

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Michigan Avenue Historic Commercial District

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 3401-3461 Michigan Avenue (south side of street only)

City or town: Detroit State: Michigan County: Wayne

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial
Style

MIXED

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, stone, limestone, plywood, aluminum,
concrete, glass, vinyl, stucco,

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District is located on Michigan Avenue in the city of Detroit in Wayne County. Michigan Avenue is an east-west running state road, one of the remnants of Detroit's radial street pattern. The historic district includes the buildings that front the south side of Michigan Avenue with an eastern boundary of Twenty-Second Street and a western boundary of Twenty-Fourth Street. The southern boundary is a public alley running behind the district. The Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District includes eighteen buildings, with construction dates ranging from 1884 to 1953. Of the buildings included in the district, all but one were constructed between 1884 and 1925, representing a significant period in the history of Michigan Avenue's commercial growth. The buildings range from one to three stories in height and represent the use of late nineteenth century architectural styles, particularly Italianate and Queen Anne, in a commercial application. Modern influences and materials are present in buildings that have undergone treatments over the original façade. The primary function of the resources within the district have been and continue to be commercial.

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Narrative Description

Michigan Avenue is a seven-lane roadway running west from downtown Detroit to Chicago, terminating ultimately in Aberdeen, Washington. The land on which the Michigan Commercial Historic District stands was originally part of a larger Potawatomi settlement and the route's original identification was the Great Sauk Trail, a significant Indian trail for travel within the Great Lakes region. It is a spoke of Augustus B. Woodward's radial street plan for the city's major traffic arteries, inspired by the plan for Washington DC created by Pierre L'Enfant, and implemented in 1806 after a disastrous fire ravaged the downtown a year earlier. In 1825, Congressional appropriation created a military road from Detroit to Chicago, also known as the Chicago Road. In 1848 as a result of the state legislature's passage of the Plank Act, the avenue became a portion of the Detroit and Saline toll road, stretching forty miles with six toll gates. Within the boundaries of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District Michigan Avenue intersects with the north-south orientated Twenty-Second, Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets. Twenty-Third Street is closed one block south of Michigan Avenue at Risdon Street to accommodate both large-scale industrial and commercial operations and the Michigan Central Railroad tracks. South of the rail line, Twenty-Third Street reopens to traffic ultimately terminating at Riverside Park along the Detroit River. North of Michigan Avenue Twenty-Third Street ends at McGraw Avenue on the city's northwest side. Also known as US-12, Michigan Avenue originates at Campus Martius, near the center of downtown Detroit, and stretches west past the city limits to New Buffalo at the southwest corner of the state where it continues beyond Michigan on its east-west trajectory. In 2004, US-12 was formally designated a Historic Heritage Route by the Michigan Legislature, and commemorated the avenue as "among the oldest road corridors east of the Mississippi River" accessing "some of the most extensive and significant historic, cultural, scenic and recreational resources in Michigan."¹ There are few trees or vegetation present along Michigan Avenue, however some mature growth trees are still present along the north-south residential streets that intersect with the corridor. The primary land use along the roadway is commercial and industrial in nature, and vacancies and vacant lots are prevalent. In 2019, Michigan Avenue is configured with two traffic lanes travelling east and west with a center turn lane. On both sides, the remaining pavement is used by a protected bike lane and parallel parking. Pedestrian traffic uses paved sidewalks running along Michigan Avenue.

Detroit's initial growth spread radially from the city center near along the main commercial corridors including Michigan Avenue. The city blocks opposite the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, once as densely populated as the south side of the street, are now almost entirely vacant, save for a few nondescript one-story brick and cement block commercial buildings. The south side of Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets is by far the most intact of the surrounding area, as only a handful of the nineteenth century commercial structures that once lined Michigan Avenue remain west of the downtown core. Presently, the area south of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District has been

¹ Michigan Highways: The Great Routes of the Great Lakes State. "Historic Byways and Heritage Routes." http://www.michiganhighways.org/other/byways_historic.html.

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almost entirely replaced by industrial development. Residential development that sprang up near Michigan Avenue to meet late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century demand consisted of vernacular worker cottage housing constructed of wood. Later dwellings constructed in the area were two-story faced with brick or siding, and featured large porches and garages adjoining the alley for automobiles, reflecting increased wealth in the community. The entire area has suffered from divestment and poverty resulting in multiple dilapidated buildings and empty parcels. While the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District is primarily comprised of buildings, there are three vacant parcels. To the north, the vernacular worker cottages in what is now known as the Chadsey Condon neighborhood are few, replaced with vacant lots or single-family subsidized housing. Clusters of historic buildings are primarily concentrated in the Corktown neighborhood between the M-10 and I-75 highways closer to Detroit's downtown, and between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets at the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District.

The building density found at the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District is unique, as many buildings on the north and south side of the roadway have been lost to demolition or deterioration. Along Michigan Avenue, clusters of historic buildings are primarily concentrated in the Corktown neighborhood between the M-10 and I-75 highways closer to Detroit's downtown, and between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets at the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. No building height is greater than three stories and frontages are along the northern lot line. This building massing and orientation is consistent with the historic configuration of the district which has never had a building over three stories erected within its boundaries. With the exception of the bank building at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street, all buildings share at least one common wall. Most buildings are separated into a first-floor storefront space, with offices or living quarters above. Despite modern interventions, the majority of the buildings in the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District still retain elements of the design, materials and craftsmanship representative of late nineteenth century commercial architecture. Only five buildings, each having a loss of architectural integrity or a modern construction date, are non-contributing. Fifteen of the buildings are brick and one is brick faced with limestone. Three buildings have a common façade treatment comprised of a mansard overhang covered with asphalt shingles.

One of the most architecturally significant buildings in the district is the Grosfield Building, its distinctive conical tower is visible for nearly a half-mile from both directions of Michigan Avenue. Constructed in 1893, the Grosfield Building replaced a wood-frame storefront which was destroyed by fire that year. It is the one of only three-story buildings in the district, and is oriented with the primary entrance facing the corner. Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street is the most prominent of the intersections included in the district, and is flanked by the Grosfield Building to the east and People's State Bank to the west.

Over half, fifty-six percent of the buildings in the district were constructed between 1887 and 1910. These buildings share common materials and architectural features, particularly the use of decorative hood molds, pressed metal cornices and brackets, ornamental brickwork, and rusticated stone foundations. After 1925 there is no documented major projects in the district until 1953 with the construction of a new building at 3431 Michigan Avenue. In recent years,

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some buildings have been modernized. The storefronts at 3443, 3449, and 3455 are now combined behind a shingled mansard style roof overhang. A cement block port-cochere large enough to accommodate medium-sized trucks abuts 3443 Michigan Avenue.

Inventory

Several sources were consulted in order to compile and evaluate the following inventory, including: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps, Michigan and Detroit city directories and City of Detroit building records. Sources specific to a particular building are individually cited however the standard reference selections are not noted.

Buildings in the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District are categorized as contributing or non-contributing as a result of material type, date of construction, and remaining characteristics that are distinctive of late nineteenth century commercial architecture. Contributing buildings in the district share common features including materials, massing and style that together express the building forms popularized during the late nineteenth century along Detroit's primary and secondary commercial corridors.

Evaluation of the resources within the district takes into consideration modern interventions that are primarily expressed through alterations to building façades. Often, these interventions have occurred as an attempt to modernize or to add security features to a building. The majority of these alterations have occurred at the first story, street level, while the second or third story

In several cases, particularly the buildings located at 3315 and 3321 Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Third Streets and 3419, 3417, and 3421 Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets, distinguishing characteristics of late nineteenth century architecture remain and thus the resource retains integrity and conveys its significance as a late nineteenth or early twentieth century commercial building. To be considered contributing to the district and façade treatments, which are generally in the form of wood or metal panels that have been superficially applied to the exterior as a means to prevent infiltration of weather and humans, are viewed as reversible interventions. Non-contributing resources are those that have been altered to conceal their historic features, as in the case of 3443, 3449, and 3455 Michigan Avenue which received shingled mansard style roof treatments, may yet retain their historical features beneath a veneer of modern materials. Such resources may contribute to the significance of the historic district, should they undergo a rehabilitation.

The following entries are placed in numerical order as they appear on Michigan Avenue proceeding west from Twenty-Second Street to the district boundary at Twenty-Fourth Street. A single resource on Twenty-Third Street follows those on Michigan Avenue.

3301 Michigan Avenue; c. 1918; Wolverine Theater; Contributing

3301 Michigan Avenue is a one-story commercial building is constructed of brick and has a trapezium-shaped footprint with a flat roof. The façade, east and south elevations are visible from the right-of-way but the western elevation abuts the adjacent building and is not visible.

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The east elevation is void of openings save for a pair of metal doors. The south (rear) elevation is constructed with common brick and is partially painted white. The south elevation abuts the alley and has two doors at either end of the wall, both a fire requirement and easy way for patrons to exit the theater. A large parapet previously used for signage is framed with brick detailing and simple stone caps is the primary focus of the façade.

Any historic building materials flanking the entry are concealed behind vertical wood siding. It is painted dark gray in its entirety and is currently vacant. City directories indicate the building use changed to a motorcycle repair shop in the early 1970s however this is not visually evident from the exterior.

3311 Michigan Avenue; c. 1922; Contributing

This one-story brick building with a flat roof abuts 3301 Michigan Avenue to the east and 3315 Michigan Avenue to the west. It shares the same brick column detailing and stone cap as the Wolverine Theater building at 3301 Michigan Avenue as well as a common wall, a nod to its historic connection to the theater as the concessions and candy sales area. A small unadorned stone crest is visible above the entry at the roofline.

The entry is currently a barred security door and is flanked on either side by two small rectangular windows comprised of two rows of four glass blocks. The building is painted dark gray in its entirety and is currently vacant.

3315-3317 Michigan Avenue; c. 1898; Contributing

This is a two-story brick building with a flat roof. It is framed by brick pilasters set upon rusticated stone block. On the lower storefront space, corrugated metal and painted plywood have been applied over the brick façade and the entire unit is painted gray. A primary entry is centered on the façade, with a slightly narrower secondary entry placed closer to the western elevation and leading up to the second-floor apartments. The separation of the upper and lower spaces is confirmed by two distinct street number assignments. A slightly recessed panel on the second story contains two separate window openings united by a stone sill that runs the length of the insert and functions as the termination of the storefront cornice. The cornice is comprised of decorative brickwork in a scallop pattern below the stone capped parapet with a raised center. The building's pilaster capitals extend beyond the roofline. The eastern and western elevations share a common wall with the adjacent buildings and are not visible. The south (rear) elevation is constructed of common brick and has three opening, a garage door situated at the eastern wall, a door directly across the elevation at the western edge and a centrally positioned door on the second floor that originally accessed a wood porch.

Despite a boarded storefront, 3315-3317 Michigan Avenue remains a contributing building to the district due to several character-defining features. Brick construction and pilaster detailing, proportions, transom openings and stone sills are all a nod to late nineteenth century commercial architecture. The building is currently vacant.

