Proposed Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District

Final Report

By a resolution dated January 15, 2008, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District is located approximately two miles north of the central business district, east of Woodward Avenue and west of John R. and the Detroit Medical Center. It is composed of fourteen contributing, small-scale residential and commercial buildings on the east-west streets of East Forest, Garfield, and East Canfield Avenues and the west side of John R constructed between 1885 and 1938. Directly north of the proposed district is Detroit's mid-city Cultural Center; directly east is the Dingell Veterans' Hospital.

This report is taken from the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District, prepared by Zachary & Associates, listed 2003.

Boundaries: The boundaries of the Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District are the same as the National Register Historic District by the same name, and are outlined in heavy black lines on the attached map. The boundary description is as follows:

On the north, the centerline of E. Forest Avenue;

On the east, the centerline of John R ;

On the south, the centerline of E. Canfield; and

On the west, beginning at the intersection of the centerline of E. Canfield Avenue and the westerly line of Lot 7 of Fisher & Shearer's Subdivision of Park Lot 31, L1, P15 of Plats, Wayne County Records ("WCR"), extended southerly; thence northerly along said westerly line of Lot 7 extended northerly to its intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley between E. Canfield Avenue and Garfield Avenue; thence easterly along the centerline of said alley to its intersection with a line drawn 10 feet westerly of the easterly line of Lot 41 of Hubbard & King's Subdivision of Park Lot 32, L7, P20 of Plats, WCR, extended southerly; thence northerly along said line drawn 10 feet westerly of the easterly line of Lot 41, extended northerly to its intersection with the centerline of Garfield Avenue; thence westerly along said centerline of Garfield Avenue to its intersection with a line drawn 10 feet westerly of the easterly line of Lot 5 of Hubbard & King's Subdivision of Park Lot 33, L7 P20 of Plats, WCR, extended southerly, thence northerly along said line drawn 10 feet westerly of the easterly line of Lot 5 extended northerly to its intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley between Garfield Avenue and E. Forest Avenue; thence westerly along the centerline of said east-west alley to its intersection with the centerline of the north-south alley between Woodward Avenue and John R Street; thence northerly along the centerline of said north-south alley to its intersection with the centerline of E. Forest Avenue.

History - Significance

The Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District is significant due to its association with jazz music, an important aspect of Detroit's music history between 1920 and 1960, and with the associated life style within Detroit's African American community. Called "Sugar Hill" by some of its residents and patrons, the district was akin to the nation's music capitals of New York and Chicago. Between the years of 1940 and 1960, Sugar Hill's collection of nightclubs, hotels, apartment buildings and businesses was home to an unique lifestyle that grew out of and fed into the local jazz scene. Sugar Hill's significance is further enhanced because it is the only remaining neighborhood associated with jazz in the city of Detroit. The loss of buildings within the District is evidence of the direct and indirect impacts of the mid-twentieth century urban renewal movement on Detroit's African American neighborhoods.

The Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District is also significant for its contribution to the social history of Detroit, specifically as related to the development of a new settlement pattern for African Americans. This neighborhood represented a departure from the strict racial barriers and segregation that existed in the city at the time, signaling a small but significant change that allowed black and white musicians and patrons to mingle in the only socially integrated section of Detroit. Integration was not accepted in housing, however, and until 1940 blacks were largely confined to the Near East Side, a strip of land located north of Jefferson to Medbury, between John R and Russell. The Sugar Hill district is on the western-most edge of the Near East Side. Despite the

restrictions of segregation, the Sugar Hill area provided better housing for a new generation of African Americans, compared to the older crowded and deteriorated neighborhoods of Paradise Valley and Black Bottom.

Perhaps most importantly, a newly formed cultural identity emerged from this district that shed the degrading image of blacks as menial service workers for a middle-class lifestyle, shaped by music, which emulated glamour and created new wealth. Out of this neighborhood sprung the musicians and genius that would eventually forge the Motown empire. In the words of Beans Bowles, a musician from this era, "People would come from everywhere. It was the center of entertainment. There was no entertainment like that in the city at the time. We called it 'Sugar Hill' really. Everything there was just poppin". 1

African American Settlement: 1940-1960

As with many neighborhoods located adjacent to Woodward Avenue, Detroit's wealthier and prominent citizens originally settled the neighborhood. Some early important residents, dating to the 1880s, include: Alex Dow, president of Detroit Edison Company; Dr. Guy L. Kiefer, appointed Detroit city physician and founder of the Herman Kiefer Hospital; and Dr. Nathaniel Webber, professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics at the Detroit College of Medicine. Near the turn of the century, the area was within the major housing district for Jewish Detroiters located east of Woodward between the CBD and Medbury, west of Hastings. Other residents in the area included hospital-related staff, due to the proximity to the developing medical center east of John R. As the Jewish population moved north and west into the Dexter-Davidson area, a growing black population drawn to the well-paying jobs provided by the auto and defense industries moved into the area. Most of John R, however, remained segregated to the black population through enforced housing restrictions and covenants until the 1940s.

While African Americans have a long history in the city of Detroit, the percentage of the whole population did not exceed 5 percent until the 1930 census count. By 1920, active recruiting by Detroit automobile companies in the south was attracting more than 1,000 black migrants from the south on a weekly basis during a time that became known as the Great Migration. Between 1920 and 1930, Detroit's black population quickly tripled from 40,000 to 120,000, but remained a small minority at 7.7 percent of the whole city population. More significant was the growth between 1940 and 1950, when the black population doubled to 300,000 and accounted for 16 percent of the population. By 1960, the black population rose to nearly one-half million people, representing 30 percent of the city's population.

Detroit’s first wave of black migrants primarily settled in two areas: Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. Paradise Valley was centered at the intersection of St. Antoine and Adams, with the following boundary streets: "Gratiot on the south, Vernor on the north, Hastings on the east, and Brush on the west."2 This area was located approximately four blocks east and south of the proposed Sugar Hill district. Black Bottom was located south and east of Paradise Valley, closer to the Detroit riverfront. Located in the area that is now Lafayette Park, Black Bottom was the area defined by Gratiot Avenue on the north, Jefferson Ave. on the south, I-375 on the west, and Mt. Elliot on the east.

Following the settlement patterns of the eastern European Jewish population, Paradise Valley eventually extended north, focusing on Hastings Street from Adams to Warren Avenue. Hastings Street was occupied primarily by Jewish merchants, but a number of African American businesses also developed in this area and on the parallel streets of st. Antoine, Beaubien, and Brush, stopping just short of John R. The Jewish population generally sympathized with the plight of black families and helped many start their own businesses.

The expansions of Paradise Valley and other black neighborhoods did little to relieve the congested housing conditions that resulted from an exploding population. As the black population grew throughout these decades, the geographic boundaries within which blacks were allowed to live grew only slightly. Until 1960, the black population, which represented 30 percent of the city's total, was confined to about 15 percent of the city's land area. Racial discrimination practices in Detroit made every aspect of life difficult for African Americans in the city during this period. Not only did racial segregation restrict employment, business and housing opportunities, but law enforcement, schools, entertainment venues, and transportation needs were also greatly impacted.

