6, Page 46, Plats, Wayne County Records.)

## **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The proposed boundaries were selected to incorporate the areas with the highest density of historic buildings and exclude isolated buildings surrounded by vacant land. On the north, the proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District is separated by a small margin of vacant land and noncontributing buildings from the nearby West Canfield and Warren-Prentis Historic Districts. On the east, Woodward Avenue, nine lanes wide and Detroit's primary north-south thoroughfare, forms a boundary. To the south and west, a significant concentration of vacant land and noncontributing buildings creates a boundary.

## **HISTORY**

*This report is adapted from the Willis-Selden Historic District National Register of Historic Places Registration Form prepared by Gretchen Griner of Zachary and Associates, Inc., in May, 1997, as part of the Cass Farm Survey Area Multiple Property Submission. Much of the text below is adapted directly from that document, but has been updated to reflect resources which have been altered or demolished or have attained significance in the intervening years.*

The proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District represents one of the largest concentrations of architecturally significant, late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings of mixed uses extant in Detroit. The district's residential and commercial building stock reflects the history of the area, from its development as a streetcar community in the late nineteenth century through the intensification of its land use in the early twentieth century and a decline in new construction during and after the Great Depression. The district, home to many notable Detroit businessmen at the turn of the last century, became one of Detroit's leading commercial districts with the advent of the automobile industry. Beginning in the 1910s, the district was home to numerous auto-related businesses. The area also came to serve as a prime location in which to house Detroit's burgeoning population of automobile-related workers. In addition to its single-family homes, larger apartment buildings, and businesses, the community also includes buildings of other uses including industrial and religious structures.

The proposed district is located approximately one and one-half miles north of downtown Detroit and the Detroit River. Land included in the proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District was originally known as the Park Lots and Cass Farm, which were subdivided in a consistent manner with generous lot sizes. The initial divisions of property into long, narrow ribbons, fronting on the river and extending back several miles, followed the land ownership pattern established by French settlers in the eighteenth century. The Park Lots, located between Woodward Avenue and Cass Avenue, were sold at auction in 1807. The Cass Farm, located between Cass Avenue and Third Avenue, was initially subdivided by Lewis Cass during the 1860s and later by his family in the 1870s.

The Willis-Selden area became an accessible and popular area for development in the 1860s as a result of technological change and the growth of the city of Detroit as a whole. The development of the streetcar lines along Woodward Avenue (extending to present day Alexandrine Avenue by 1863) and Third Avenue (extending to present day Hancock Avenue by 1873) facilitated faster and more accessible transportation to the area creating a streetcar suburb within the city limits of Detroit. During this time, the city was growing rapidly as a result of new industrial opportunities. In turn, the new growth and industrialization resulted in an expanded wealthy professional class, who chose to escape the crowded conditions in the city center by moving to this newly-developed, suburban area.

This move comprised the first wave of development in the Willis-Selden area. New development consisted primarily of single-family dwellings built by upper-middle class professionals between approximately 1875 and 1895. A concentration of three modest single-family residences built in the 1870s at 483 Brainard Avenue, 3752 Second Avenue, and 3760 Second Avenue exemplify this early stage of development. In addition, many notable Detroit businessmen and their families had fashionable homes built in the district, such as Robert Brown, the vice president of the cigar manufacturing firm of Brown and Brothers Company; Edgar B. and Anna Scripps Whitcomb, real estate investors and philanthropists; James Gourlay, a co-partner in the shirt manufacturing and men's furnishing goods company of Gourlay Brothers; Charles H. Moore, U. S. Deputy Marshall; Campbell Symington, office manager of the C. R. Mabley Company department store; and Robert A. Jamieson, a physician. Churches, local businesses, and a fire station were established to serve the residents of the area.

As apartment-style living became popular in the late 1880s, the construction of duplexes and small-scale apartments increased drastically into the early 1900s while single-family residential construction nearly ceased. Architects and builders were commissioned to design small-scale apartment buildings in the popular styles of the period. The most notable architect of this building type was A. C. Varney, one of Detroit's most prolific designers of apartment buildings, and designer of two buildings within the district. Varney, who was born in Lucerne, New York in 1849, practiced architecture in Detroit beginning in 1879. He designed a total of fourteen residences in the broader *Cass Farm Survey Area*, and founded the firm of A. C. Varney & Company, and later (with his son) Varney & Varney, and finally partnered with Frederick Winter to form A. C. Varney &

Winter. Other prominent firms included Baxter, O'Dell and Halpin; Pollmar & Ropes; and the prolific Donaldson & Meier.