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3321 Michigan Avenue; c. 1910; Contributing

3321 Michigan Avenue is a one-story yellow brick-faced building with a flat roof. The storefront space is entirely concealed behind corrugated metal and painted plywood save for two small grill panels at the eastern elevation. The storefront portion of the building is framed by brick pilasters and the brick is painted. Four sets of paired metal brackets support a metal cornice below a parapet concealing the flat roof. The brackets and cornice piece are painted and are attached to the brick cornice. The cornice is divided into three panels, spaced between the brackets. Each panel contains a decorative brick treatment, highlighted with a stone insert oriented diagonally. The stone-capped parapet is ornamented with a stepped detail flanking a centrally positioned round arch.

Despite the majority of the façade being boarded, 3321 Michigan Avenue continues to display elements of the late nineteenth century architecture in the district. The brick-faced façade ornamented with pressed metal brackets and cornice, brick pilasters framing the storefront and decorative parapet hiding a flat roof result in the resource contributing to the architectural history of the district. The building is currently vacant.

3325 Michigan Avenue; c. 1896; Contributing

This is a three-story building with a flat roof. The primary façade is constructed with yellow brick, now darker from years of staining. The eastern, western and rear elevations are common brick. The first-floor storefront façade is covered by a combination of metal and wood paneling and plywood. A small glass block window is positioned next to the front door and two small hexagonal windows are centered over the recessed entry space. The second and third stories are unified by a central, large round arch with decorative keystone. The arch is recessed approximately two feet into the building. On the second story this space is filled with a bay window which projects over the façade. On the third floor a modern entry door is flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a narrow transom. The sidelights are separated into two panels. The upper panel, approximately two-thirds of the area is glass, while the lower, one-third panel is filled with wood paneling. There is no visible balcony rail which suggests that this is a functioning door. Second story rectangular window openings are framed with a decorative brick surround and topped by a hood mold also serving as a drip edge. Third floor window openings are arched and framed by a rusticated brick treatment with stone sills. All window openings on the second and third stories visible from the right-of-way contain double-hung one-over-one windows, including those on the eastern elevation. Just below the parapet a decorative brick panel inset holds three small circular metal vents are surrounded with an attractive fanned brick pattern.

Despite the modern façade intervention at the storefront level, 3325 Michigan Avenue retains a high degree of its architectural integrity and is one of the more intact examples in the district.

3333 Michigan Avenue; c. 1900; Contributing

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3333 Michigan Avenue is a three-story red brick building with a flat roof. The eastern elevation is not visible as it shares a common wall with 3325 Michigan Avenue. The first-floor storefront space fronting Michigan Avenue is filled by painted concrete block save for the two entrances which remain accessible behind metal security gates. The building is divided into two bays. On the eastern end of the building, a thin bay containing an entry door with large transom window on the first floor and one opening each on the second and third stories. This entry provided access to the second and third stories of the building. The main entry is centered in the second and primary bay. On the second story above the storefront space are three sets of paired windows. The central pair is rectangular framed with a stone hood, flanked by two sets of arched window openings with keystones. Each window on the second story sits on its own stone still. A stone belt course running the length of the façade provides a visual separation between the second and third stories. This third story displays a different treatment, potentially an indication that this portion was a later addition to the building. One set of paired windows is centered in the primary bay, flanked by three window openings. All are rectangular and topped with a large keystone. A parapet wall projects slightly above the third story, concealing a flat roof. The parapet punctuated with a decorative square pattern in the brickwork. At some point it was painted with a thick gray product, presumably with a sealer to combat water infiltration.

The building is currently vacant and listed for sale.

3337 and 3341 Michigan Avenue; Vacant lots; Non-contributing

3337 and 3341 Michigan Avenue are vacant parcels with shared ownership and are bundled in the same real estate package for 3333 Michigan Avenue. Historically this parcel was occupied by two-story masonry building that was demolished some time ago.

3363 Michigan Avenue; Reeber Furniture Company Building; 1887; Peter Dederichs, Jr. / Joseph E. Mills; Contributing

The Reeber Furniture Company Building is situated with its façade facing northwest toward Michigan Avenue, the west elevation abutting the adjoining building, the south elevation facing a paved public alley and the east elevation facing a vacant lot and remaining block. The building sits at the lot line at the north boundary. The Reeber Building has seventy feet of street frontage on Michigan Avenue. The building is two-stories, constructed of brick and irregular in form. The Reeber Building façade is angled slightly to follow the lot line formed by the radial pattern of Michigan Avenue. The façade is divided into three asymmetrical bays, each flanked by brick pilasters. On the first floor the pilasters have decorative stone accents at their base and intersection with the stone belt course separating the first and second stories and running the length of the building. The second floor displays a more ornamented design treatment than that of the first floor. On the second floor the pilasters are topped by decorative stone capitals. The second story window openings have arched stone moldings with a small scroll design at the ends and small flower at meeting locations between windows. Semi-arched carved stone pieces fill the small arches above window openings bearing a flower and vine motif and with thin stone arches above that resemble eyebrows. A slim bay on the eastern end of the building contains a recessed entry which provided stairway access to the second floor, and a single double-hung window and

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transom above. The largest and central bay contains a recessed storefront entry framed by large plate glass windows on the first floor and three sets of paired windows above. The roofline cornice is adorned with corbeled brickwork and extends just above the flat roof. The western bay contains a recessed entry and large storefront window on the first floor and three double-hung windows above. The floral motif inserts above the second-floor window transoms differ slightly from the rest of the façade, a small reminder that this portion of the building was added to the original building in 1894. Remnants of a faded painted sign reading “The Reeber Furniture Co.” is visible over the primary entry.

The eastern elevation is constructed with common brick. A modern mural painted in 2017 covers approximately one-third of the eastern wall near the front façade. There have been some loss of bricks at the parapet and where the rear elevation has pulled away from the building. Four window openings are positioned on the second-story, all currently without sashes. Gray paint covers areas on the brick where graffiti has been applied to the building. The south (rear) elevation of the Reeber Building is constructed of common brick and is entirely collapsed save for a small area on the eastern side surrounding an entry with a partial wood paneled door and single rusticated stone lintel above. The flat roof is also partially collapsed at the rear elevation. The rear elevation was originally outfitted with a wood porch and remnants of wood anchored into masonry remain. It is unknown when this was removed or if it was related to the collapse of the rear elevation.

In 2019, the Reeber Building is subject of a rehabilitation project to convert it to retail and apartments.

3365 Michigan Avenue; Grosfield Building; 1893; Joseph E. Mills; Contributing

The design of the Grosfield Building exemplifies the commercial application of Late Victorian style and retains several characteristics of the Queen Anne subset including textured stone trim, patterned brickwork, terra cotta insets, semi-circular arched openings and a cylindrical tower with conical roof. The building was originally outfitted on the first floor with wood paneled entry doors set with transom windows above and large plate glass windows fronting the avenue. The second and third floors had double-hung windows with decorative upper sashes with a single lower pane. Stone belt courses running the building’s width between the first and second and second and third floors give an exterior visual of the interior separation of space. The prominent rounded corner contains a squat tower projecting just over the parapet wall, punctuated by two square window openings and topped with a conical roof.

Despite its deterioration, the Grosfield Building has always been and remains the most architecturally distinctive building in the historic district. The building retains late nineteenth century character-defining features on both the façade and western elevation that convey its architectural significance, such as fenestration, textured stone trim, checkerboard brickwork, corbeling, terra cotta insets, semi-circular arched openings, and a cylindrical tower topped by a conical roof with slate shingles. At least one, the western most, of the store front bays retains its wooden bulkhead (the eastern bay is entirely covered by wood panels. The distinctive tower of

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the Grosfield Building can be viewed nearly a half-mile before one arrives at Twenty-Third Street.

In 2019, the Grosfield Building is subject of a rehabilitation project to convert it to a mixed-use, rental-residential and commercial property.

3401 Michigan Avenue; People's State Bank 1925; Contributing

This building is a one-story rectangular-shaped building with a flat roof constructed in 1925 to serve as a branch office for People's State Bank, later Peoples Wayne County Bank and First National Bank. It is Neoclassical in style and the primary elevation faces Michigan Avenue. The façade is eighteen feet wide and divided into three bays. The primary and secondary elevations are faced with limestone and the building sits on a slightly raised foundation. The secondary elevation is parallel to Twenty-Third Street, is divided into eight bays and is the longer of the elevations. On either side, two bays with recessed panels and sills flank the arcaded windows. The central and largest bay is recessed from the secondary façade and contains six window units divided into a functional lower three-light lower, three-light middle and rounded upper transom. Each window is framed by limestone arches with keystones. All windows have limestone sills with a bullnose drip edge. A limestone belt course runs on both sides of the building separating a frieze which originally the bank's signage, one centered above the entrance facing Michigan Avenue and the other centered along the Twenty-Third Street elevation. Above the frieze a course of dentil molding and slightly projecting cornice create another separation before the parapet wall. The roof is hidden behind a parapet wall comprised of alternating limestone panels and a series of six balustrades. On the primary façade, the parapet balustrades are centered above the window openings enhancing the building's sense of balance. The primary entrance is accessed through a recessed portico flanked by two ionic columns. The front door is framed with a pediment. A large rounded transom window above the door repeats the trim and keystone treatment found on the Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street elevations. Only the Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street elevations are architecturally significant. The rear (south) and west elevations are clad in brick and the rear elevation contains one door opening and a ghost sign advertising parking for Alytaus Bar customers only. In 2014 the building was converted into a private residence and is currently occupied.

3407 Michigan Avenue; Vacant lot; Non-contributing

This vacant lot is located one parcel to the east of the People's State Bank building. A privacy fence constructed of horizontally oriented wood boards sits at the sidewalk frontage. No building or structure is reported on this parcel since a filling station was demolished for the People's State Bank in 1925. It is owned in common with the former bank at 3401 Michigan Avenue and is used as outdoor space and parking.

3415 Michigan Avenue; c. 1884; Contributing

This is one portion of a triple storefront building constructed of brick and two stories high with a flat roof. While the buildings all present a unified exterior architectural treatment, 3415

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Michigan Avenue does not share any interior openings with its neighbor at 3419 Michigan Avenue. 3415 Michigan Avenue is under different ownership than the buildings to the west at 3419 and 3423 Michigan Avenue. This division is visually evident by a mismatch in material uses, primarily at the ground floor storefront level.

The easternmost building at 3415 Michigan Avenue is divided into four bays. The first-floor storefront façade is covered with a combination of faux ashlar block and aluminum siding. Two small, horizontal sliding windows are positioned on either side of the primary entry at the door's header level and are thus not at pedestrian height. At the westernmost portion of the façade is a slightly narrower secondary entry, providing access to the upper floors. A faux mansard roof treatment created with shingles and aluminum siding visually separates the first story and second story.

Windows are one-over-one double hung vinyl. Wood anchors are visible around each of the arched upper windows indicating the presence of decorative hood molds at one time.

3415 Michigan Avenue continues to exemplify elements of late nineteenth century commercial architecture including decorative brick cornice and pilasters, storefront and upper apartment configuration and massing. As part of the district's oldest development, despite interventions and age, the collection of buildings at 3415, 3419, and 3423 Michigan Avenue would be easily recognizable to a past resident of the area.