The first foothold of black property ownership west of John R occurred in 1941 when Mr. Ernest White was successful in purchasing the glamorous Gotham Hotel, located at the southwest corner of John R and Orchestra Place. This property purchase was, in fact, a case of mistaken racial identity, but created the first opportunity to break the real estate color barrier that existed west of John R.

The Gotham Hotel, a few blocks south of the proposed district, was located at the western edge of the growing Detroit Medical community, which fought the purchase of the hotel by a man of color, and was successful in preventing the hotel from obtaining a liquor license. Further gains in black property ownership occurred in the 1940s following political and union inroads toward integration of the factories.[3] Also during this time prominent African American business owners developed a number of professional office buildings on East Warren Avenue between John R and Hastings.

The US Census counts for this area (generally bounded by Forest on the north, John R on the east, Canfield on the south and Woodward Avenue on the west) illustrate the dramatic influx of African American population in the decade between 1940 and 1950 when the population shifted from 1 percent non-white to 70 percent. By the 1960 census count, the area had shifted to 94 percent non-white.[4]

In the ten years between 1940 and 1950, the fairly quiet residential district clustered around John R and was transformed into the hottest new address for young African American men and women. These men and women were seeking to live in a better quality neighborhood that was close to the action of the growing music and entertainment district that radically changed music and segregation policies during the late 1940s in the area.

By the 1940s, Detroit was a regular stop for numerous world-famous jazz artists and celebrities performing at the nearby Paradise Theater (Orchestra Hall) and the Graystone Ballroom, both located within a few blocks on Woodward. The performers were not allowed to stay at the whites-only hotels downtown, so they provided the Gotham with a steady clientele and helped usher in a new black identity in Detroit, where elegance and glamour were standard fare to be admired and

emulated. The hotel was also the scene for the emerging upper class of African Americans in Detroit, and the choice location for major social events in the black community.[5]

The first nightclub in the proposed Sugar Hill District opened in 1936. The Harlem Cave, named for its basement environment, was Jewish owned, and reputed to have a number of Purple Gang patrons. This club initiated a shift of entertainment places from the intersection of Hastings Street and Adams downtown to the neighborhood around John R and Canfield. The Harlem Cave was also a departure from the highly formal format offered by the clubs located downtown, instead resembling the speakeasy style of clubs that evolved during the Prohibition era. This style of venue responded to a new form of music - be-bop that was better appreciated in a nightclub setting.[6]

Throughout the 1930s and 40s, many of the commercial buildings continued to be Jewish owned. In the vicinity of John R and Canfield, several Jewish-owned showbars and clubs were opened in the 1940s. This was the birth of 'The Strip', which would become famous as the center of Detroit's jazz and be-bop music scene.

The jazz district continued to flourish until the 1960s, attracting musicians and patrons from around the country. During this time, the Sugar Hill area and surrounding blocks housed five clubs and lounges, and nine hotels. Many of the nation's finest jazz and blues musicians of the 1940s and 1950s played the clubs located along John R and stayed in the local hotels that were open to blacks. These musicians include Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Muddy Waters, B. B. King, Dinah Washington, John Lee Hooker and countless others. Though many of the clubs served both black and white patrons, the music and culture of the area was predominantly black. Housing in this district was especially appealing to young black factory workers, who considered it to be "the happening place." In the clubs and on the street, local residents could rub elbows with the greatest jazz musicians in the country. Long-time resident Donald Ray recalls,

> Well, you might see noted musical people when they were in town because they would be in that area, you know. And, often you could see some entertainers, big entertainers back at that time ... That was the thing about that area right there. There's no telling who you might see. Might see Count Basie, or Duke, or other people like Little Willie John.

Coinciding with the influx of new clubs, jazz music was also evolving following the World War II years, reflecting a greater respect for black musicians and entertainers. This evolution also influenced the venue. The new sophisticated audience appreciated music more for listening than dancing, and the "show bar" or "lounge" style of club emerged in a neighborhood setting in place of the large, racially restricted ballrooms. The clubs broke color barriers, as the district included "black and tan" clubs - nightclubs that were open for patrons of both races, creating the only racially integrated environment in the city.

By the end of the 1940s, the two blocks of the Sugar Hill District housed several black-and-tan nightclubs. The Frolic opened in 1946 on John R just south of Garfield, and hosted national acts including the Louis Armstrong All Stars and Dinah Washington. Next, the Chesterfield Lounge was opened at the northeast corner of John R and E. Forest, specialized in local talent. The Flame Show

Bar, located on the southeast corner of John R and E. Canfield, was probably the best known of the John R clubs due to its world-class entertainment. 'Two other clubs, the Parrot Lounge and Waha Room (later named Garfield Lounge) of the Garfield Hotel, provided music venues and other activities.

While most of the clubs were Jewish owned, the Garfield Hotel was owned by a black businessman, Randolph Wallace. Wallace also developed the Randora Hotel, which housed a version of the Garfield Lounge after the original burned down. There were nine hotels located within the larger neighborhood that specialized in housing transient musicians, entertainers and newcomers to the city. With the electric combination of nightclubs, hotels, and hustle, the district became the hotspot of the city overnight. According to Thomas "Beans" Bowles:

> On weekends the traffic would line up, you could not drive your car down Canfield or John R. That was hustle night, girls were on the street, pimps were out, everybody was Makin' money. It was like Las Vegas. Lights and glitter, valet parking ... Nobody bother you or nothing. White people would come from allover to come to the Flame ... because we had the top shows."[7]

Thus, in the ten years between 1940 and 1950, the fairly quiet residential area clustered at John R, developed into the hottest address in Detroit for young African American men and women seeking the jazz lifestyle. The neighborhood became infused with all forms of nightlife, where young musicians gathered on the corners to obtain gigs with famous touring acts and every form of vice was offered. The close proximity of numerous clubs, hotels, and everyday goods and services all contributed to a tight-knit community.

Due to high demand for housing in the area, large single-family homes were configured into boarding houses, often with several beds to a room: "Seventy five percent of Negro homes have so many lodgers that they are really like hotels."[8] Entrepreneurial businesses sprang up to provide services to the boarders, with cooking and laundry performed out of home kitchens and basements. Some places "ran all day long and all night long. Maybe the husband would take over at a certain time and the wife would sleep or they had somebody working for them. But some of them went 24 hours." [9].

Gambling also took hold in the African American neighborhoods. The infamous numbers games formed a system for lending and banking that helped to finance a number of black-owned businesses. The neighborhood was a magnet for all types of people - musicians, political figures, sports figures, dancers, and factory workers - who lived elbow-to-elbow in the desire to have a better life and participate in the excitement that was Sugar Hill.

On a daily basis, entertainers were in the district to perform at any number of clubs. The Flame held at least three shows per night during the week, and up to five on the weekend. Each show also included local talent, featuring dancers, comedians, and vocalists. A house photographer was on hand to record the night's activities, and everyone was treated the same - with style and dignity.

Neighborhood residents rubbed elbows with the greatest performers in the world at the local restaurants, barbershops, and after-hours places. The artists included Della Reese, Al Nibbler, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis Jr., Count Basie, LaVerne Baker and Jackie Wilson. Local

entertainers were included in the after-hours sessions and residents were treated to spontaneous music and dancing in the street.