The advent of the automotive industry in Detroit was a major force behind the transformation of the Willis-Selden area from a residential neighborhood into a mixed use commercial and high density residential district between 1910 and 1930. It was a prime location, located in close proximity to downtown Detroit and easily accessible from the entire city. The large lots available within the district helped to facilitate the construction of commercial buildings, about half of which were automobile-related businesses.

The Willis-Selden area soon became one of the most significant automobile-related business districts in the city. Businesses included car dealers, repair shops, parts suppliers, garages and gas stations. Examples include the four-story Overland-Willys Service Station at 444 West Willis Avenue, the Stuber-Stone Building (an automobile dealership) at 4221-29 Cass Avenue, Markley Commercial Body Company at 4130 Cass Avenue, Glendale Motor Sales (since demolished) at 3955-61 Cass Avenue, a gas station (since demolished) at 4153 Second Avenue, Motor City Maintenance at 3960 Third Avenue, the Detroit Ball Bearing Company at 100-10 West Alexandrine Avenue and 115 West Willis Avenue, and Ramsay & Company Auto Repair at 665-7 Selden Avenue. In addition, a branch office of the Michigan Secretary of State's Automobile License Bureau was established at 4107 Cass Avenue in 1935.

As the population of Detroit continued to rise with the influx of people seeking jobs in the manufacturing industry, the Willis-Selden area became a prime location in which to provide housing for the increasing working class. Many single-family houses and small-scale apartment buildings were further subdivided to meet the housing demand. Large scale, often full-lot apartment buildings with a high density of units were constructed as well. These included larger structures such as the Coronado Apartments at 3751-73 Second Avenue, and the Strathmore Hotel at 70 West Alexandrine Avenue. While some of these buildings contained traditional apartment-style residences, others served as apartment hotels, a concept that was growing in popularity in Detroit in the 1910s and 1920s. The apartment hotel served both short-term travelers and long-term residents, combining the larger floor plans common in residential dwellings with the degree of services customarily found at hotels.

Recreational needs of new residents were soon met by the construction of new theaters and ballrooms. A three-story 1890 structure at 3933 Woodward Avenue was remodeled in 1912, creating the Garden Theater, the first large movie theater built outside of the downtown Monroe District. It was the first adaptive reuse project of noted theater architect C. Howard Crane. Other facilities in the area, located just outside the boundaries of the proposed district, include the Graystone Ballroom (demolished in 1980), on Woodward Avenue just north of East Canfield Avenue, the Majestic Theater, on the east side of Woodward, and Orchestra Hall, on the west side of Woodward one block south of Selden Avenue.

The pace of development within the district slowed significantly during the 1930s with the onset of the Great Depression. Although new buildings were erected infrequently from 1930 through 1960, those that were built were consistent in density and use with the district's earlier structures, maintaining the overall character of the area. These buildings included new Detroit Ball Bearing Company facilities, one built at 100 West Alexandrine Avenue in 1930 and expanded in 1950, and another built at 115 West Willis Avenue in 1959, the Michigan Secretary of State branch office, and the Smith Welding Supply and Equipment Company, built at 666 Selden Avenue in 1950.

In the second half of the twentieth century, building additions, alterations, and new construction occurred sparingly, and although a number of buildings have been demolished in recent decades, the overall scale and character of the community persists. Presently, the proposed Willis-Selden Historic District provides an outstanding example of late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century mixed-use architecture, including a significant portion of automobile-related buildings.

## **DESCRIPTION**

The proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District contains one of the City of Detroit's largest concentrations of architecturally significant, late nineteenth century and early to mid-twentieth century buildings of mixed use. Substantial single-family and multiple-unit residential buildings, commercial buildings (residential in scale) and churches are evidence of the district's early development as a streetcar community within the city of Detroit. The construction of additional commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings reflects the further growth of the district into one of Detroit's commercial centers in the early twentieth century. The area's high concentration of buildings and overall character have been retained, with most of its resources showing only minor alterations over time. Still, some resources have been altered, have deteriorated from neglect, or have been demolished.