3419 Michigan Avenue; c. 1884; Contributing

The storefront at 3419 Michigan Avenue is concealed behind a vertically oriented board that also encompassed 3423 Michigan Avenue. Currently one entry is centered on the shared storefront treatment and services both buildings. There is evidence of a stalled intervention as portions of the façade have been pulled off, exposing insulation and framing members. 3419 Michigan Avenue is divided into four bays, with the secondary entry to the upper floor positioned at the easternmost point on the façade. This building exhibits an arched brick treatment over the first-floor openings, which is not replicated by the storefronts on either side. The upper story contains two one-over-one double hung vinyl windows. Wood anchors are visible around each of the arched upper windows indicating the presence of decorative hood molds at one time.

Sanborn maps indicate the presence of openings between the first-floor storefronts at 3419 and 3423 Michigan Avenue. 3419 Michigan Avenue continues to exemplify elements of late nineteenth century commercial architecture including decorative brick cornice and pilasters, storefront and upper apartment configuration and massing.

3423 Michigan Avenue; c. 1884; Contributing

The storefront at 3423 Michigan Avenue are concealed behind a vertically oriented board running the length of both buildings and punctuated by entry point. There is evidence of a stalled intervention as portions of the façade have been pulled off, exposing insulation and framing members. 3419 Michigan Avenue is divided into four bays, with the secondary entry to

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the upper floor positioned at the easternmost point on the façade. This building exhibits an arched brick treatment over the first-floor openings, which is not replicated by the storefronts on either side.

The upper story clearly conveys the relationship between the three storefronts. Window openings are arched and ghosting on the brick indicates were previously framed with hood mouldings. Currently, windows are modern double-hung vinyl. 3417 and 3419 Michigan Avenue contain three one-over-one window openings and 3423 Michigan Avenue contains two. Several small chimneys in varying states of decay are visible over the low parapet wall, evidence of the building's early construction prior to most commercial buildings constructed with steam heat. A stepped scalloped brick treatment at the cornice runs the length of all three buildings. This same treatment is also visible on 3315 Michigan Avenue.

In 2019, 3423 Michigan Avenue continues to exemplify elements of late nineteenth century commercial architecture including decorative brick cornice and pilasters, storefront and upper apartment configuration and massing.

3431 Michigan Avenue; Cass Lock and Key; c. 1953; Non-contributing

This building is one story with a flat roof and an oversized parapet. It is oriented at a forty-five-degree angle to Michigan Avenue and constructed with a combination of brick and aluminum siding. Window openings are glass block. The interior of the business is accessed by a glazed door wall system with sidelight and transom.

The building is non-contributing to the district as a result of its date of construction and utilitarian design. It does not represent any characteristics shared by contributing buildings in this district.

3443 Michigan Avenue; c. 1890; Non-contributing

3443 Michigan Avenue is a two-story building with a flat roof. It is constructed with brick and the entire storefront façade is painted white. The façade is void of decoration and is framed by thick brick pilasters. The primary entry is a steel security door surrounded by brick quoining. A narrow secondary entry is located at the eastern wide of the façade to access the upper story, also a security door. Existing windows are four-over-four double-hung vinyl windows that are not historic. A shingle-covered mansard style roof was added at some point, and is punctuated by two window openings. This treatment is repeated on 3449 Michigan Avenue and 3455 Michigan Avenue.

The building is categorized as non-contributing because it currently displays little to no characteristics of the late nineteenth century commercial architecture represented in the district. The addition of the modern mansard-style roof, incompatible windows and painted brick conceal elements which would have made the building a contributing resource.

3449 Michigan Avenue; c. 1890; Non-contributing

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3449 Michigan Avenue is a two-story building with a flat roof. It is constructed with brick and the entire storefront façade is painted white. The façade is void of decoration and is framed by thick brick pilasters. The primary entry is a steel security door slightly off-center on the facade. A shingle-covered mansard style roof was added at some point, and is punctuated by three window openings. The openings are covered with painted plywood.

3449 Michigan Avenue is non-contributing because it currently displays little to no characteristics of the late nineteenth century commercial architecture represented in the district. The addition of the modern mansard-style roof, plywood covered window openings and painted brick conceal elements which would have made the building a contributing resource.

3455 Michigan Avenue; c. 1914; Non-contributing

3455 Michigan Avenue is a one-story brick building with flat roof. The facade contains a single entry point, a steel door, and is painted white save for the door. The façade is void of decoration and is framed by thick brick pilasters. A shingle-covered mansard style roof was added at some point, and contains two window openings filled by glass block and plywood.

Historically, this site housed the Victoria Theater, opened in 1914. As a result of exterior interventions and the building's status as an unoccupied building, it is difficult to determine if this is the same core building.

In 2019, 3455 Michigan Avenue does not contribute to the district as it currently displays little to no characteristics of the late nineteenth century commercial architecture. The addition of the modern mansard-style roof, incompatible windows and painted brick conceal elements which would have made the building a contributing resource.

3461 Michigan Avenue; Schulte and Kaiser Grocery Building; c. 1889; Peter Dederichs, Jr.; Contributing

This is a two-story building constructed of brick. The building has a decorative treatment at the cornice and a slightly projecting parapet concealing a flat roof. It is oriented so that the primary entry faces the intersection to Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street. The Michigan Avenue frontage is divided into eight bays. It contains two storefront spaces, the easternmost has been filled with concrete block and the space closest to the intersection is filled with brick. Brick pilasters sit on rusticated stone and have ornamental stone treatments at the intersection with the second story. The corner entry bay is flanked by the same decorative brick pilaster and decorative stone treatment and sits on a slight raised rusticated stone foundation. A plain stone belt course runs the length of the primary elevation provides a visual separation between the stories. Currently, there are no visible window openings on Michigan Avenue elevation. On the first story, the building is painted. 3461 Michigan Avenue is one of the buildings included in the historic district designed by an architect, Peter Dederichs Jr. The secondary elevation along Twenty-Fourth Street extends nearly to its alley boundary and shows evidence of alterations. To the immediate right of the entry a large plate glass window has been bricked in. Near the only

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remaining door at the south side of the elevation is another entryway that is bricked in. Currently, the only window openings on the first floor along Twenty-Fourth Street are glass block. Window openings on the upper story are covered with plywood and it is undetermined if windows are present.

In 2019 the building is vacant however it continues to display the elements distinctive of late nineteenth century commercial architecture along Michigan Avenue. Brick detailing, rusticated stone, decorative pilasters, flat roof and massing are all indicative of buildings constructed in Detroit at this time.

Integrity

Since the turn of the twentieth century there has been significant change to the built environment along Michigan Avenue, between downtown Detroit and the city of Dearborn to the west. Physical alterations, beginning with the addition of traffic lanes significantly altered the streetscape on the north side of the road. Socio-economic changes, population movements, and disinvestment have resulted in further physical changes to the historic district and surrounding area. These factors have only been compounded by vandalism and weather. Yet, the collection of buildings within the historic district retain integrity. While the first-floor stores fronts of many of the buildings have been altered or are obscured by temporary materials, the second floors of many buildings retain original character-defining details such as cornices, brickwork, fenestration, window sills and hoods. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century Detroiters who frequented the businesses located in these buildings would certainly recognize them as the same buildings, though altered, as those they knew. Additionally, the form, massing, scale, and architectural styles of the contributing resources present a streetscape that is clearly placed at the turn of the twentieth century. Collectively, these resources provide an architecturally and socially significant connection to a period of profound growth and change for the city of Detroit.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

c.1884-1925

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Dederichs, Peter Jr.

Mills, Joseph E.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance in the area of Commerce. The Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District is significant as one of very few examples of late nineteenth century development along Detroit's primary commercial corridors, and illustrates the patterns of expansion from the downtown core outward into relatively self-sustaining enclaves. Most of the late nineteenth century commercial buildings along Michigan Avenue west of the city center have been demolished in the name of progress, and increasingly fewer buildings remain that are associated with one of the city's development. During the time of the district's development, specifically between 1884 and 1925, the area between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Street became a critical link to goods, employment and socialization for the ethnic community settling and working in the expanding neighborhood. At the turn of the century, the area surrounding the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District contained the largest amount of day laborers in the city, creating an indisputable need for services, shops and communal opportunities.

The Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District is also significant under Criterion C as a representative example of commercial application of the Late Victorian, Queen Anne and Italianate architectural style on the west side of Detroit, and is the largest and most architecturally distinguished extant example of the once numerous commercial buildings that lined Michigan Avenue in Detroit. Over time, these buildings have disappeared due to demolition, deterioration, and transportation and urban planning. Despite the challenges of age, vandalism and vacancy the majority of the buildings in the district still exemplify distinctive characteristics of the architecture found along commercial corridors during the late nineteenth century. In cases where alterations have occurred there remain visible elements tying the building to the style of this time period. The two city blocks comprising the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District are virtually all that remain of a once thriving commercial corridor along Michigan Avenue west of the city's downtown.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Development of Detroit and the Michigan Avenue Corridor

The history of the city of Detroit can be, in some good measure, understood through the story of its immigrants. It is a microcosm of the United States itself – a melting pot that is also ever evolving to thrive against adversity. Similar to the country at large, Detroit expanded from a frontier, military outpost in its earliest days to a modern industrial-age city by 1900. Its growth was facilitated by many factors, but the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 increased break of bulk points for goods and also eased travel, resulting in the city becoming a principal point of

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departure for immigrants heading west as well as a destination for settlement.² These new arrivals came as skilled and unskilled labor to support growing industries, eager entrepreneurs ready to start small businesses and professionals interested in continuing their trade from the old country. As opportunities for commerce in Detroit grew alongside its population, neighborhood enclaves such as the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District emerged to meet demand and ultimately thrive as a commercial nucleus.

The city's immigrant history began with the arrival of Europeans in 1701, chiefly French fur traders. Other French arrived and established long, narrow farms along the river. British traders followed, and the settlement remained under British control until the end of Revolutionary War. Americans – new and old – came from the eastern states, predominantly New York and the New England states. This continued through the nineteenth century. In the middle years of the nineteenth century these Yankees were joined in the Michigan Territory by new European immigrants. In 1825 people from the modern state of Germany began to arrive in Detroit in “sizable numbers,”³ the earliest from the village of Neustadt in the Rhineland-Palatinate state in southwest Germany and were joined a few years later by Irish immigrants. By 1836 hundreds of immigrants, mostly German and Irish, arrived in Detroit each day,⁴ and the city's population had increased to more than 6,900. Though many undoubtedly intended to move still further west, hundreds and thousands of immigrants settled permanently in Detroit, transforming the city both physically and socially and both directly and indirectly.

For many, this early emigration from their homeland reflected displacement caused by the beginning stages of the Industrial Revolution, primarily impacting farmers and members of the county's lower middle class. These individuals immigrated with skills and a propensity for hard work useful to growing American cities and formed urban concentrations to a greater extent than other European predecessors.⁵ This influx of immigrants from Europe and migration of Americans from the east increased the population of the state past the 85,000 required for statehood. The process was initiated in 1835, and Michigan was formally admitted to the Union in 1837. In 1836, the Michigan Central Railroad began construction moving west from Detroit, reaching Ypsilanti by February 1838, Ann Arbor in October 1839, and Jackson on Dec. 29, 1841. The population of the city of Detroit continued to increase throughout the rest of the nineteenth century: 9,192 in 1840; 21,019 in 1850; 45,619 in 1860; 79,577 in 1870; 116,342 in 1890 before crossing 200,000 in 1900.