Detroiter Donald Walden remembers the district as a teenager when he worked at a beauty parlor at Canfield and John R and used to play with his high school band at the Detroit Urban League:

> Probably in 1954 - I remember it being a district for hustlers, players, road runners, and entertainers. Sammy Davis Jr. was a member of the Will Mastin Trio - and would stay at the Randora Hotel whenever they appeared at the Flame.

Another Detroiter, Earl van Dyke, recalled the district:

> We used to always meet up on the corner of Canfield and John R. There was a guy down there, Mr. Kennedy, who used to sell hot sausages, tamales, outside on the corner. We used to stand out there and talk. All the musicians used to stand out there and meet and talk all night about our gigs.

Beans Bowles:

> We'd talk lies, and when it got to be early in the morning we'd go over to Maxis's and eat some "cat heads" and biscuits. The ambiance of the '50s was the greatest thing in my life as far as music was concerned, because we had brotherhood, we had respect. Didn't make much money ... got a chance to build your confidence. You live a good life and there's places for you to work. Now there's no place to work. There's no place for a young musician to hone his wares so that he's competent. [12]

Earl van Dyke:

"I'll tell you what really happened. At the time Detroit was like a Mecca for good musicians."[13]

In an oral history interview, former exotic dancer Roxanne Morris recalled,

> I've traveled extensively. I have never found an area like the one down on John R. Because the people, and that's why I stayed here, the people were so grand. They were grand. I don't care if it was wealthy well-known businessman . . .I don't care if it was a housewife running a blind pig. I don't care who it was. Everybody was grand.

An important aspect of living in the district was the opportunity to be a part of the nightlife, to see it unfold from the window, or join in on the street. Ms. Morris continued:

> You'd go from one spot to the other. People came from allover the world.
> You had people coming up in limousines and long, to-the-ground furs. And men dressed sharply and they just walked right in. And they spent the whole night in the club. And everyone was laughing and talking. Oh, it was just joyous, joyous.

The visiting celebrities were larger-than-life compared to the drudgery of life as a service worker or in the factories, as faced by most of Detroit's African Americans. More than half of the African Americans employed at the Ford Rouge plant worked in the foundry, and most others labored as janitors, sanders, paint sprayers, and other physically demanding jobs.[14] Thus, while the higher pay scale of factory work afforded many a new, middle-class lifestyle, the reality of their jobs was grim but easily forgotten in Sugar Hill. Truly a twenty-four-hour district, Sugar Hill with its bootleggers, after-hour clubs, and all-night restaurants mirrored the factory shifts of the city and never closed.

According to long-time residents who first moved to Detroit in the 1940s, it was considered the most desirable place for young African American men arriving from other parts of the country to live, even if it meant working two jobs to afford the rent. It also was a place far from the world of extreme racial prejudice found as close by as Woodward Avenue.

A resident of the district for more than 50 years, James Stubblefield, recalled:

> Detroit was a working town. Everything was on the go. You worked hard and played hard. Young men worked hard during the week and still had energy for the weekend. After hours places were located throughout the area where jazz players from different clubs would convene and hold jam sessions until dawn. Some clubs had breakfast dances ... you would catch a few hours of sleep ... sometimes on the front porch or on the lawn, and just pick up and keep going by 10:00 a.m.

An interview with Ernest Borden, nephew of Gotham Hotel owner Ernest White, was another perspective from the resident's point of view:

> During the 50s a lot of guys were working two jobs in the factories. And they would live for the weekends. They'd be in their new car, in a $200 suit and a $20 Dobbs, standing on the corner ... and they do the clubs, several spots and night clubs ... the Garfield Lounge was kinda like a headquarters and they'd all be standing around there ... Was just like in New York, the Savoy.

Barbering was a big business in the district as the desired look of the day was the 'process', a means of chemically straightening hair. These barber and beauty shops were some of the most prosperous black-owned businesses. Alonso Dixon, a long time barber in the neighborhood (and retired worker from Dodge Main) described the atmosphere as follows:

> People from all over the city came to John R because we were one of the few places that knew how to do the process. Entertainers came too. There were six barbers and we all stayed busy. Everybody that wanted to be in the know wore their hair in a wave. The styles were named the Tony Curtis, the David Crockett. People come in early in the morning and get in line to get a ticket. Then they'd wait till their number came up. Some would come back later in the week and get their hair set if they had someplace to go.

From this neighborhood, a generation of musicians and followers made Detroit a national scene for jazz and great music. Starting with a respect for music that was encouraged by programs in the neighboring Detroit schools (Balch Jr. High and Miller High School), children were trained to read music and perform in publicly supported entertainment. Highly marketable skills were thus developed at an early age, giving many Detroit performers a head start in lifelong careers. Music permeated every aspect of life in the neighborhood, including the churches whose gospel songs were later woven into jazz and blues. Many churches were known to include drum sets and horns alongside the organs.

It is no coincidence that the first black-owned F.M. radio station to operate in Detroit was also the nation's first jazz-format program. Located on E. Forest between John R and Brush, when the area

was a thriving jazz community, two black dentists from Detroit, Dr. Wendell Cox and Dr. Halley Bell, launched an F.M. station dedicated entirely to jazz with the call letters WCHD began broadcasting in the basement of 278 East Forest with a guy wire transmission tower in the backyard. In 1962 or 1963, the station call letters were changed to WJZZ that remains as Detroit's only jazz format station to this day. Another notable, longtime tenant of this now demolished building was Coleman A. Young, Detroit's first African American mayor, who maintained an apartment in this building from 1964 to 1980, when it was purchased for demolition to make way for the behemoth V.A. Hospital that is now in the site.

Berry Gordy, Jr. was a frequent visitor to the showbars within the greater Sugar Hill District. His Motown empire was launched when his sister, the house photographer at the Flame, introduced Berry Gordy, Jr. to Al Green in 1957. Starting as a songwriter for Jackie Wilson, he wrote the hit “Lonely Teardrops" in 1958 that launched both of their careers. Other Flame performers, including Marvin Gaye (married to another of Goody's sisters) and the Maurice King house band performers, helped Goody establish the unique sound of Motown.[15]

Roxanne Morris recalled in 1959 attending a party at the Randora given by Marv Johnson, an early partner of Berry Goody, Jr.'s:

> Marv had a party in the Randora. He had this ice sculpture in the middle of the floor. It was the first thing you saw when you walked in the door, his ice sculpture with the champagne flowing out. Burt Benton was there, everybody from Motown. I would think about 200 people were there. But everybody that was appearing in town was there; everybody from Motown that was in town was there. It was lovely. He gave fantastic parties. [16]

By 1964, Motown was a household name nationwide. The music that was culled from the Sugar Hill showbars swept the nation.

Urban Renewal: Post-1960

The tightly knit urban organism of Sugar Hill all but disappeared as a result of the social and governmental policy changes of the 1960s. Within two decades of the district's glory days, advances in civil rights legislation in the city allowed greater freedom of choice for African Americans, and many chose to move to better neighborhoods of single-family homes. Also too quickly gone was the music that held the neighborhood's lifeblood, as the influences of television and “Motown" music made the showbars obsolete. Most detrimental to the district, however, was the impact of the urban renewal programs implemented by the federal and local government starting in the 1950s. These programs eliminated nearly all of the physical history of the Great Migration to the city that took place from 1915 to 1960.