The proposed Willis-Selden Local Historic District, located one and one-half miles north of downtown Detroit, contains approximately 110 buildings and covers approximately 49 acres. The district is roughly bounded by West Canfield Avenue on the north, Woodward Avenue on the east, the alley south of Selden Avenue on the south, and Third Avenue on the west; however, the exact boundary is irregular, as shown on the attached map. This district covers the land originally platted as the Park Lots and Cass Farm. A grid system was used in the subdivision and development of the area, resulting in main thoroughfares running north-south, towards downtown Detroit and perpendicular to the Detroit River, with east-west streets intersecting at right angles.

The north-south and east-west streets are similar in character. The streets are approximately four lanes wide and contain a variety of building types. Early residential buildings with shallow yards are concentrated in the 400-700 blocks of West Alexandrine Avenue, the 400 block of West Willis, and the northern half of the 3900 block of Second Avenue. Larger apartment buildings are primarily located on the east-west streets.

Commercial buildings and other uses are interspersed throughout the district, with particular concentrations of commercial and small-scale manufacturing structures located along Woodward Avenue, at the intersection of Cass Avenue and West Willis Avenue, and on the 600 block of Selden Avenue.

Eighty-nine buildings contribute to the significance of the proposed district. They were constructed between 1875 and 1950, and include thirty-three apartment buildings, twenty-five houses, fourteen small commercial buildings, ten buildings which originally housed light industrial, manufacturing, or repair businesses, two churches, a theater, a livery stable, a firehouse, a funeral home, and a veterinary clinic. The buildings display a variety of architectural styles, stylistic decoration, and craftsmanship. Styles range from the Late Victorian period through the Modern period, ranging from high style to vernacular interpretations of styles including Colonial Revival, Romanesque, Commercial, Queen Anne, Beaux Arts, and Art Deco. Although materials vary, the façades of these buildings are faced most commonly with brick.

The single-family residences in the proposed district were erected between 1879 and 1924, with most constructed during the 1880s. Late Victorian architectural styles dominate and include Victorian Eclectic, Gothic, Queen Anne, Stick/Eastlake, and Romanesque. Significant examples include the Victorian Eclectic Thomas Beck House (c. 1879) at 3972 Second Avenue, the Queen Anne Thomas G. Craig House (1883) at 461 West Alexandrine Avenue, the Stick/Eastlake Frederick Hubel House (1885) at 478 West Alexandrine Avenue, and the Romanesque Campbell Symington House (1882) at 3977 Second Avenue. These early residential buildings are distributed evenly throughout the district.

The apartment buildings were built from the 1890s through the 1920s, with construction peaking in the 1910s. The buildings range in size and scale, from a two-story duplex with a yard, to much larger structures. The largest building is the Strathmore Hotel (1924), eight-story, full-lot apartment hotel at 70 West Alexandrine Avenue. Architecturally notable, smaller-scale apartment buildings include the Spanish Medieval Revival El Moore Flats (1898) at 624 West Alexandrine Avenue, the Beaux Arts Venn Apartments (1904) at 4142 Cass Avenue, a Colonial Revival apartment building (1906) at 4251 Cass Avenue, the Romanesque Coronado Apartments (1894) at 3751-73 Second Avenue, the Jacobethan Revival Charles apartment building (1908) at 500 West Willis Avenue, and the Craftsman Burcorns Apartment (1912) at 675 West Willis Avenue. Smaller apartment buildings include the Spanish Colonial Rainer Court Apartments (1922) at 711 West Alexandrine Avenue, the Late Gothic Billingham Apartments (1922) at 71 West Willis Avenue, and the Neo-Georgian Lindley Hall Hotel (1916) at 479 West Willis Avenue.

Construction dates for the commercial buildings within the proposed district span the period from 1875 to 1950, with most constructed after 1920. The commercial buildings, ranging in height from one to three stories, are primarily located on Cass and Woodward Avenues and the 600 block of Selden Avenue. Designed primarily in twentieth century revival styles and Art Deco, many of the buildings also reflect vernacular forms of these

styles. Noteworthy examples include the Classical Revival Watkins & Radcliffe store (1908) at 4145 Woodward Avenue, the commercial Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company building (1924) at 4201 Cass Avenue, the Sullivanesque Stuber-Stone & Company Building (1916) at 4221-4229 Cass Avenue, and the Art Deco Springfield Metallic Casket building (1930) at 627 West Alexandrine Avenue. Storefront additions to existing residential buildings, such as those at 483 Brainard Avenue and 3752 Second Avenue, are also indicative of the creation of commercial infill development around and after 1920.