The district is also significant as a physical record of German immigration in the late nineteenth century on Detroit's west side, and illustrates the settlement pattern of German immigrants in Detroit in which new arrivals first established enclaves not far from the central business district and over time expanded outward to newer neighborhoods on the edge of the city. German

² City Plan Commission. *The People of Detroit*. Detroit: City of Detroit. 1946, p. 4.

³ David Lee Poremba, ed. *Detroit in its World Setting: A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001, p. 105.

⁴ David Lee Poremba, ed. *Detroit in its World Setting: A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001, p. 115.

⁵ Bergquist, James. M. “German Communities in American Cities: An Interpretation of the Nineteenth-Century Experience.” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 1984, 4, p. 9-30.

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immigrants who settled in urban environments tended to be from the professional and intellectual classes, or were skilled workers valuable to the numerous industries in the city.¹¹ City directories and the numerous histories written about the city attest to the great number of German-related businesses and organizations that flourished in this heyday of immigration. In 1834 the first of many German Catholic parishes was established. Protestant and Lutheran Germans quickly established their own churches. Detroit's German population also established a notable secular presence by founding newspapers, banks, theaters, musical and choral societies, and other organizations, clubs, and businesses.⁶ In the opinion of one observer, German immigrants had an eye for "the most desirable urban properties for their businesses."⁷ In addition to churches and temples of commerce, Germans also built halls, theaters, breweries, and other buildings. Even as late as 1914, this section of Gratiot Avenue had "a decidedly foreign aspect" to it, with "hardly an American or English name" to be found.⁸ Not coincidentally, this area on the east side was known for a time as Germantown.⁹ However, it soon became necessary for the population to settle a new area.

As the city's population swelled during the nineteenth century, expansion of Detroit's geographic limits became necessary to accommodate the great numbers of immigrants coming to the city. On February 12, 1857 the westernmost city boundaries were extended to the west end of a vast farm once operated by former territorial governor, George B. Porter. The new boundary, which became Twenty-Fifth Street in 1872, sat one block west of the westernmost boundary of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District and two and a half miles from the city center. Expansion occurred again in 1885 advancing the boundary further west to Livernois Road, 3.8 miles from the city center.

The 1860 *Michigan State Gazetteer, and Business Directory* identifies the J. Mathew rope and twine factory at 840 Michigan Avenue as being the most westerly located enterprise along the corridor. The Detroit City Railway installed four lines in 1863 to improve transportation along the city's main radial corridors: Jefferson, Woodward, Gratiot and Michigan. The Michigan Avenue line opened on November 25, 1863 extending 1.75 miles from the city center. With improved access, the avenue prospered. By the mid-1860s, commercial buildings dotted each side of Michigan Avenue west of downtown Detroit, evidence of the continued westward investment. Early stores were wood frame construction, with outbuildings and sheds positioned behind the main buildings along alleys. An 1875 business directory listed a multitude of offerings along Michigan Avenue, and illustrates the substantial commercial growth and diversification that had taken place during a five-year period. J.A. Dudgeon's clothing and dry goods and Samuel Lane plumbing and gas supplies were both located between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Third Streets, and Edward Minard's grocery business sat at the southeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Fourth. Across Michigan Avenue to the north, Theo V. Law, physician, at 952 Michigan Avenue was conveniently located one storefront over from a druggist

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at 950 Michigan Avenue. Anthony Somer's saloon sat at 972 Michigan Avenue. Most proprietors lived in the quarters above their businesses for convenience and to conserve earnings.

The City of Detroit fostered development west of the city center by opening streets and alleys, installing water and sewer lines, and making other general improvements. In 1884 the city contracted with Brush Illuminating Company to erect 133 iron light towers around the city including at the southeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street in front of the Grosfield Building. These towers ranged in height from 104 feet to 150 feet and were used to illuminate the surrounding environment, which allowed businesses to operate and residents to patronize those businesses at night, thus increasing the social and commercial activity in the neighborhood. In the early 1890s, Detroit upgraded wooden sewers to six-inch water pipes on Twenty-Third Street, eight-inch on Twenty-Fourth Street and twenty-four-inch service pipes along Michigan Avenue. By 1900 the city consisted of about twenty-three square miles of territory. In 1903, Detroit Edison began construction on the Delray I Power Plant to service the growing utility needs of the city. In 1904 the city opened the alley between Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets between Michigan Avenue and the Michigan Central Railroad, signaling increased land use in the immediate area. By 1906 the western city boundary extended to the Village of River Rouge, situated along the Detroit River and 5.3 miles southwest of the city center. The westward expansion along Michigan Avenue ended in approximately 1916 at the eastern boundary of Springwells, renamed Fordson in 1925, and later merged with the city of Dearborn to the west.

In 1891 in response to an expanding population and development pressures in the central business district downtown, the Common Council of Detroit disbanded the longtime Central Market and established two markets on the east and west sides of the city. Demonstrating the commercial demand in the western parts of the city, a contract to construct the Western Market, a companion to the Central and Easter Markets and located on the north side of Michigan Avenue at Eighteenth Street, was awarded that same year to Teakle and Golden contractors for a sum of \$16,378.¹⁰ The open-air sheds provided fresh produce, meat, poultry, and complementary products such as spices and nuts. Vendors sold out of wood stalls and later truck beds to consumers from the surrounding neighborhoods. The market was demolished in 1965 to make way for construction of the Fisher (I-75) and Jeffries (I-96) freeway interchanges. Despite proposals and pleas from the public as well as vendors who argued the market's closure would negatively impact independent businesses, Western Market was not rebuilt in a new location on the west side of the city. Eastern Market, however, remains a thriving retail and social destination and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (1978).

Between 1900 and 1910, the city continued to grow – both in terms of population and territory. At the end of the decade Detroit's population reached 465,000, ranking ninth in the country, and spread over forty square miles. By the 1910s, city directories indicate a significant Polish and Czech population, along with Irish and Greek. While still maintaining a notable presence, Germans were not as numerous as before, nor did they make up the same proportion of the population as they did between 1850 and 1900. This resulted from several factors, including a

¹⁰ "The Eastern and Western Markets." *Detroit Free Press*. Sept. 22, 1891.

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significant increase in immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, a decrease in immigrants from a now-unified Germany, and a diffusion and migration of Germans to other parts of the city and the developing northern suburbs. Immigration from Germany all but halted by the onset of World War I. Thousands of African Americans living in the southern United States arrived in Detroit enticed by the city's numerous well-paying factory jobs. Hispanic and Arab immigrants also arrived to the western section of the city for new opportunities, albeit in smaller numbers.

Just like the east side of the city, German and other European immigrants from Czech Republic, Poland, and Lithuania settled on the west side of the city and also constructed buildings to suit their spiritual and social needs and opportunities for engaging with one's countrymen were numerous. Social halls, clubs, and saloons were located within a short distance of the Michigan Avenue enclave. Several churches served the religious community as it evolved with immigration and settlement patterns of Detroit. Saint Boniface Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1869 by Germans living west of downtown Detroit. A second church building was constructed between 1882-1883 on Twelfth Street (Vermont Avenue) and Michigan Avenue, east of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. Saint Casimir Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1882, the first Polish parish located on Detroit's west side. In 1882 Anthony Grosfield sold six parcels of land at Twenty-Third Street and Myrtle Avenue to the church in to facilitate construction of the temporary parish building. A church building was constructed in 1883 at the corner of Twenty-Third Street and Myrtle Avenue (now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) two and a half blocks north of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. The permanent parish church was modeled after Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. Construction on the building began in 1889 and was completed in 1890 at a cost of \$126,000.¹¹ By 1898, membership at Saint Casimir numbered eight hundred families.¹² Mount Hope Congressional Church, a Protestant congregation, formed as a Sunday school mission in 1883 in a wood frame cottage on Twenty-Fifth Street near Michigan Avenue, later establishing as a church in 1889.

Groups rooted in the heritage, language and traditions of the motherland were vital to the growth and success of Detroit's immigrant communities and provided a crucial link for new arrivals seeking work, comradery or a potential mate. While hailing from different locales, there was often enough shared linguistic commonality to work and socialize together. In many parts of Europe, citizenship was not identical with ethnicity and language, and people were usually identified by their language rather than country.

Like the German community, Bohemians initially settled on the east side of the city along Gratiot Avenue and after continued growth, expanded their community out Michigan Avenue west of the downtown. Those fleeing Prussian persecution in Bohemia (present day Czech Republic) initially arrived in Detroit at the end of the nineteenth century. By 1898 the group

¹¹ St. Casimir Roman Catholic Church. July 16, 2017. <https://www.detroitpolonia.org/st-casimir-roman-catholic-church/>

¹² Ross, Robert B. and George B. Caitlin, eds.; Rev. by Clarence W. Burton. *Landmarks of Detroit, A history of the City. Detroit, Mich.:* The Evening News Association. 1898.

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numbered nearly 3,000 and a Detroit Free Press article titled “Bohemians of Detroit” noted that “there are many living on Michigan Avenue and the cross streets near Tillman” Avenue.¹³

By 1910, the Bohemian Turners Society, an affiliate of the Bohemian Society of America, outgrew the east side hall erected in 1890 and plans were made for a large new hall on the west side. The new Bohemian National Home opened to great fanfare on December 13, 1914 at the corner of Butternut Street and Tillman Avenue, just a few blocks north of the Michigan Commercial Historic District. The *Cesky Narodni Dum* or “Czech National Home” was built by Sokol Podlipny, as the west side Turner society was called, at a cost of \$30,000 and included a gymnasium, showers, auditorium, two meeting halls, library, schoolroom, and an apartment for the building manager.¹⁴ The three-story brick building is 16,000 square feet and included all of the modern conveniences of the time and reflected Arts and Crafts influences in the design. In 1962 the building was sold to the Detroit Lithuanian Home Association who remained until the early 1990s. It was purchased in 1996 to stave off demolition and converted into an independent art cooperative and music venue. The building is currently vacant but retains its architectural integrity, including vibrant blue stained glass square windows that adorn the façade just below the parapet.

Detroit’s Lithuanian community settled near the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, arriving at the turn of the century and quickly found work in automotive factories. Lithuanian churches, social halls and funeral parlors were primarily constructed closer to Southwest Detroit, west of the historic district, and several are standing and occupied in 2019. Many of the social and religious organizations also provided an important philanthropic and service component for the community and its immigrant populous. Banks affiliated with national groups gave loans to new immigrants seeking to start a business or purchase a home and place down roots in the neighborhood. Mutual aid societies “provided sick benefits, insurance and low-cost funerals,” an important safety net for a group working hazardous labor positions without job-based benefits or personal savings.¹⁵ Starting in the 1920s the Lithuanian Fraternities of America Immanuel Aid Society held meetings and functions at a hall located at 3509 Michigan Avenue on the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street. During this time, the space was also utilized by other organizations without a home building, including Enterprise Camp #8894 of the Woodman fraternal organization and *Obreros Unidos Mexicanos* a popular Mexican dance group popular with the Hispanic population that had settled in Southwest Detroit.

Despite the flourishing corridor of Michigan Avenue and relative prosperity and stability of Detroit, circumstances were not as prosperous abroad. In 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, marking the start of World War I. While the United States maintained a cautious position supporting the allied forces from afar, following continued German aggression the United States severed diplomatic relations with Germany in February 1917. On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and formally entered World War I. During the first round of

¹³ “Bohemians of Detroit.” *Detroit Free Press*. Sept. 18, 1898.