The proposed Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District is one of the last remaining areas of the neighborhoods of the Near East Side that was once home to the majority of African Americans in Detroit. These neighborhoods were removed as part of a systematic plan to rebuild the City through policies of “urban renewal". In the middle of the twentieth century, urban renewal was

introduced in Detroit and had a huge impact on the development of this area that continues even today.

The urban renewal movement was established and encouraged by federal, state and city laws and ordinances. The process began with land acquisition by the city, proceeded with the relocation of area residents, and finished with the demolition of homes and businesses, clearing the land for future redevelopment. In Detroit, predominately African American neighborhoods east of Woodward were particularly singled out as sites for urban renewal projects.

The very first urban renewal district in the United States was designated in Detroit in the early 1950s. It was the Gratiot Project located approximately one half mile east of the downtown, north of Jefferson Avenue in an area that eventually grew to cover the neighborhoods bounded roughly by I-375 on the west, Mt. Elliot on the east and by Gratiot Avenue on the north. This area became known as the Lafayette Park Elmwood Urban Renewal District. The district eliminated a neighborhood that was referred to as Black Bottom first because of the richness of the soil, and later because it was home to a predominately African American population. These projects eliminated the oldest African American neighborhoods in the city.

Paradise Valley was targeted for urban renewal in an effort to remove the blight that characterized the area by the 1960s. This was the long-term effect of overcrowded conditions and poor maintenance. The heart of Paradise Valley, Hastings Street, was eliminated when the Chrysler Freeway was constructed in the 1950s. The City designated the Mid City Urban, Art Center, and Medical Renewal Districts (all located within the area bounded roughly by I-75 on the south, Woodward on the west, I-94 on the north and I-75 on the east) to accommodate the creation of the Detroit Medical Center, growth of the Cultural Center, and new housing. Again, urban renewal wiped out African American neighborhoods to accommodate new development. These new Districts included the proposed Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District and its surrounding neighborhoods. Most of the surrounding neighborhoods were demolished to accommodate Detroit's' Medical Center. The most recent addition is a new Veterans Hospital directly east of the proposed historic district. Several former jazz clubs were demolished in the early 1990's to make way for the new hospital.

As recently as the early 1990s, the city maintained plans for demolishing all of the remaining buildings in the proposed district to provide a clear tract of land for redevelopment. Current plans for revitalization of the area depend on these remaining buildings to provide historical context and the springboard for redevelopment. Since the recent demolition of the last two clubs at Gratiot and St. Antoine to make room for Ford Field (the home of the Detroit Lions), the only remaining physical links to the historic black neighborhoods in the Near East Side where jazz flourished are the buildings in the proposed Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District.

Often when an area is designated for redevelopment by the local government a process known as "inverse condemnation" begins. This process consists of disinvestment in the upkeep of the buildings by owners and neglect by tenants, leading to a cycle of declining rental rates, declining property values, abandonment and eventual demolition of structures. In the proposed district, just this process has led to the gradual, but steady, decline in the quality of the neighborhood. Therefore, the loss of buildings in this district is an integral part of its story. If it had not been designated for urban renewal, partially because it was an African American area, its building fabric would be more intact

and in better condition. In direct contrast to this area, the Cass Corridor Historic District on the west side of Woodward Avenue, a traditionally white area that was never designated by the City for such redevelopment, stands in better condition. As such, the remaining buildings and urban fabric in this proposed historic district have a story to tell. They show how essentially similar neighborhoods east and west of Woodward Avenue suffered substantially different fates due to the race of their inhabitants.

The recognition of the significance of Detroit's rich African American culture and settlement history within the living residential environments has not occurred in part due to the deterioration of buildings due to lower economic conditions and evolving uses of buildings - causing the loss of original materials and context of neighborhoods as they were originally built. In 1981, an historical survey of this area received a determination of no significance that allowed the demolition of several important blocks for the construction of the Veteran Administration Building. The buildings were cited simply as not eligible on the basis of their architectural merit, citing that "A structure must be an outstanding and/or rare examp1e of a specific style of architecture or method of construction to qualify for the Register and these houses are neither. There are many better examples of that period home in other nearby downtown Detroit neighborhoods." In the case of the nation's first black-owned F.M. radio station, the VA Historic Preservation Office indicated that "the building's architectural integrity had been altered since being occupied by the radio station. The entranceway and windows to the basement where the broadcasting facilities were located have been bricked up, irrevocably damaging the integrity of the architectural elements that represent the station's use of the building." The State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with that opinion. The building and 24 others on East Forest and 15 on East Canfield were thus not considered to be eligible for listing in the National Register and the nightclub buildings and numerous boarding houses, businesses and apartment buildings, were demolished in the early 1990.[17]

Extant Buildings: Cultural Significance

The remaining structures in the proposed district are the last vestiges of the once-lively Sugar Hill community. These buildings, together with the streets that were the scenes of so much activity, serve as reminders of a community drawn together during one of Detroit's most critical and influential musical eras. They are an important part of Detroit's social history, documenting two decades of evolution in music, racial divisions, economic hardships, and government policies.

The original homes of this area were first built in the late 1800s and early 1900s for an upper-middle class population that aspired to live close to the desirable Woodward Avenue and a growing medical community. While built as large, single-family homes, each of these houses was altered as boarding houses to accommodate Detroit's expanding working class population. As the wealthier class moved out, beginning in the 1930s and continuing through the 1950s, the homes were subdivided to accommodate the growing number of men coming to the city to work in the auto and defense industries. This was particularly true during the period of significance, 1940-1960. All of the remaining houses were divided into apartments or into mixed commercial and residential uses. In addition to single family homes, several apartment buildings and hotels were built to accommodate the changing population. Several of these apartment buildings and two former hotels with important ties to the district still exist.

The apartment buildings on John R and Garfield that were constructed for the population of nurses

and other medical staff associated with the Detroit Medical Center were similarly replaced by single men and women working either in the auto industry or entertainment fields. Some medical staff remained in these buildings through the late 1950s. The John R apartments were especially popular due to their premier view of the nighttime activities along John R and E. Canfield. These apartments housed some of the support staff of the Flame and Parrot Lounge and were also well known as bootlegging and after-hours addresses.

Every surviving building of this district is a small testament to the heritage of the high standards and pride that developed during this critical stage of Detroit's social development. Built for a fairly affluent population, the district retained the image of quality living styles despite the development of crowded conditions and influx of a working class population.

Garfield Avenue

71 Garfield Avenue

The Garfield Manor Apartments, built in 1922, were constructed upon land that was previously occupied by a large single-family home. At that time, the value of a single-family house was less then the value of a multiple-unit building. This building's location and 74 Garfield's location, one block east of Woodward Avenue, was a prime location to the city's hotel, business and medical districts. The first tenants were nurses and doctors, which soon gave way to autoworkers as early as 1941. In the 1950s, most men housed in this building were employed by the Big Three or related industries. The majority of the men held jobs requiring minimal skills, though some nurses still lived there. Many of the men worked two jobs so they could thoroughly enjoy themselves on the weekends. By working two jobs people could buy a new car, a $200 suit, and a $20 Dobbs (a very expensive hat) which they would show off by mingling with people at night inside and outside of clubs and restaurants in the neighborhood. Cruising down John R to show off new cars was a popular pastime. The Garfield Hotel and Lounge served as a headquarters where people would gather to see and be seen by others, and was only a few buildings southeast of the Garfield Manor Apartments.