The industrial buildings within the proposed district were constructed between 1915 and 1950. Typically small in scale, they are interspersed throughout the neighborhood. The two story brick Blue Valley Creamery building (1915) at 634 Selden Avenue is Modernistic in style. The four story brick Overland Storage Company (1916), located at 444 West Willis Avenue, is an example of the industrial building from the Modern Movement. The two story brick, Late Georgian Revival Owosso Casket Company was constructed in 1927 at 644 Selden Avenue.

Other significant structures within the proposed district include the Gothic and Classical Revival Emanuel Memorial Episcopal Church (1875) at 80 West Alexandrine Avenue, the Romanesque Cass Avenue Methodist Church (1883) at 3901 Cass Avenue, the Northern Renaissance Revival Engine House #5 (1909) at 435 West Alexandrine Avenue, the Beaux Arts Garden Theater (c. 1890) at 3933 Woodward Avenue, and a livery stable (1886) at 30 Selden Avenue.

Detailed descriptions of select buildings are as follows:

**3977 Second Avenue; Campbell Symington House (1882)**



This large, rectangular, two and one-half story residence with hip roof is located on the corner of Second Avenue and West Alexandrine Avenue. It was designed in the Romanesque style by Donaldson & Meier. The residence was built on a raised foundation. Constructed of red-vein sandstone, the main façade is divided into three sections; the two outer bays with paired windows and gable dormers flank a main entrance bay. A rectangular bay extends slightly

from the middle of the West Alexandrine elevation and is surmounted by a dormer. The cornice has been replaced with artificial siding. The house was originally built for Campbell Symington, office manager of the C. R. Mabley Company department store. In 1884, Symington joined with J. L. Hudson to purchase a carpet business and form the firm of Symington & Hudson. This building is locally designated as the single-resource Campbell Symington House Historic District.

**461 West Alexandrine Avenue; Thomas G. Craig House (1883)**

This medium sized, two and one-half story, Queen Anne-style brick residence atop a raised basement is asymmetrically arranged. The



façade is vertically divided into two bays. The east, front gabled bay contains a three-sided window on the first floor topped by a hipped roof which connects to the porch roof located over the recessed entrance in the western bay. A paired window and a single window are located in the second story. Topped by a cross-gabled roof, the residence is embellished with finely patterned brickwork and stone courses as well as Eastlake-style wood detailing in the roof gable. Its original occupant, Thomas C. Craig, was a grain merchant in the firm of Gillet & Hall.

### **3901 Cass Avenue; Cass Avenue Methodist Church (1883)**

This Romanesque church building, designed by Mason & Rice, also includes an addition by Malcomson & Higginbotham that was added in 1891. The original membership of



this church consisted mostly of affluent residents of the surrounding community. This large building, with Grafton stone in a coursed ashlar finish with sandstone trim, is composed of three sections: the original, T-shaped chapel with a two and one-half story read wing, the present main church with a Greek cross plan formed by cross gables, and a small, one-story addition on the north elevation added in 1966. Measuring seventy-two feet along Cass

Avenue and 146 feet along Selden Avenue, the church features a tower, with pyramidal roof sheathed in green slate, at the corner. The main entrances are located on the south and east sides of the tower, and at the north end of the Cass Avenue elevation. This building was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, and is presently locally designated as the single-resource Cass Methodist Church Historic District.

### **3751-73 Second Avenue; Coronado Apartments (1894)**

Located at the corner of Second and Selden Avenues, this large, rectangular, four story building with flat roof sits atop a raised foundation. The building is constructed of yellow brick and rusticated sandstone which horizontally divide the primary elevations between the second and third stories. The Second Avenue façade is a long, flat-fronted, symmetrical mass that terminates in curved, four story bay windows at the south and north ends. The ground floor contains three entrances, each with open loggias on the floors above. The broad, wood and metal, bracketed cornice and brick frieze form a monumental cornice treatment which caps the building. The Coronado is noteworthy as an upscale apartment building erected at a time when apartment living was only beginning to become fashionable for middle class and wealthy Detroiters. The units were subdivided in the 1930s as the average income of area residents declined. This building was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.