¹⁴ “New Bohemian National Home.” *Detroit Free Press*. Dec. 13, 1914.

¹⁵ Babson, Steve. “*Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town.*” Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1984.

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registrations on June 5, 1917, nearly 154,700 Detroit men entered their names into the draft. Based upon population quotas based on eligible men, the city was obligated to provide at least 22,000 soldiers for the war effort.¹⁶

In November 1917, to comply with a national order from President Woodrow Wilson, Detroit Metropolitan Police Commissioner James Couzens (later Mayor of Detroit from 1919-1922) declared that all non-naturalized Germans must register with local police precincts during a five-day period in February of the following year or face internment, despite any previous registrations. To assist with this great undertaking, blank registration forms were distributed to local factories that employed large numbers of German aliens, including those who lived in the vicinity of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. The registration cards included the name, address, and description of the cardholder, as well as a photograph and imprint of the left thumb. These forms were to be carried by the individual at all times. Published accounts counted 6,459 German aliens as having been placed into the registration system. A February 27, 1918, *Detroit Free Press* article that described the process for returning to the precinct to obtain one's completed registration card employed the stern and separatist title "Enemy Aliens Called Again." In addition to anxiety over discontent in their homelands, those of German heritage living in Detroit faced discrimination, acts of violence, and even government-driven seizure of property. Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools Dr. Charles Chadsey publically called into question the loyalty of the city's German teachers, prompting reassurances by Emil Albrecht, head of the German department at Central High School that he did "not know of a single case where disloyalty has been shown by these persons."¹⁷ Still, many public schools and universities dropped their German language programs in a pledge of allegiance to the United States war effort. Despite Albrecht's assurances not all of Detroit's German population was loyal to the United States. Albert Kaltschmidt, a German alien living in Detroit, enlisted to commit acts of espionage for Germany. Kaltschmidt organized a group of fellow immigrants to destroy a number of targets in the Detroit area and in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Ultimately, only one target – the Peabody Company in Walkerville, Ontario, was destroyed. Kaltschmidt's efforts were funded by Count Johann von Bernstorff, the German ambassador at that time, and Captain Franz von Papen then-military attaché and later vice-chancellor of Germany under Adolf Hitler.¹⁸

By 1920 the population of the city had about doubled to more than 993,000 people, all within 77.9 square miles. Approximately twenty-nine percent of these individuals were foreign-born, and included many Poles, Russians, Canadians, Irish, Scots, Swedes, and Norwegians. The city reached its present size in 1927, covering a sprawling 139 square miles. From its humble beginnings, the city had largely spread along the river. Between 1910 and 1927, however, the city increasingly expanded northward, finally reaching the southern borders of Oakland and Macomb Counties. In 1930, the city ranked fourth as the nation's largest, exceeded by New York, Chicago and Philadelphia.

¹⁶ Clemens, Elizabeth. *Detroit in World War I*. Charleston S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2015.

¹⁷ "German Teachers Here are Loyal." *Detroit Free Press*. Apr. 10, 1918.

¹⁸ Jack Pickering. "Full Complement of Spies Roaming Detroit Today as in the World War." *Detroit Free Press*. June 30, 1940.

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Germans, too, continued to settle in Detroit,¹⁹ but had been surpassed in numbers by Poles, Canadians, and African Americans, by 1925.²⁰ During the 1930 census, 4879 Lithuanians lived in Detroit. In the 1950s Atalyus Bar at 3415 Michigan Avenue catered primarily to Lithuanian clientele, having been named for the owner's home city in Lithuania. The bar served as base for activity for the community, not only as a local watering hole but also as a place for ethnic Lithuanians to gather, hold meetings and assisting with new immigrants displaced after World War II.

Detroit's population reached a high of 1,850,000 residents in 1950 and had fallen to 1,514,063 by April 1970, largely a reflection of post-1967 rebellion white flight to the outlying suburbs. By the 1970s, the city's German population made up only a small proportion of the city's ethnic groups. In 2018 after decades of continued decline Detroit's population numbered 673,000.

Commerce

1884-1900

The Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District represents a remaining link to what was the heart of the west side commercial district. The section of Michigan Avenue, between what is now the Jeffries Service Drive and West Grand Boulevard provided goods and services for the surrounding, largely German, population. As Detroit's German population increased (by 1880 the number of Germans exceeded seventeen thousand, making it the largest ethnic group in the city²¹), a second community was established on the west side of the city, beyond Corktown and west of Eighteenth Street. While not the only ethnic group to establish neighborhoods on the far west side of the city, Detroit's Germanic citizens established a sizable presence on the west side of the city, largely west of Eighteenth Street and east of Twenty-Fifth Street. Much like on the east side of the city, immigrants on the west side also constructed buildings to suit their spiritual, social, and practical needs. These places occupied corners and corridors within walking distance to consumers' homes and places of employment, and this section of Michigan Avenue became a center of daily life, placing jobs, goods, and entertainment within reach for the expanding immigrant community. A significant commercial center developed along Michigan Avenue and the heart of that center was largely between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets, in particular.

In 1887 the merchants located on Michigan Avenue reflected the needs of the immigrant population residing close by. Twenty-Second Street did not extend to Michigan Avenue, the occupied by the George Beecher farm estate which the concentration of buildings along Michigan Avenue did not bisect. The block begins with 961 Michigan Avenue, and Grankowski

¹⁹ David Lee Poremba, ed. *Detroit in its World Setting: A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001, p. 251.

²⁰ Alex B. Hill. "Population Density Map 1925 Detroit City Census." *Detroitography.com*. <https://detroitography.com/2016/10/12/population-density-map-1925-city-census/>. Accessed March 31, 2019.

²¹ David Lee Poremba, ed. *Detroit in its World Setting: A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001, p. 129.

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carriage and wagon shop occupies a one-story brick building directly to the west at 963 Michigan Avenue. Weber's shoe shop located at 971 Michigan Avenue and Anthony Grosfield's hardware partnership with John Lingeman and August Heidenrich occupied a two-story wood frame building at 981 Michigan Avenue. Keeping local homes and businesses warm, Thomas Montgomery's wood and coal business occupied the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue Twenty-Third Street at 985 Michigan, with a long wood storage building stretching along the side street. Other businesses established on the block stretching toward Twenty-Fourth Street included Barbara Pfeifer's tailor shop at 991 Michigan Avenue, James Tierney's saloon at 995 Michigan Avenue and Frank Dejat's butcher shop at 999 Michigan Avenue. Charles Protiva, a grocer, located his business at 1007 Michigan Avenue. The majority of buildings share at least one common wall and are built to the Michigan Avenue frontage, maximizing exposure to passersby. The buildings are one and two-story masonry construction, with only three wood frame buildings fronting the avenue at this time. A three-story brick building with mansard roof stands at 969 Michigan Avenue.

Some of these business owners, and likely a few developers, hired prominent local architects to design buildings for them including at the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. In August 1887, Anthony Grosfield, a west side real estate developer and German immigrant from Westphalia, contracted local architect Peter Dederichs Jr., another German immigrant, to prepare plans and specifications for a new double brick store on Michigan Avenue. The project currently standing as the two eastern bays of the Reeber Building. Grosfield first dealt in dry goods, stoves, and hardware before turning to real estate sales and development, locating both enterprises at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street. Detroit builder and carpenter Samuel Stringer constructed the building the same year with construction totaling \$8,196. A receipt dated April 14, 1888, details Dederichs' role in the realization of the building, furnishing plans and specifications for the design in addition to providing superintendent duties.

In 1888 Charles and Joseph Reeber expanded their retail business and relocated from 967 Michigan Avenue to the newly constructed building at 975-979 Michigan Avenue. The Reeber Brothers were a prominent and popular dry goods house on the city's west side, established in 1879. Goods available included products sourced from domestic and foreign locales, carpets, and a wide variety of clothing fabrics and ribbon sold by the yard for home-based sewing projects. The Reeber brothers also dealt in goose feathers, used to fill pillows and mattresses. In 1890, Charles and Joseph Reeber purchased the property and building at 975-979 Michigan from real estate developer Anthony Grosfield for the sum of \$13,700.

In 1889 grocers Willibald Schulte and Anthony Kaiser, owners of Schulte and Kaiser Grocers, hired Peter Dederichs Jr., who recently completed a building for Anthony Grosfield, to design a block of brick stores for the southeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street, constructed by John Brennan and Company contractors at a cost of \$7,500.²² Schulte and Kaiser specialized in groceries, flour, horse feed and also operated a saloon. Schulte and Kaiser previously operated at 983 Michigan Avenue and had a store at 899 Gratiot Avenue serving the

²² "A Suburban Boom – New Buildings." *Detroit Free Press*. June 23, 1889.

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east side German community. Grocers, boot and shoe shops, butchers and saloons were frequent amongst the blocks stretching alongside Michigan Avenue running west of downtown, keeping life's daily requirements and relaxations within easy reach to nearby residents.

At this time, opposite the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, sewing machines could be purchased from August Schultz at 980 Michigan Avenue Joseph Raymo operated his new hardware store at 982 Michigan Avenue and Werner Raschke's saloon sat at northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street. Ezra Craft also sold sewing machines alongside Bartholomew Fafeyta's tailor shop at 992 Michigan Avenue. In 1889, Fafeyta's Opera House opened on the north side of Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets at 996-998 Michigan. The theater sat one thousand patrons and boasted an elegantly frescoed and decorated setting for the enjoyment of stage productions.²³ The area immediately surrounding the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District was quickly becoming a destination and gathering place.

The Home Savings Bank organized in Detroit in January 1889 and headquartered operations downtown on Griswold Street across from City Hall. The bank was the first in Detroit to erect a branch office and in 1890 selected 781 Michigan Avenue, just a few blocks east of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, signifying the early confidence in the commercial success of the area and acknowledgment of banking requirements of west side businesses and residents. While the street address indicates the location of the bank branch is at least two blocks west, the bank's own advertisements and historical biographies of Detroit refer to the branch as being located at Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street.

The commercial prominence of the blocks comprising the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District continued into the 1890s. In 1893 Anthony Grosfield hired architect Joseph E. Mills to design a three-story brick building with stores and flats on the southeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street. Grosfield located his real estate and investment business on the second floor of the new building and resided on the first floor. Prior to the construction of the new building, this site was occupied by a one-story, wood-frame building at 979 Michigan Avenue and a two-story, wood-frame building at 981-983 Michigan Avenue. These buildings were partially or fully destroyed by a fire in 1893. The City of Detroit granted building permit #840 on May 19, 1893, for construction of a three-story brick double store and four dwellings on Lot 3 of Porter's Subdivision. The pressed brick building was constructed by Warren, Henwood & Brown at a final cost of \$14,000. On June 25, 1894, the City of Detroit granted building permit #613 for construction of a two-story masonry structure at the rear of Lot 3 of Fisher's Sub. By 1897, building is documented as a tin shop by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company.