74 Garfield Avenue

The York Apartments, built in 1928, contained approximately 50 units and its first tenants included a large number of nurses who continued to occupy the building through 1941. Similar to the Garfield Manor Apartments, the 1940s began the trend of a large number of transient, single men moving in and out of the building. Again, most men were employed by the Big Three automotive companies or related industries and held positions that required minimal skills. Three doctors and two nurses occupied the building in the late 1950s, but the majority of the occupants were working-class black men who were attracted to the area's nightlife. This building was conveniently located next to Sunnie Wilson's, a popular hotel and piano bar. Residents were able to watch entertainers come and go from their apartment windows.

98 Garfield Avenue

This building, constructed in 1909, is commonly known as the Randora Hotel and formally called

the Theo Backus house. Theo Backus was a prominent Detroit businessman who owned a large stationary/printing company and factory. The building was later adapted and added to for hotel use by Randolph Wallace. Traces of the original single-family dwelling are still evident today.

Wallace was an entrepreneurial black business owner who wanted to capitalize on black tourists coming to Detroit. Wallace was also one of two black men who owned an establishment in this district. (The other black-owned building was Sunnie Wilson's Hotel and Piano Bar, no longer standing). After the Garfield Hotel and Lounge burned, which was owned by Wallace, he quickly bought 98 Garfield and renovated it into a hotel and lounge. The Randora Hotel was established to serve Detroit's black population in the 1950s when hotels in the city were still segregated, specifically to service visitors of the national NAACP conference that was located in Detroit in 1957, the year the Randora opened. Wallace hoped to provide additional rooms for visiting blacks. To his great surprise, downtown hotels were ordered to open their doors to blacks when the NAACP conference came to Detroit, subsequently the Randora was not as successful as Wallace hoped in its first year. In its early years, it was considered a nice place to stay, and enjoyed some patronage. Most entertainers and visitors stayed at the nearby Gotham Hotel or Sunnie Wilson's Hotel and piano Bar, also on Garfield Avenue. However, some entertainers did stay at the Randora. During an interview with Roxanne Morris, she recalled in 1959 going to a very fancy party hosted by Marv Johnson, founder of Motown Records, complete with champagne fountains. Roxanne Morris recalls,

> Marv had a party in the Randora. He had his ice sculpture in the middle of the floor. It was the first thing you saw when you walked in the door. His ice sculpture with the champagne flowing out. Everybody was there. Burt Benton was there, everybody from Motown. I would think about 200 people were there. But everybody that was appearing in town was there. Everybody from Motown that was in town was there. It was lovely, he gave fantastic parties.

The Randora had a bar, ballroom, and provided nightly entertainment. Some local entertainers stayed there throughout the late 1950s. Many music events, debutante parties and bridal showers were held in this building. Despite these many amenities, Randolph Wallace is said to have made his money in numbers and to have run the operation from the Randora.

102 Garfield Avenue

The Agnes Inglis House was built in 1891 and was the home of Alex Dow from 1907 through 1922. From 1922-1934, the Chaffee-Noble School of Expression occupied the building. In 1938, the building was subdivided and listed as a rooming house, but the exterior of the building maintained its elegance. In the 1950s, the building was further divided into 6 apartments, and 6 sleeping rooms. The division of the house corresponds to the increased population in this area, stimulating a demand for housing. This area was considered a highly desirable place to live because of the creative musical atmosphere that had developed and because it was a safe neighborhood to live in. Former resident, Donald Ray, recalls people sleeping in their cars and feeling completely safe because crime was practically nonexistent. Also, the area was full of businesses besides clubs, such as drug stores, barbershops, laundry places run from people's homes, and restaurants. Donald Ray recalled going to the Pelican (no longer standing), a restaurant at the corner of John R and Garfield with a friend

for biscuits in the morning. This building is one of two original single-family buildings, which remain in the proposed historic district, that represent the first wave of people who lived in this area. This building also tells the story of the demographic history of the neighborhood as it adapted from a single-family dwelling to a rooming house and finally to apartments.

E. Forest

62 E. Forest

The Palmetto Garage, built in 1926, offered private parking for the highly desirable Palmetto Apartments on John R and Hancock until 1933. Note that while the beautifully decorated apartment building was demolished, the garage has retained a useful life, mainly as an auto body repair garage. Stories told to the current owner, George N'Namdi, at the local barbershop by residents from that time tell of the notoriety of after hours parties held in this building.

66 E. Forest

This non-contributing industrial building, built in 1938, housed a printing company from the 1930s to the 1960s. After that time, the building had a number of uses, from a dairy to a drug-counseling center to a child care center, and is now an art gallery. George N'Namdi moved his art gallery from Birmingham, Michigan, to this location to capture the spirit of the African-American Arts Culture.

76 E. Forest

This building, built in 1885, was home to the prominent Dr. N. Webber from 1887-1895. He was the U.S. Surgeon General from 1862-65 and later became the professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics at Detroit College of Medicine. The building was subdivided in the 1940s into a rooming house, corresponding to the high volume of black working-class men who moved into the neighborhood. In 1945, it is listed as containing a club, indicating that the musical evolution affected not only the larger buildings in the district, but infiltrated all the buildings in the area. In 1953, a "rec room" was added in the basement. It is believed, from an interview with Ernest Borden, that the "rec room" was really an after hours club. Borden clearly remembers a bar in this building, not a "rec room."

92 E. Forest

The Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian) served the population from 1915 to 1940. At that time, the church moved to Royal Oak and a Baptist church, Grace Baptist Missionary Church, eventually moved into the building. The Grace Baptist Missionary Church was listed as a "colored church" on Sanborn Maps. Many musicians started their careers playing in churches. It is believed that this church played an integral role in helping young musicians get their start. The music of the church and the music played in the clubs were tied closely together and helped to bring the community together. The church offered yet another outlet for the musical and spiritual talent of the community.

John R

4413-15 John R

The Dromlona-Bellamy Apartments, built in 1910, were the home of a community bootlegger who sold booze out of his door on Sundays. He would open the door with the chain in place and people would tell him what they wanted. This apartment building and the Carlton Apartment building were strategically located near the Garfield Hotel and Lounge, the Frolic, and the Flame. Windows facing John R had a good view of patrons, musicians, pimps and prostitutes going to and from the Flame, the Frolic, and the Garfield Hotel and Lounge. Both buildings were popular because of their close proximity to these famous establishments.

4425-27 John R

The Carlton Apartments, constructed in 1909, were built to house six families (three at 4425 and three at 4427 John R). This building was home to factory workers, as well as support staff to the famous Flame and Parrot Lounges. Not only did the building house support staff from famous clubs, but it also housed single, black working-class men. Like other apartment buildings in the area, young men enjoyed living in this neighborhood so they could partake in the active nightlife, which flooded the area with lively activity of cars, people and business transactions. Once eleven o'clock in the evening struck, the neighborhood was alive with a parade of cars, gambling, patrons, musicians, dancers, pimps, prostitutes and everyday people trying to make a living by offering a variety of accommodations, such as a hot cooked meal after a night spent at a club or a room for rent.