### **3933 Woodward Avenue; Garden Theater (c. 1890)**



This three-story brick building was adapted by noted theater architect C. Howard Crane in 1912 to house a movie theater. It is three bays wide and originally contained three storefronts on the first floor separated by decorative metal verticals. The pattern of fenestration of the upper floors is similar on each bay: a large triple window flanked by narrow double-hung windows. On the second floor the outermost triple windows share a single

segmental arch at the top; on the third floor, they are rectangular with flat arches in brick. Patterned brickwork is evident in the corbelling at the shoulders of the third floor windows at the outer side of each bay and in checkerboard pattern on the corresponding second floor windows and above the central third floor triple sash. A bracketed cornice has been removed. The central bay was altered with the addition of a two-story terracotta applied façade. The first-floor storefronts appear to have been altered from the building's 1912 configuration.

### **624 West Alexandrine Avenue; El Moore Flats (1898)**

This four story, rectangular, brownstone-faced, multi-unit apartment building on a raised foundation measures forty-one feet wide and eighty-six feet deep. Its style is Spanish Medieval Revival, combining Islamic motifs, such as the recessed horseshoe arch and archivolts as seen within the entrance, and Christian Gothic motifs, such as the finials above the hood moldings. A crenellated tower occupies the southwestern corner of the flat roofed building. The side and rear elevations are utilitarian in design. The building was designed by A. C. Varney & Company.



### **4251 Cass Avenue; Apartment Building (1906)**



This Colonial Revival structure was constructed by builders Putnam & Moore. The main rectangular block of this two-story brick building is divided into three bays. The central bay features a projecting two-story monumental portico with fluted columns supporting a gable roof which intersects the shallow hipped roof of the house. The outer bays contain two double-hung windows per floor, each with flat lintels containing pronounced keystones and sills of stone. Raised brick quoins line the corners of the

front façade. A modillion cornice extends the length of the façade and side elevations.

**500 West Willis Avenue; The Charles (1908)**

This medium-sized, brick and stone, three-story apartment building with flat roof was designed in the Jacobethan style by the firm of Pollmar & Ropes. It measures fifty feet wide along Second Avenue and eighty-nine feet wide along West Willis Avenue. The two primary façades each contain entrances. The slightly raised basement level is clad with rock-faced stone; above at first story level is a striped effect created by stone quoins and window surrounds with small areas of brick between. Oriel windows hang above the first floor on the bays flanking the entrance on both elevations. The entrance is through a segmental arch with carved spandrels and keystone. A modillon cornice rests beneath the parapet wall.



**444 West Willis Avenue; Overland Storage Company (1916)**



This large, four-story industrial building is constructed of reinforced concrete faced with brick. It measures 190 feet wide by 150 feet deep, extending the full depth of the lot. A two-story addition was added to the west side in 1940. Brick-faced pilasters, terminated by a stone belt course bearing stone crests, divide the bays of windows located between two side entrances. The two outermost bays have one window while the five bays in between

have a row of four windows sharing a sill. A fifth story, recently added to the building, is set back from the plane of the façade and is visible from the street only at a distance. On the building’s east elevation, a painted advertisement reads “Overland Willys Knight Service Station.” The building provided sales, repair, and storage facilities for the Willys-Overland Motor Company.

**4221-4229 Cass Avenue; Stuber-Stone & Company Building (1916)**

This Sullivan-esque building was erected by A. J. Smith Construction Company. It is a large, two-story, rough brick and reinforced concrete building with terra cotta ornament, rectangular in shape, measuring 100 feet wide by 150 feet deep. The roof is flat. The façade is vertically divided into five bays by two-story brick piers. The storefront windows and windows on the north elevation appear to have been replaced in the early 1990s with windows that reflect the form of the building’s original windows. A wide spandrel and cornice encompass the second-story windows. Among other decorative elements, the cornice features gargoyles in the form of lions bearing shields. The building served as a Columbia Motors



dealership until that firm went bankrupt in 1923. This building was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.