1897 Sanborn maps depict both sides of Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets occupied by one- and two-story commercial buildings, with each parcel occupied. Of the twenty primary buildings extent in 1897 on the south side of Michigan Avenue within

²³ Jeffery, Jno B. *Jeffery's Guide and Directory to the Opera Houses, Theatres, Public Halls, Bill Posters, Etc. of the Cities and Towns of America*. Chicago, Ill.: Jno B. Jeffery, 1889.

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Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District boundaries all are masonry construction with the exception of two small wood buildings. Secondary structures behind the commercial strip, including barns and storage sheds, are still constructed out of wood at this time, as are the majority of the one- and two- story dwellings that line Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets. 1897 Sanborn maps show the area directly east of Twenty-Third Street as being entirely void of development. Twenty-Second Street is not noted on the map and Foundry Street is depicted two and a half blocks east of Twenty-Third, intersecting with Michigan Avenue.

Early industry is present south of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, clustered along the Michigan Central Railroad. Several wood planing mills and lumber yards are situated near Michigan Avenue and the railroad tracks. The John Brennan and Company Boiler Works facility sat just over the railroad south of the district.

A July 1898 volume of *The Inland Architect and News Record* indicates preparation of plans by Joseph E. Mills for a \$5,000, two-story, double-brick residence for real estate developer Anthony Grosfield. Situated directly behind the Grosfield Building, 2746-2748 Twenty-Third Street is a two-story rectangular-shaped building with an irregular southern elevation parallel to the alley. The building sits on a raised foundation with basement and has a flat roof with stone-capped parapet. The façade is faced with pressed red brick. The entry to the double residence is recessed under a covered stoop behind an arched opening and is accessed by several stone steps which are worn, evidence of over one hundred and twenty years of use. Window openings on the first floor are arched with simple stone sills and lintels and openings on the second story are arched with a brick band with stone sills below. Above the entry, two small window openings are framed by a decorative brick panel above. A header course of brick runs the entire length of the primary, north and south elevations. A pressed metal cornice wraps the front elevation, terminating at the intersection with common brick. One third of the south elevation facing the alley is faced with pressed red brick returned from the façade, the remaining two-thirds is common brick. The intersection of the two materials is blended with a quoin treatment. In 2019, 2746-2748 Twenty-Third Street presents with a collapsed roof and is void of mechanical systems. A small portion of the rear elevation has been removed. Window openings are covered with plywood. Deterioration is localized to the northern and rear elevations, and the façade remains remarkably intact save for missing windows.

Grosfield was already well-established as a successful developer on Detroit's west side. He platted farm land and sold residential real estate in the neighborhoods north and south of Michigan Avenue, including the former Saint Joseph's Asylum property just west of the historic district at Grand Boulevard. The Twenty-Third Street duplex served solely as an income-producing property and it remained as such until its vacancy. This property likely catered to an individual residing with at least one additional person who either did not desire or who was not yet financially positioned for home ownership. Each unit was just slightly smaller than the vernacular wood-frame worker cottages in the surrounding neighborhood.

City directories at the turn of the twentieth century illustrate the variety of shops and supplies located on Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets. Dry goods, confections, clothing, a druggist, furnishings, groceries, hats, hardware, cigars, shoes, fresh

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baked goods, a barber and blacksmith were all available within a short walk. The surnames of the proprietors of these businesses demonstrate the prevalence of Germans among the west side businesses: Fellrath, Kruger, Weber, Von Mach, Waldstein, Reeber, Grimm, Kress, Reich, Goldberg, Grier, Litzenburger, Raymo, Kolbe, Paddock, Boldt, Krohn, Schechter, Schulte, Hafenfeld, Ochenfeld, Gottesman, Cobo, Ziegler, Zindler and Grosfield. The businesses lining Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets represented the core of the west side commercial district as well as an important link to Eastern European settlement of Detroit. Job advertisements in local newspapers during this era often specified that prospective candidates speak both English and German to be considered for employment.

1900-1950

At the turn of the twentieth century, commercial development on Michigan Avenue between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets continued to evolve, and mirrored a rapidly changing city. A 1900 photograph of the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street shows the uninterrupted stretch of two- and three-story brick buildings that occupied both sides of the avenue. Awnings over plate glass storefronts offered protection from the sun for pedestrian shoppers, and hand-painted signs and banners advertised goods and services to passersby on the roadway. Streetcar rails visible in the photograph remind of a once common mode of transport throughout Detroit, are no longer in use and were removed or buried in brick and asphalt as lanes grew to accommodate cars. Detroit had become a manufacturing powerhouse that produced such in-demand items such as stoves, freight cars, pharmaceuticals, seeds, beer, and wood-based products. Industrial growth was powered by iron and steel operations, supporting the new and evolving automobile sector. By 1907 the city boasted that it was home to three thousand factories that employed 100,000 people.²⁴

Detroit was also a leading tobacco manufacturing hub after the turn of the century, and feminine fingers provided optimal dexterity for rolling cigars. The cigar industry provided an important employment opportunity to women, despite male union organization against hiring female workers. While the majority of cigar factories were located on the city's east side close to downtown and near Polish enclaves as these women comprised a large percentage of the cigar-rolling workforce, some manufacturers located operations on the city's expanding west side. Charles F. Boldt cigars, founded in 1888, located their manufacturing operations at 1000 Michigan Avenue on the north side of the street between Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets.

In July 1906 the *Detroit Free Press* published two features focusing on the industrial growth of the area and the commercial strength of the Michigan Avenue corridor west of the downtown. A July 2, 1906, article titled "City's Rapid Growth" including the subheadings "Tract out Michigan Avenue an Indication" and "Vacant Three Years Ago" showing the impressive improvement of land between 1900 and 1903 to support local industry. South of the commercial corridor of Michigan Avenue grew a number of industrial and manufacturing operations to attract skilled and unskilled workers alike. Items produced or readied for consumers included

²⁴ "Detroit as a Manufacturing Center." *Detroit Free Press*. August 28, 1907.

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furniture, lumber, cigars, aluminum castings, structural steel, boilers and stoves, railroad supplies, leather, meats and poultry and brick. In 1901 real estate brokers City and Suburban Homes Company were charged with dividing fifteen acres formerly belonging to the Beecher Estate into factory sites. The tract of land in question was situated between Michigan Avenue and the Michigan Central Railroad and between Beecher and Isabella Avenues (Twenty-Second Street). Close proximity of the site to the Michigan Central Railroad and the Detroit River allowed for ease of transfer, improved greatly in 1906 when new track was laid for two industrial spurs running north from the Michigan Central line between Beecher Avenue, now the service drive of the Fisher-Jefferies highway interchange, and Twenty-Second Street and between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Third Streets. The new lines enabled freight rail cars to reach the new factories nearly all the way to Michigan Avenue. A second significant logistics improvement also occurred in 1906 when the Detroit River Tunnel Co. commenced work on a railroad tunnel from Detroit to Windsor. The tunnel opened on July 26, 1910, with electric locomotives making passage between the two countries.

The Acme Foundry Company erected a new factory on former Beecher estate property in 1903, employing eight men with a monthly payroll of \$400. By 1906, the grey iron foundry employed sixty-five men, with a monthly payroll of \$4000 and built a thirty foot by sixty-foot addition to accommodate increased production. Whitehead and Kales Iron Works also secured a site in 1903 and constructed a new brick factory at a cost of \$12,000. Joining Acme and Whitehead and Kales on the former Beecher grounds were several manufacturers illustrating the immediate area's varied range of production: M. Mitshkun railroad supplies, Ypsilanti Underwear Company, W.J. Scully Ventilator and Manufacturing Company; William W. Vaughn Preserving Company pickle manufacturers, Comfort Furniture Company, Sullivan Beef Company, Detroit Fireproofing Tile Company; the Detroit Leather Specialty Company, Srere Brother's rag factory and the Frederic B. Stevens foundry. The article sums up the recent industrial expansion by stating "it is doubtful if any tract of the size in the city can equal this plat of fifteen acres for rapidity of growth, diversity of enterprise and prosperity."²⁵

Like Anthony Grosfield, M. E. Von Mach, local interior decorator and decorative painter who had located his business at 965 Michigan Avenue since 1886, also invested in the neighborhood's residential real estate. In 1903, Von Mach built four two-story brick-veneered dwellings at the northwest corner of Isabella Avenue (Twenty-Second Street) and E Street one block south of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. Each building was sixty-four feet by forty feet and construction totaled \$4,500.00. The dwellings remained standing until at least 1950 when they are depicted on a Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map.

The blocks comprising the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District were featured in a July 25, 1906, *Detroit Free Press* article touting the expanding corridor and the variety of well-appointed commercial stores serving the immediate neighborhood. Three images are included in the article, two of which depict the busy north and southeast corners of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street. The "thriving center" is described as representing "practically every kind of retail business" which flourished from continuous patronage of expanding neighborhoods and

²⁵ City's Rapid Growth." *Detroit Free Press*. July 2, 1906.

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the well-traveled roadway.²⁶ Multiple ventures were featured in the article, businesses supported by the consistent travel along the corridor and proximity to the Western Market at Eighteenth Street as well as the numerous people residing a short walk from the merchants. West of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, I.P. Norton Funeral Director was situated across the avenue from Mrs. F. Rush, florist. Speck Brothers furnishings, carriages and refrigerators was located on the north side of the avenue near Eighteenth Street. The Reeber Brothers and Anthony Grosfield were lauded as well-established and trustworthy Michigan Avenue merchants. John Paddock Drugs at the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third provided practical items, prescriptions and a large assortment of cigars. Roman Jahsan's shop at 1007 Michigan Avenue sold house furniture and baby carriages. Schulte and Kaiser's store continued to provide dry goods and groceries at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street. In December 1911, the Detroit Savings Bank, Michigan's oldest banking institution, opened a new branch at the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street, established for the "convenience of the business men and general public in this thriving section of our city."²⁷

Motion pictures soon replaced stage and vaudeville acts, and one did not need to travel far to enjoy a movie. The first Detroit theater to exclusively to show motion pictures was the Casino Theater, constructed downtown at Monroe and Farmer Streets in 1905.²⁸ Small neighborhood theaters, seating a few hundred guests, were erected throughout the city often on one of the main corridors such as Michigan Avenue. The first of these neighborhood theaters, the Garden Theater, opened on December 29, 1912. Located on Woodward Avenue between Willis and Selden Streets the Garden Theater is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. By the 1920s, Detroit had over one hundred sixty movie theaters distributed across the city. Neighborhood theaters provided an important compliment to the commercial strip of Michigan Avenue, giving Detroiters a source of entertainment after a day of shopping or work.

In 1914 the Victoria Theater opened at 3455 Michigan Avenue near Twenty-Fifth Street, constructed by Greenwich Company, Detroit-based builders of small theaters, fraternal halls and residences. A *Detroit Free Press* advertisement celebrating the opening depicts a small one-story building with a decorative iron awning. The one-story height of the building was by design, as the city had banned all second-floor movie houses earlier that year due to inherent fire and evacuation hazards. As early as 1918, the Tillman Theater was operating at 3301 Michigan Avenue at Twenty-Second Street, seating just over 500 motion picture patrons. Renamed the Wolverine in 1921, the Dale in 1941 and the Mexico in the mid-1950s the building continued to show motion pictures for nearly a half century.