4635 John R

Commonly called the Mccollester House, the building was constructed in 1905 and was the home of Dr. Guy Kiefer (1912-1915). The house was converted into apartments with retail in the basement that was accessible at the street level. The basement was converted to retail space in 1948 and has been listed as a barbershop since the 1950s to the present day. African-American barbers were well off during the 1950s because of the "process" hairstyle that was popular for black men. This "process" hairstyle required a lot of maintenance; weekly if not sooner. Even musicians from out of town needed to come to the barbershops to keep their high-styled hair looking fresh. Thus, black barbershops flourished in the 1950s. In 1957 the house was owned by Abe Cherry, who worked for Dodge at the time. Abe would later become a leader in the Coleman Young administration and still owns the house today.

E. Canfield

89 Canfield

The Carver, built in 1926, was distinguished in the 1950s as a hotel catering to black tourists, although originally intended for a white client-base. By the 1950s, Sanborn maps described the

building as "colored." The hotel was listed in the Negro Motorist Green Book as a hotel open to blacks. The Carver had a restaurant at the street level that catered to the entertainment traffic. Most of its rooms were rented to travelers and others seeking temporary housing. It was considered a desirable address because of its nearness to the entertainment action. The two extant former hotels, the Randora and the Carver, housed entertainers including Sammy Davis Jr., and were a stopping place for newcomers to the city. Both hotels were integral parts of the entertainment district, providing an optimal location for the visiting talent and tourists. Like the Randora, the Carver was also reputed to house a numbers operation. One former tenant, Ernest Borden, remembered living at the Carver and becoming behind on his rent. He participated in the numbers operation and won $1,200, which enabled him to pay his rent. It is believed that the Camwood Garage, built in 1929, provided parking spaces for residents of the Carver. Owning an automobile was very desirable because it showed the community your financial status. Thus, many young men worked two jobs in order to purchase an automobile.

109-117 Canfield

The Canfield buildings (built in 1918) and two buildings on E. Forest Avenue represent the area's commercial sector. 109-117 E. Canfield has two storefronts. 109 E. Canfield housed several different businesses: J. R. Canfield Tire Repair, Battery Shop and manufactured potato chip business. The corner store at John R and Canfield (117 E. Canfield) was a Jewish-owned pharmacy from 1929 to 1957, and prospered from its location at such a busy intersection. There are conflicting stories about its after-hours business, with some claiming that bootlegging was run out of this store in the 1950s. The corner of Canfield and John R, where 109-117 are located, was what many musicians considered an employment center. National touring jazz bands often hired local talent to fill in as house musicians during shows. Most often, Detroit musicians who made themselves available to the bands as they arrived in town - along John R, filled these spots. This street corner in particular was known for providing the general gathering place for local talent as the source of employment, news and camaraderie among musicians, dancers, and other entertainers.

Conclusion

From 1910 to 1960, Detroit's black population grew from 5,741 to 482,229. This rapid and dramatic growth in a minority population created a tremendous impact on the urban conditions in Detroit. The effects of racial segregation concentrated the minority black population into a disproportionately small area of land, creating a critical mass that encouraged a new black culture, music, and identity. The proposed district enjoys distinction as a pivotal place in Detroit's cultural history as a jazz district from 1940 to 1960. During the jazz era, this district housed numerous clubs and hotels and was a major tourist destination and local hot spot. The buildings of the proposed Sugar Hill District are the only physical remnants of this cultural explosion. The changes they have undergone over time, and particularly during the period of significance, represent the cultural evolution of the neighborhood and larger society.

1 Bjorn, 72

2 Bjorn, 39
3 Moon, Untold, 179
4 US Census, 1940, 1950, 1960
5 Moon, Untold,179
6 Bjorn, 44
7 Bjorn, 72
8 Muddy Boots and Ragged Aprons, 16
9 Roxanne Morris oral history
10 Stubblefield interview
11 Moon, Untold 241
12 Moon, Untold 241
13 Moon, Untold 241
14 Boyle & Getis, 92.
15 Bjorn, 194.197
16 Morris interview
17 Resource Assessment, Inc.,V117

Description

The Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District consists of fifteen structures located within a two-block area bounded by E. Forest Avenue on the north, E. Canfield on the south, John R. on the east, and Woodward on the west. It is located approximately two miles north of downtown Detroit. Directly north of the district is Detroit's mid-city cultural center that is home to numerous museums and other public structures. Directly east of the district is a Veterans' Hospital that is the newest addition to Detroit's medical center. To the west across Woodward Avenue is the Cass Corridor Historic District. Two national register-listed buildings are adjacent to the district: the Congregational Church at the· northeast intersection of Woodward and Forest, and the Garfield Building at the northeast intersection of Woodward and Garfield.

The district is the largest remnant of a neighborhood that flourished in the 1940s and 1950s with a concentration of black-owned or operated jazz venues and related residential/commercial activities. The district includes single-family houses, apartment buildings, a church, and commercial buildings. Historically, the proposed district has been an area of evolving uses, reflective of the changing economy, auto industry, population, and housing trends. Its remaining buildings reflect the architectural evolution of the area from 1885 through the 1950's. All retain their original location and appearance with minor alterations. The buildings maintain a common setback and are constructed of similar materials.

Architectural History

The contributing extant buildings were constructed between 1885 and 1938. The single-family residential structures are the oldest in the district, dating from 1885 to 1909. They reflect the care

in ornamentation and craftsmanship typical of single-family homes built for a prosperous population. The single-family residences at 102 Garfield and 76 E. Forest are lightly ornamented Queen Anne Style homes typical of the late-Victorian era. The home at 4635 John R reflects the aesthetic coming into fashion with the Craftsman Movement at the turn of the century. All of the homes in the district are large in scale, constructed of brick and stone, and retain much of their original appearance and integrity.

Additions to the neighborhood in the early decades of the 20th century, including apartment and commercial buildings, are simpler in style than the earlier homes. This was due to both changing architectural styles and the shift to a renter, rather than owner, population. As the neighborhood evolved, apartment and commercial buildings dating from 1909 to 1938 were introduced. Two apartment buildings on Garfield Street are representative of the ornamented Classic Revival style while the apartments on John R are more simply detailed.

The district began to change from a purely residential area to one of mixed uses as the auto industry developed near the turn of the century. The first commercial buildings to open in this district were auto-related and include the extant Palmetto garage and commercial buildings on Canfield. All of the extant commercial buildings were constructed between 1913 and 1926.

The area encompassed by the district was completely developed - without vacant lots - by the middle of the 20th century. Alterations were made to many buildings to accommodate increased residential and commercial demands from the growing black population[3]. Many single-family homes were subdivided into apartments or mixed residential and commercial uses. The function of the district's buildings is still primarily residential. While in recent decades demolition of the historic fabric (by neglect or by design) has altered the district's appearance, leaving numerous empty lots, the buildings that remain are accurate testaments to the architecture and prosperity of the area throughout its development.

Inventory for the Sugar Hi11 District, Detroit
All buildings are contributing unless otherwise stated.