**627 West Alexandrine Avenue; Springfield Metallic Casket Company (1930)**



This two-story, concrete commercial building is faced with stone on its principal façade. It is Art Deco in style and massing, with copious decoration both raised and in relief. It is rectangular in plan, with narrow street frontage, and occupies the full depth of its lot. The façade is vertically divided into three bays by pilasters, each side bay is further divided into three vertical sections and the central bay into two. The central bay of the flat roofline of the

building is embellished by an ornamental frieze. This building was used by the Ohio-based Springfield Metallic Casket Company until 1943. From 1957 to 2002 it served as Mortuary Science Building of Wayne State University.

**LIST OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES**

W. Alexandrine Ave.:

- 70 Strathmore Hotel
- 80 Emanuel Memorial Episcopal Church
- 100-110 Detroit Ball Bearing Company
- 434 Mahtawa Apartments
- 435 Engine Company #5
- 454 Eileen Apartments
- 461 Thomas G. Craig House
- 467 Virelo Apartments
- 476 Frederick Hubel House
- 477 Brenton Apartments
- 487 West Samuel Brandon House
- 489 Detroit Veterinary Sanitorium
- 624 El Moore Flats
- 627 Springfield Metallic Casket Company
- 643-47 Moss Double House
- 654 Thomas MacLeod House
- 667 Genesee Apartments
- 677 Mt. Vernon Apartments
- 687-89 Duplex
- 690 Weber House
- 711 Rainer Court Apartments

Brainard Ave.:

457 Traymore Apartments  
470 Electrical Warehouse, Inc.  
483 House  
484 Brainard Apartments

Cass Ave.:

3901 Cass Avenue Methodist Church  
3971 William R. Hamilton Funeral Home  
3975 Robert H. Brown House  
4107 Michigan Secretary of State  
4120 Waldorf Apartments  
4130 Markley Commercial Body Company  
4142 Venn Apartments  
4160 John Solomon Grocery  
4201 Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company  
4221-29 Stuber-Stone & Company  
4251 House  
4263 Knickerbocker Apartments

Martin Luther King Blvd.:

470 Stimson Hotel  
480 Edgar B. and Anna Scripps Whitcomb House

Second Ave.:

3745-47 James Gourlay House  
3751-73 Coronado Apartments  
3752 Robert Smith House  
3760 Joseph F. Cooper House  
3929 Commercial Building  
3951 Col. Edmund H. Brooke House  
3964 Century Apartments  
3972 Thomas Beck House  
3977 Campbell Symington House  
3980 Thomas Beck House  
4120 Commercial Building  
4138-62 Second Avenue Terrace  
4222 Timken Roller Bearing Service and Sales  
4246 House

Selden Ave.:

30 Livery Stable

438	Marie Apartments
627-35	Selden Lodge
634	Blue Valley Creamery
644	Owosso Casket Company
665-67	Ramsay & Company Auto Repair
666	Smith Welding Supply and Equipment Company
677	Commodore Apartments
678	Finn Apartments
686	Selden Manor

Third Ave.:

3960	Commercial Building
4100	Commercial Building
4126	Weber Furniture Company

W. Willis Ave.:

49	R. A. Jamieson House
71	Billinghurst Apartments
115	Detroit Ball Bearing Company
122	Edman Apartments
132	Milton Apartments
137	Charles A. Dean Double House
444	Overland Storage Company
445-59	House
449	House
469	Wentworth Apartments
479	Lindley Hall Hotel
500	The Charles
619	Richard Austin House
629	Dr. Joseph Baker House
630-42	Westwill Apartments
665	Keyes Apartments
675	Burcorns Apartments

Woodward Ave.:

3901-15	Freer & Company and George Spring grocery stores
3921	Charles Rischert Bakery
3933	Garden Theater
3961-65	Parker Pharmacy
4145	Watkins & Radcliffe Hardware
4161	Commercial Building

## **CRITERIA**

The proposed historic district meets the first and third 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; (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.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Designation Advisory Board recommends that the Detroit City Council adopt an ordinance of designation for the proposed Willis Selden Local Historic District. A draft ordinance is attached for City Council's consideration.