Community events organized by local professional and business societies provided outlets for entertainment and brought together those living in the neighborhoods near Michigan Avenue. They also provided a venue for such organizations to showcase their businesses and groups in efforts to grow sales and membership numbers. The Central Michigan Avenue Improvement

²⁶ "Michigan Avenue A Growing Retail District" *Detroit Free Press*. July 25, 1906. p. 10.

²⁷ "New Branch." *Detroit Free Press*. Dec. 17, 1911.

²⁸ Woodford, Arthur M. *This is Detroit, 1701-2001*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001.

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Association was created in 1912 to unite business interests along the avenue from Trumbull to Grand Boulevard, forming a unified group to lobby local government for enhancements and improve patronage along the avenue. Meetings took place in locations along the avenue, including at the meeting hall at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Fourth Street, just outside the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District boundary. In August 1914 the group co-sponsored a carnival with the West Michigan Avenue Improvement Association, taking place along three miles of Michigan Avenue, stretching west to Martin Avenue. Businesses were encouraged to decorate their storefronts for the festivities and were formally judged on their efforts while uniformed troops representing local fraternal organizations, including the Bohemian Turners, were rallied for a night parade. More than three hundred automobile floats registered to entertain crowds lining the road. Attendance counts for the event numbered in the thousands and nearly seven hundred merchants participated in the weeklong events, no doubt increasing the exposure of the businesses located between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets.

By 1915 Detroit was the undisputed center of automobile production in the United States with and virtually every Detroiters was impacted by this individual industry. The area surrounding the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District furnished employees eager to work in Detroit's now fully established industries. Laborers from the surrounding neighborhoods found work at large automobile plants as well as with local plants situated along the Michigan Central Railroad. During a 1915 operator strike sidelining the city's street cars, the Chalmers Motor Company arranged to transport workers reliant on the system to the factory on Jefferson Avenue east of the city's downtown. The corner of Michigan and Twenty-Fourth Street was included in the pre-arranged pickup points, a nod to the amount of workers hailing from the neighborhood. By the first quarter of 1916, Detroit's automotive production was up four hundred percent from the same time period in 1915.

Detroit's industrial sector supported the World War I effort by shifting mass production dedicated to automobiles to munitions, aircraft and armored vehicles. Henry Ford's River Rouge Plant began fulfilling a United States Navy contract for Eagle Boats rather than Model T automobiles for the everyman. Packard built airplane engines rather than touring cars and delivery trucks. Average residents pitched in also, buying war bonds and volunteering for bandage and clothing drives. Although not formally programmed, the United States heavily persuaded the home front to reduce food consumption, particularly wheat, meat, fats and sugars. Posters with slogans such as "Food is Ammunition – Don't Waste It!" and "Preserve" with colorful depictions of overflowing produce baskets further encouraged a patriotic slant to meal planning. These efforts led to a fifteen percent reduction of American food consumption between 1917 and 1918. The Great War ended on November 11, 1918, and large crowds gathered throughout Detroit, including at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Campus Martius, to celebrate the return of peace.

Increased private ownership of automobiles also impacted the corridor and the forms of transportation that brought goods and people to Michigan Avenue. In 1921, a filling station with a one-thousand-gallon-capacity holding tank occupied the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street to accommodate the growing number of automobiles, a considerable

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change from the steel cans, pitchers, and ladles, of only a few years earlier.²⁹ By August 1925, People's State Bank advertised the "23rd-Michigan" branch at the southwest corner of the intersection to service the savings and loan needs of the local population. That included not only small businesses along the Michigan Avenue corridor but also working-class individuals occupying vernacular homes and professionals residing in the more palatial homes along West Grand Boulevard. At the time of the Michigan Avenue branch opening, the People's State Bank reported over \$150,000,000 in resources.³⁰ The 1925-1926 city directory lists a branch of the Kroger Grocery and Bakery at 3326 Michigan Avenue, an arrival of a large corporate entity to the small business-based atmosphere of Michigan Avenue. Seven years prior in 1918, the Kroger Grocery and Baking Company had purchased eighty retail grocery establishments in the city of Detroit. As larger companies amassed stock and stores, and were able to reach more consumers via truck deliveries, it became more difficult for small enterprises to compete.

The previously mid-size industrial concentration of foundry and industrial operations south and east of Michigan Avenue grew into larger-scale facilities, supported logistically by the Michigan Central Railroad directly to the south of the district and increases in trucking operations. A 1921 Sanborn map depicts several industrial operations, several of which have occupied the area since its opening for factory sites just after the turn of the century. Included are General Aluminum and Brass, Wright and Parker Baking Company, Acme Foundry Company, Frederic B. Stevens Foundry, Miller-Selden Electric Company, Sullivan Packing Company and Horace G. Preston Company.

The 1928-1929 *Polk's City Directory* confirms the area is still a flourishing commercial destination. Between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Third Streets, the Wolverine Theater and Wolverine Candy Company occupy the storefronts at 3301 and 3311 Michigan Avenue. M.E. Von Mach's design business continued in his longtime location at 3321 Michigan Avenue. Chylowski Jewelry remains in business, marking over forty years on the block. The Reeber Furniture Company continued at 3363 Michigan Avenue and the Grosfield businesses remained headquartered in their namesake building at 3365 Michigan Avenue. These long-term German businessmen were joined by a branch of the Kroger Company. Between Twenty-Third and Twenty Fourth Streets the bank remains in operation at the southwest corner, now under the Peoples Wayne County Bank moniker. 3415 Michigan Avenue is listed as Alex Nashlen's soft drinks and the companion storefront at 3419 is vacant. A second hand goods shop is located inside the storefronts at 3419-3423 Michigan Avenue, with proprietor Louis Silverman residing upstairs.

The prevalence of soft drink parlors should be viewed in context of the time as this label most likely reference locations that were previously bars or saloons during the time of Prohibition. Several were also coyly renamed confectionaries, changing over from soda and candy by day to selling alcoholic beverages by night. Detroit was the first city in the nation to prohibit alcohol sales on May 1, 1918, however the city's proximity to Canada and a thriving thirst meant a

²⁹ Melaina, Marc W. "Turn of the Century Refueling: A Review of Innovations in Early Gasoline Refueling Methods and Analogies for Hydrogen." *Energy Policy*. Vol. 35 June 2007.

³⁰ The People's State Bank. *Detroit Free Press*. Aug. 10, 1925.

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bustling albeit illegal industry quickly arose from the ban. The nation soon realized the incapability of the law, and in 1933 Prohibition was officially over.

By the mid-1930s more significant change was planned for the western stretch of Michigan Avenue. More automobiles meant increased congestion along Detroit's corridors. A 1938 project to widen Michigan Avenue resulted in an extensive alteration to the streetscape, the scars of which remain visible today. In order to accommodate additional traffic lanes nearly half of the late nineteenth century commercial building stock along the avenue was lost to demolition. Images taken prior to the expansion from the show the threatened building stock: a dense concentration of two- and three-story brick buildings, outfitted with plate glass storefronts on the ground floor and ornamented with attractive stone trimmings and cornice treatments on the second and third stories. A unique effort to preserve the historic architecture occurred in 1940 with the removal of the Grimm Jewelry Store from the original location on Michigan Avenue to Henry Ford's museum of historic buildings and structures at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. Designed by Peter Dederichs Jr. for Englebert Grimm, the two-story brick building sat less than a mile from the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District and housed the avenue's first jewelry store.³¹

In 1940, the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District had turned a corner with an increased number of vacancies. The Wolverine Theater remained at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Second Street, serviced by Philip Bogosian's confectionary next door at 3311 Michigan Avenue. The storefront at 3315 Michigan Avenue was occupied by a second-hand furniture business. M.E. Von Mach and Son interior decorating remained at 3321 Michigan Avenue. Grand Sign and Light Company is at 3341 Michigan Avenue, marketing fluorescent lights. Reeber Furniture occupy the storefronts 3347-3353 and the Reeber family continues to use the second-story dwelling above the storefront as a family residence. The Grosfield Agency and Grosfield Investment Company occupy offices at the Grosfield Building, and one half of the Grosfield storefront level space is reported as vacant. The bank building at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street is vacant. John Knaz operates a beer garden, a nod the area's German heritage, at 3415 Michigan Avenue and resides upstairs. On the north side of Michigan Avenue moving west from Twenty-Third Street, multiple vacancies are reported at 3410, 3420, 3422, 3424 and 3426. Boldt Cigars remains at 3430 Michigan Avenue.

A 1949 aerial photograph shows some retention of density on the south side of Michigan Avenue with the north side of the street showing a greater building loss from the 1938 widening project. Development of the area started to shift from the dense commercial avenue and intersecting residential streets to favor industry as the primary use of the land south of Michigan Avenue. As populations migrated further north to newly-constructed suburbs and longtime residents aged, the former neighborhood to the south is replaced almost entirely by industrial uses. The residential neighborhood to the north, known as Chadsey Condon began a steady decline.

1950-2000

³¹ Daughter to End Long Vigil over Shop with Historic Past." *Detroit Free Press*. February 21, 1940.

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After World War II the city experienced a shift. Companies began moving away from older plants built at the turn of the century and constructing modern facilities outside city limits in the growing suburbs. In 1949 General Motors began construction on the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan northeast of the city (NRHP, 2000; NHL, 2014). The three hundred twenty-acre industrial research campus was designed by world-famous architect Eero Saarinen, also known for his campus design at Cranbrook Educational Community in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (NRHP, 1973; NHL, 1989). At its opening, the General Motors facility was comprised of twenty-five buildings and represented the automotive industry's post-war focus on innovation and modernity. Ford Motor Company opened a new world headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan in 1953. Designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill the building "the sleek glass-and-steel minimalism that characterized up-to-date architecture in the 1950s."³²

The late nineteenth century architecture at the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District was not currently in favor and viewed as dated in comparison to the sleekness of mid-century modern designs. In 1954, Claramunt Printing was established at 3333 Michigan Avenue and replaced a barber shop. The family-run firm provided commercial printing and letterpress services, and held several local union contracts. Brothers Bar occupied the storefront space next door at 3337 Michigan Avenue. Alytaus Bar operated at 3415 Michigan Avenue

The favor of locating light and heavy industry on the west side of the city south of Michigan Avenue became city policy in 1958 when the City of Detroit Plan Commission unveiled the West Side Industrial District. The district was planned between the M-10 Lodge Freeway and Twelfth Street south of Michigan Avenue near the Detroit River. Located only one mile southeast of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, the West Side Industrial District was the first project in Detroit in which federal urban renewal funds were used to clear a blighted area for industrial use.³³ This official government undertaking determined that the area was not suited to residential development due to its "proximity to existing large industry, rail lines and transit terminals." The plan encouraged existing industrial uses to remain and grow and attracted new companies interested in being located in a dense industrial and logistical setting near the Ambassador Bridge international bridge crossing with Canada and the Michigan Central Railroad. A map included in the report depicting "Industrial Corridors of Detroit" shows the area including and surrounding the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District is now widely labeled as heavy industrial.

The 1958 city directory reveals the Peoples State Bank building at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street remains vacant. The Union Packing House Workers of America Locals 192 and 569 share space at 3311 Michigan Avenue. Luther's Bar and Tavern occupied 3325 Michigan Avenue, and proprietor George Luther resided above. 3415 Michigan Avenue Experimental Machine Products is located at 3431 Michigan Avenue. Across the street

³² Will, George. "Seeking a Ford in our Future." *Real Clear Politics*. Dec. 18, 2008.