Garfield Avenue

71 Garfield Manor Apartments, 1922. Permit pulled by Thomas Davidson.
This brick building with a granite watertable and foundation veneer is in fair condition. It features Beaux Arts styling with eclectic classical motifs. The building is composed of four rectangular modules connected by a circulation spine and separated by light courts. The modules are three stories high with an exposed basement level on the back three modules. The front elevation features the decorative use of white glazed terra cotta tile at the window heads, the entry, and parapet. A bracketed string course and cornice are also of glazed terra cotta. Corbeled brick panels with green glazed terra cotta accents separate the windows and cover the sides of the first module. The entry is a double door with arched transom and arched surround. The upper windows on the façade are wood, eight-over-one, double-hung sash. Several panes of glass are missing. The façade's first floor windows are casement-style with divided lights, also in wood. They are currently boarded over. The building has

symmetrical fenestration, parapets capped with terra cotta tile, and a flat roof with projecting elevator housing.

74 York Apartments, 1928. Architect unknown.
This brick apartment building in the Renaissance Revival style is in fair condition. The building is four stories in height with an exposed basement level and is comprised of three rectangular modules connected by a circulation spine and separated by light courts. The eastern bays of the modules are smaller than those west of the corridor spine. A one-story shed-roof section between two modules on the north side *is* original and houses the mechanical systems. The north elevation, facing Garfield, features corbeled brickwork, limestone sills, and ornament, and multi-colored glazed terra cotta tile panels. The five bay fenestration is comprised of single, paired, and triple-sash window groups. The windows are wood, with divided lights in the upper sash at the larger windows. Two projecting bays with triangular parapets, one on either side of the entry, organize the windows vertically, while the terra cotta panels, limestone water table, and decorative banding organize the façade horizontally. The entry has a double door with two sidelights, an ornamented frieze panel, and a pediment. The building has a flat roof with projecting elevator housing.

92-98 Randora Hotel, 1909. Originally known as the Theo Backus house. Architect unknown.
The current appearance of the building is the result of additions made in 1954 and 1955. Randolph Wallace, a prominent African American, pulled the addition permits. The additions obscure the 1909 home beneath. The three-story brick building has two projecting wings, which form a U-shaped building with the courtyard facing the street. One wing is wider than the other. The wider wing features a two-bay fenestration, the smaller wing a single-bay fenestration. The recessed portion of the building contains the one-story entry and has a two-bay fenestration at the upper stories. All windows on the façade are multi-paned steel frame windows. The building currently has a flat roof and is of brick construction throughout. It is in good condition. Evidence of the original home is apparent when looking at the sides of the building. There are obvious areas of brick infill at former window openings.

102 Agnes Inglis House, 1891. Architect unknown.
This Queen Anne two-and-one-half-story brick residence has a two-story polygonal bay. The orientation of the house is side-gabled with a large front gabled dormer. The dormer features wood rake boards and returns and is clad in the same asphalt shingles as the roof. The house is brick with a limestone water table. A corbelled brick course visually separates the two floors. The bay tower is accented with stone string courses. Windows are wood, double-hung, and in a range of sizes and proportions. At the bay tower, a stone band separates transoms from the double-hung sash. The basement windows have been replaced with glass block. The entry door has a transom and flanking sidelights. A ghost image of a former porch is clearly visible on the brick adjacent to the door. The poured concrete steps are not original. This house has been divided into several apartments.

E. Forest

62 Palmetto Garage, 1926. Permit pulled by Sarah Barnett.
This is a brick, single-story commercial building with limestone veneer at the façade. The building is heavily decorated with Tudor motifs. Some of the stone ornament is broken or missing. The remaining historic stone is fair-to-good condition. The façade is divided into three bays, each of which contains a large panel outlined in stone rope molding. These panels were the original door and window openings, and have been altered with brick and concrete masonry unit infill. One of the two smaller openings has been completely bricked in; a modern entry door has been installed in the other. The central section has also been partially bricked in but still contains two large window groupings and a garage entrance that may be original. Ornate sculpted pilasters with inset panels, winged birds, and pyramidal caps visually support each segment of the upper façade, which is separated from the lower façade by a band of round arches with carved recesses. The upper façade wall features two segmental arches at each side with a long, flat rectangle in between. A carved crest with knight's helmet and cross bars is centered in each arched section. Low-relief crests are evenly spaced across the rectangular portion of the upper façade. The roof is supported by wood bowstring trusses that are visible from the interior.

66 Welker Letter Company, 1938. Permit was pulled by Myles Standish.
A loading shelter addition was completed in the same year. This building is in good condition and the original façade does not appear to have been altered. It is a single-story, brick commercial building in the International Style. At the north façade, a full-height, two-withe projection of the brick from the otherwise flat surface marks the entry. A ribbon window capped by a soldier course of brick is the only other feature of the primary façade. This building has a flat roof that steps down gradually through the rear portions of the building. The rear of the building is industrial.

76 Dr. N.W. Webber House, 1885. Permit was pulled by N.W. Webber.
This is a Queen Anne, two-and-one-half-story, brick residence with limestone accents. All materials appear to be original and are in good condition. The home features a projecting two story bay and has limestone stone string courses. The entrance to the house is under a wood-trimmed porch. The door is wood and glass with a segmental arch top, a motif that is repeated in the double window above the porch. Two long, slender double hung windows flank each side of the door. The porch is a relatively simple design with turned porch columns and balustrade. Poured concrete steps have replaced the original stairs. A triangular pediment accents the porch's shed roof. Two gabled dormers pierce the pyramidal roof. Each dormer features a pair of windows with round arched tops. Both dormers are further decorated with ornate brackets and carved trim.

92 Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian), 1915.
This is a two-story brick church with simple Gothic Revival features. Single-story aisles flank a two-story nave. The nave features four large arched windows per side, which are currently boarded over. The façade has an arched limestone vestibule. A single large, arched

window covers most of the upper façade; it is also boarded over. Two pilasters rise to the top of the arched window. The front gable roof is accented on the façade by a stepped parapet that projects above the roofline. This church is still being used and is in good condition.

John R

4413-15 Dromlona-Bellamy Apartments, 1910. Builder and architect, T.W. Cooper.
This is a brick, three-story, Commercial Style building with exposed basement level and is in good condition. The symmetrical façade features two three-part bays that are the full height of the building. Visual texture is created by raised brick quoins and a double string course in above the third floor windows. A simply styled cornice projects outward, emphasizing the building's horizontal lines. All windows are wood, single-pane, double-hung, and rest on limestone sills. The fenestration is five-bay. Non-original aluminum awnings have been installed over the first floor windows and the entry. The building has a flat roof.

4425-27 The Carlton Apartments, 1909. Builder and architect, T.W. Cooper.
This three-story Commercial Style building is nearly identical to the Dromlona-Bellamy Apartment building, differing primarily in the addition of limestone lintels and its lack of quoins. The symmetrical façade features two three-part bays that are the full height of the building. The building is in good condition. There is double string course of brick above the third floor windows. A simply styled cornice projects outward, emphasizing the building's horizontal lines. All windows are wood, single-pane, double-hung, and rest on limestone sills. The fenestration is five-bay. The building has a flat roof.