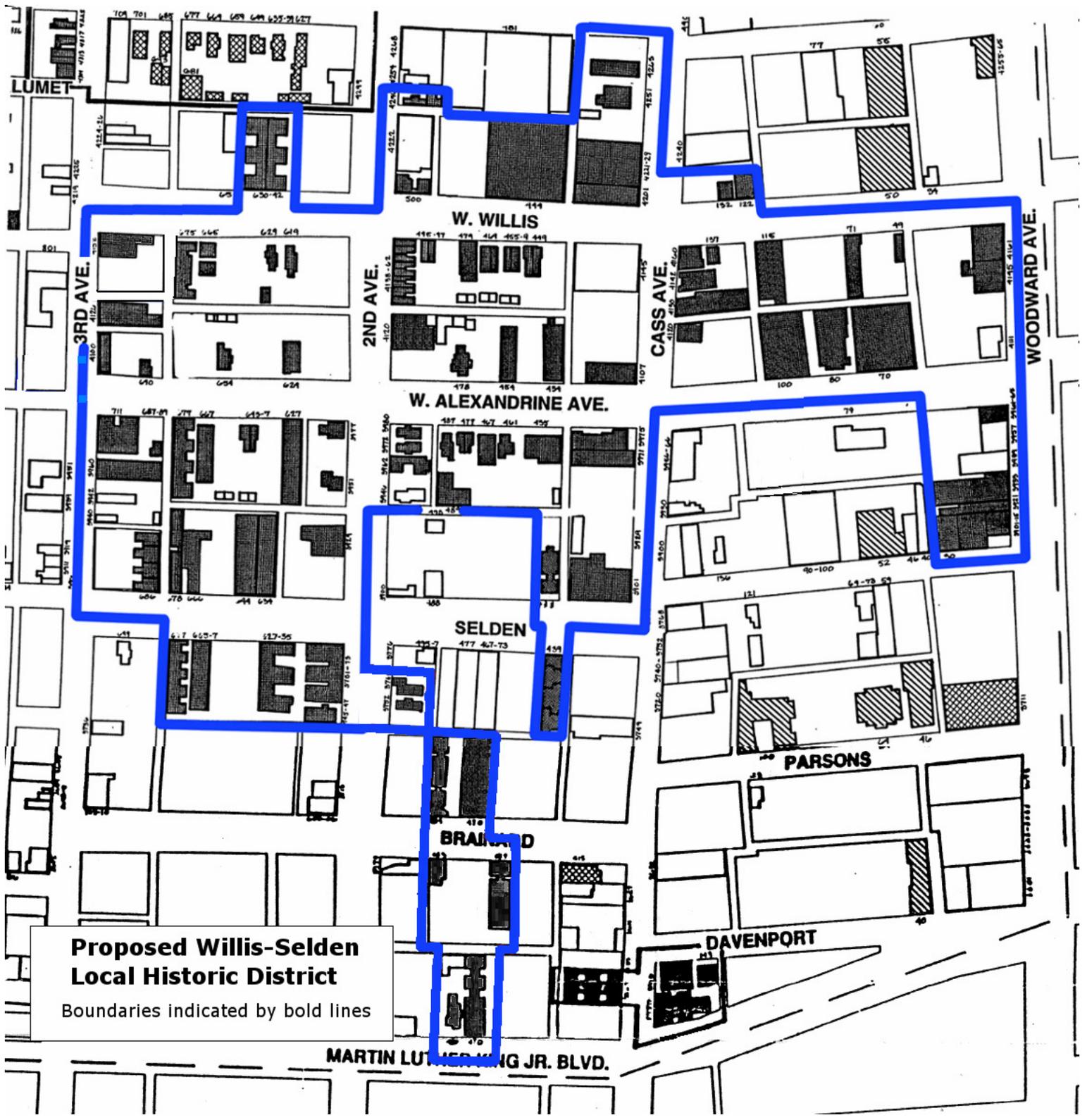
## **COMPOSITION OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD**

The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine appointed members and three *ex-officio* members, all residents of Detroit. The appointed members are: Kwaku Atara, Melanie A. Bazil, Robert Cosgrove, Keith A. Dye, Zene' Frances Fogel-Gibson, Edward Francis, Calvin Jackson, Harriet Johnson and Doris Rhea. The *ex-officio* members, who may be represented by members of their staff, are: the Director of the Historical Department, the Director of the City Planning Commission, and the Director of the Planning and Development Department.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Detroit/Urban Conservation Project. North Cass Corridor Intensive Level Survey. 1995.

National Register of Historic Places, Willis-Selden Historic District, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register # 97001478.



**Proposed Willis-Selden  
Local Historic District**

Boundaries indicated by bold lines