4635 Mccollester House, 1905. Architect, unknown.
This two-story Tudor Revival house was converted from a single-family home into apartments. The house is in fair condition. It is constructed primarily of brick, with wood siding at the cross-gable that creates a second-story overhang. The porch and overhang are supported with heavy wood beams and rounded brackets. Brackets also project from the cross-gable where it meets the eave of the larger roof, section. The wood cladding in the cross-gable appears to be a replacement for the stucco that would be typically found on a house of this style. The main entry is via a recessed porch at the building's corner. There is an additional entrance, serving a basement apartment, on the front elevation. The majority of windows on the front elevation are twelve-over-one double-hung wood windows. A pair of smaller, one-over-one, double-hung windows is located at the top of the front gable.

E. Canfield
Buildings 87-89, 99, and 109-117 below are connected in a strip of storefronts with a common setback.

87-89 Carver Hotel, 1926. Permit was pulled by D. Rosenblum.
This is a four-story brick building in Renaissance Revival style. This building is scheduled for redevelopment but is currently vacant and in poor condition. It is comprised of four modules connected by a circulation spine and separated by light courts. At ground level,

limestone outlines five round-topped recessed arches. The arches mark door and window openings, and the limestone has been painted white. Limestone string courses are located between the first and second floor, and between the third floor and the roof. Three inset panels decorate the parapet. Limestone is also used for decorative keystones above the windows, which alternate single and paired sash across the façade. Many of the windows are missing or damaged. The few remaining windows are wood, double-hung, with one-over-one glazing.

99 Camwood Garage, 1929. Architect unknown.

This one-story, red brick building with flat roof is vacant and in fair condition. The Commercial Style façade is divided into three bays, each delineated by brick piers with limestone accents. Two large bays flank a smaller center opening. Two of the bays are covered with plywood. The other has been infield with brick and wood. There are limestone bands across the frieze panel and cornice. The frieze panel contains decorative brickwork. The styling of the building is typical for commercial storefronts of the time.

109-113-117 Commercial Stores

This 1918 building is divided into three storefronts. The original tenants included J. R. Canfield Tire Repair at 109, and the Rubber Distribution Company of Michigan at 117. The building is brick Commercial style, single story, vacant and in fair condition. Each storefront had a transomed three-part window and a doorway. The original storefront configuration is visible in the bay to the left of center and in the transom areas of the other two storefronts. Some storefront windows are bricked in at the center bay and the bay on the right, including at the John R elevation. The entries are recessed, and the corner entry is on the diagonal, located behind a brick pier. The three storefronts are tied together by a common parapet and frieze panel. The parapet is corbeled brick capped by limestone. The frieze panel has ornamental brick panels with limestone accents. The 117 storefront has been painted on both the Canfield and John R. elevations and the ornamental brickwork at the upper façade has been removed or covered with signs. The styling of the building is typical for commercial storefronts of the time.

1 Bounded roughly by Hancock on the north, Orchestra Place on the south, and Woodward on the east, and Brush on the west.

2 Before Motown, p. 71

3 See Section 8.

Criteria: The proposed Sugar Hill/John R Music & Art Historic District meets one of the criteria provided by reference in the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act and in the local ordinance. This criteria refers to resources:

A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns

of our history.

Composition of the Historic Designation Advisory Board: The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine appointed members and three ex-officio members, all residents of Detroit. The appointed members are: Russell L. Baltimore, Melanie A. Bazil, Robert Cosgrove, De Witt Dykes, Zené 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.

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

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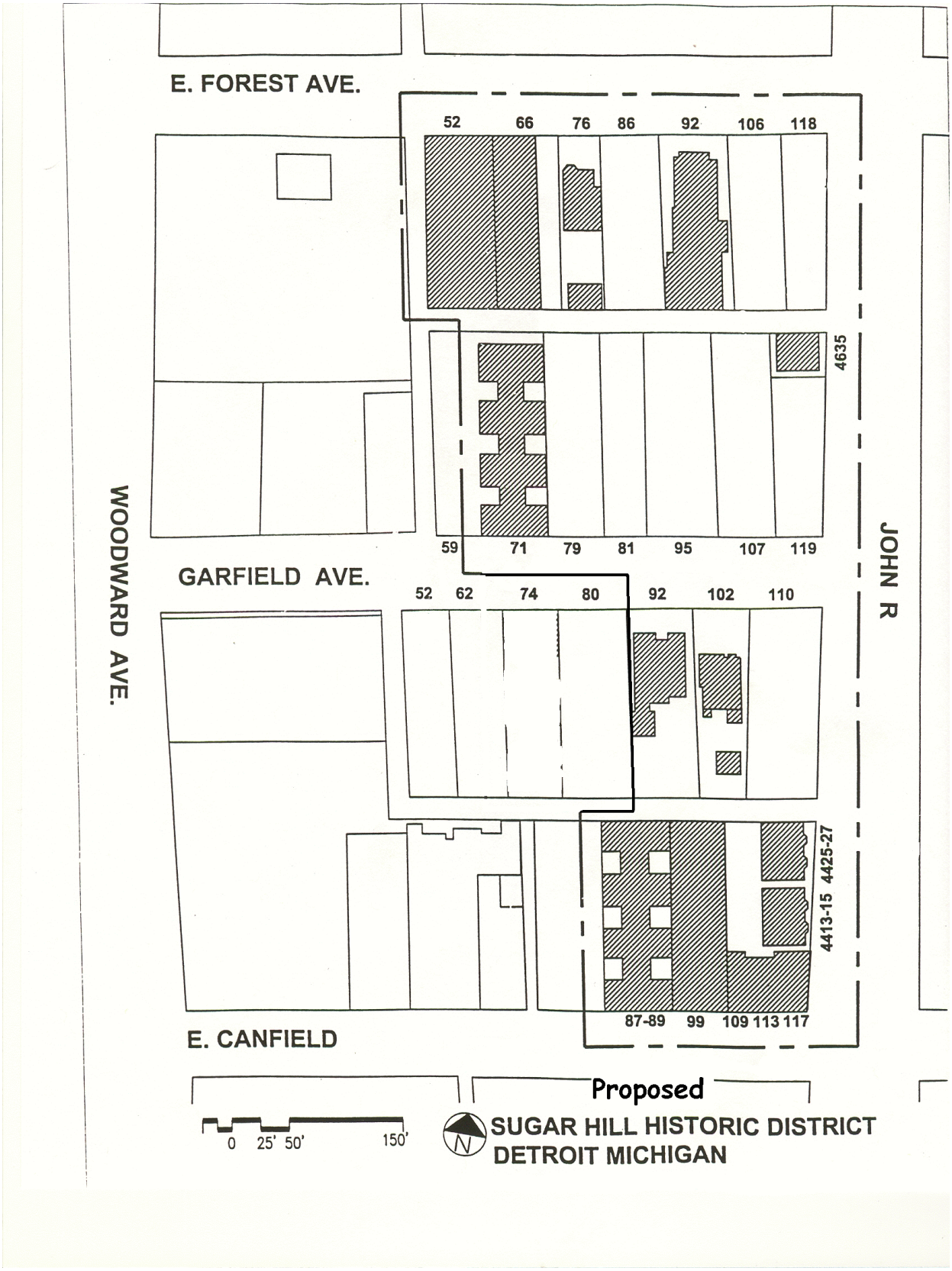
Boundaries are shown in heavy broken black line.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Proposed
SUGAR HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT
DETROIT MICHIGAN
0 25' 50' 150'
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