³³ City of Detroit Plan Commission. *Industrial Redevelopment, West Side Industrial District*. Detroit, Mich.: City Plan Commission, 1958.

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from the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District, Max Reich's Music Shop at 3334 Michigan Avenue advertised musical instruments rather than phonographs. A Michigan Secretary of State office is located at 3408 Michigan Avenue one building west from Paddock Drugs at the northwest corner. These businesses provided a reasonable draw for local residents and patrons driving east and west on Michigan Avenue.

An aerial photograph from 1961 shows nearly every dwelling south of Michigan Avenue on Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets cleared for industrial development. The construction of the freeway system throughout the city in the late 1950s and early 1960s further impacted the neighborhood near the Michigan Avenue and Twenty-Third Street by placing the Fisher and Jefferies Freeway interchange at Michigan Avenue and Twenty-First Street, effectively isolating the area from the downtown. Western Market, a commercial and social center in the neighborhood for decades, was demolished to make way for the project.

City directories published in the late 1960s and 1970s show a dwindling concentration of businesses along the avenue and a shift from retailers supplying the essentials of everyday life to businesses with limited daily customer interactions. In 1964 longtime Michigan Avenue mainstay Reeber Furniture Company is replaced with Mc Laughlin Early American Shop. Luther's Bar, Claramunt Printing are still operating in their spaces at 3325 and 3333 Michigan Avenue, respectively. Shoe repair is available in the 3341 Michigan Avenue storefront. S & O Weld-craft Engineering Corporation relocated operations from Porter Street in Corktown to 3431 Michigan Avenue, replacing Nylon Extruders Incorporate in that space. Wholesale meat operations are listed at 3445-3349 Michigan Avenue.

As the television set became a more commonplace item in American households, neighborhood theaters struggled to make a profit. In 1950, Detroit had one hundred seventy motion-picture houses and by 1953 the number had fallen to one hundred seventeen, with twenty-three operating at a deficit.³⁴ By the early 1960s the theater at 3301 Michigan Avenue is vacant, no longer known as the Mexico Theater. Moving westward, vacancies are reported at 3315, 3323, 3331 and the storefront of the Grosfield Building. On the block stretching west to Twenty-Fourth Street, the People's State Bank building remains vacant, joining storefronts at corresponding street numbers 3419, 3421, 3425, and 3443.

The 1968 city directory signals a new use of the vacant People's State Bank branch as the Ambassador Club. Between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Fourth Streets moving west, vacancies or no returns are noted at 3317, 3321, 3331, 3335, 3345, 3365, 3367, 3425, 3443 and 3457 on the south side of Michigan Avenue. The area surrounding the Michigan Commercial Historic District would continue a consistent decline, aided by movement of urban populations to suburban communities and increased land allocation for industrial purposes.

The Grosfield firm remained in the Grosfield building until 1972, when the firm relocated to the

³⁴ *Motion Picture Trade Practices. Motion Picture Distribution Trade Practices: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Select Committee on Small Business, United States Senate. Volumes 1-2.* Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1953.

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northeastern suburb of Sterling Heights, marking the end of a seventy-seven-year history of Grosfield family operations inside the Grosfield Building at the corner of Michigan Avenue and 23rd Street. A 1973 advertisement in the *Detroit Free Press* for Hensley's Performance Cycle Center at 3301 Michigan Avenue indicates that the theater was repurposed into a motorcycle repair shop. By 1976 the Peoples State Bank branch is listed as Liberty Baptist Church.

1981 aerial photographs show an abundance of vacant lots surrounding the block on which the Grosfield Building is situated. While the block itself retains density, the lots to the south, across the alley are being used for semi-truck trailers. Telephone directories show a large number of vacancies and no returns within the boundaries of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. In the early 1990s the People's State Bank building was briefly used as an alternative music venue, appropriately named "Bank."

2000-2019

One of the other few remaining links to the corridor's commercial heyday, Claramunt Printing, a longtime mainstay at 3333 Michigan Avenue had an active telephone book listing until at least 2005.

A mural painted in 2017 covers the majority of the eastern elevation of the Reeber Building. Titled "Solid Foundation" the work is by William C. Bevan. Bevan was born in the 1980s and has worked in Memphis, New York City, and Detroit. His mural work is black and white with a focus on visual movement, imaginary architecture, and exotic rhythms.³⁵

As of 2019 the area directly south of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District between Michigan Avenue and the Detroit River remains highly industrial in use with varying levels of vacancy. There are few intact examples of the nineteenth and twentieth century commercial blocks that once lined Michigan Avenue, and only a handful of which can claim any level of architectural integrity. The majority of buildings in the district are vacant with façades concealed behind metal and wood vertical siding, painted plywood and cement block, masking remaining notable building characteristics or materials. Recent interest and investment in the neighborhoods surrounding the district have resulted in some examples of preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of the building stock. At the time of the nomination, a few of the vacant buildings were offered for sale.

Late 19th Century Commercial Architecture

By the late nineteenth century, commercial buildings were evolving from the wood frame buildings to brick, often with increased façade ornamentation. Building spans increased as wood joists were replaced by iron and steel framing members. Advances in glass manufacturing resulted in large plate glass windows uninterrupted by muntins required for holding smaller panes. The emergence of machine-pressed bricks increased production and improved product quality, resulting in harder, longer-lasting brick. Detroit was a center of brick manufacturing

³⁵ WC Bevan bio. Murals in the Market. <https://www.muralsinthemarket.com/wc-bevan>

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with plentiful clay reserves to support the architectural trends reflected in the buildings constructed in the city. By 1900 the city was producing nearly 100,000,000 bricks per year used to construct buildings, streets and utility structures, sewers, and tunnels. Of the brick yards operating in Detroit at the turn of the century, several were located in southwest Detroit not far from the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. These enterprises employed thousands of laborers, including Slavic and German immigrants, eager for the position despite the backbreaking work. In 1915 production jumped to 225,000,000 bricks annually, including common face, hollow, and sand-lime brick. In 2019 Twenty-Second Street remains a brick lined street.

Late nineteenth century commercial buildings were traditionally oriented with the storefront space situated on the first floor and offices or living quarters above. Basement spaces provided storage space for extra stock and was traditionally accessed from a sidewalk vault or the alley to conceal unloading efforts from consumers on the ground floor. As in the case of the three-story Grosfield Building commercial and residential tenants could be accommodated above storefronts with ample space to accommodate both uses. Depending on the individual circumstance, rentable space provided additional income for property owners or gave storefront proprietors an easily accessed and economical dwelling.

Commercial building owners recognized the importance of providing a visually impressive and comfortable shopping environment. Façade ornamentation such as decorative stone hoods, pressed metal cornice treatments and attractive brick laying techniques were employed to erect distinguished looking buildings. Turn of the century millwork catalogs enabled easy inclusion of stylistic components such as paneled wood doors, decorative window sashes, and ornamental vergeboard, brackets and columns that could be ordered at a reasonable price. Large plate glass panes lined the sidewalk frontage with shop entrances recessed slightly into the interior, providing maximum opportunity to showcase goods and entice patrons into shops.

Local architects also had a role in assisting building owners and developers to shape the architectural styles of the city's commercial corridors. Stylistic treatments elevated buildings selling even the most utilitarian supplies. The buildings comprising the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District exemplify the application of Italianate and Late Victorian influences on commercial architecture. Several characteristics of the Italianate subset are evident including bracketed cornices, tall double doors, and round or segmented arched windows with hoodmolds, brick pilasters, rusticated stone foundations and flat roofs capping two- and three-story buildings. The Grosfield Building's textured stone trim, patterned brickwork, terra cotta insets, semi-circular arched openings and a cylindrical tower with conical roof is a nod to the Queen Anne style. It is unsurprising that the Italianate form was heavily utilized during the late nineteenth century on Michigan Avenue buildings as it is the most common style found occupying historic commercial corridors throughout the State of Michigan.³⁶ It was not uncommon for a building owner to commission an architect to design multiple projects or for the

³⁶ Mary Jo Byrnes. *Creating Design Guidelines for the Historic Commercial District*. Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Historical Center, 2007.

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same architect to design multiple buildings in close proximity, as in the case of Peter Dederichs Jr. and Joseph E. Mills.

Architects

Peter Dederichs Jr. was born in Detroit in 1856. He began working as an architect in Detroit in 1874, appearing in a J.W. Weeks *Detroit City Directory* listing on Croghan Street, currently known as Monroe Street. In 1878 Dederichs designed a four-story commercial block for businessman Valentine Hilsendegen on Monroe Street, constructed of brick with galvanized caps and cornices. Coincidentally, after a fire destroyed a portion of the block in 1898, Joseph E. Mills was hired to prepare plans to rebuild the building and the Hilsendegen Block stood until its demolition in 1953. In 1885 Dederichs engaged on a three-month tour of European architecture of churches and cathedrals that would influence later contributions to religious architecture and during a celebration commemorating his return to Detroit was serenaded by the Lyra Singing Society and the Detroit Opera House Orchestra.³⁷ A May 4, 1885, *Detroit Free Press* article describes Dederichs' design for the new Saint Joachim French Catholic Church as being of "Roman style" and constructed of brick with stone trimmings. During his early career, Dederichs completed a variety of commissions from wood frame dwellings and brick residences to commercial blocks, breweries and a hotel. In 1891 Dederichs was commissioned by the Ekhardt and Becker Brewing Company to design a new brewing facility in Eastern Market. His Romanesque design, added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, is currently occupied as the E & B Brewery Lofts an early successful adaptive reuse project in Detroit. In 1892 he designed a dance hall and pavilion for Detroit's Westphalia Shuetzen Bund, a German social group. He soon became a sought-after architect for churches, rectories, and school buildings primarily for Catholic congregations. In 1893 Dederichs was appointed by President Grover Cleveland to be Superintendent in charge of constructing Detroit's new Post Office and Customs House until 1897. He later supervised the construction of the Wayne County Court House.

Peter Dederichs regularly designed religious, public and commercial buildings with Late Victorian influences including Gothic, Neo-classical, Romanesque Revival, Renaissance Revival and Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Revival styles. There are several local examples of Dederichs' employ of the Late Victorian style for commercial and religious buildings in addition to the Reeber building and Schulte and Kaiser building. The Grimm Jewelry Store, constructed with brick in 1886 for Englebert Grimm has a galvanized ornamented cornice, stepped brickwork, ornamental arched hoods over double-hung windows and pilasters topped with decorative capitals. The building is now part of the permanent architectural exhibit The Henry Ford, having been removed from its original location on Michigan Avenue east of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District. Dederichs is best known for his contributions to religious architecture. He designed several prominent Catholic houses of worship in Detroit including Saint Mary Catholic Church, Saint Bonaventura Church and Monastery, Grotto of Our Lady at Lourdes for Assumption, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Rectory, Saint Charles Borromeo, all listed in the National Register of Historic Places; Saint Joachim (demolished 1934

³⁷ "Local Brevities" *Detroit Free Press*. November 18, 1885.

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due to fire), Our Lady of Sorrows Church and School (demolished 1963) and rectories for Saint Albertus and Saint Joseph Roman Catholic Parishes. Beyond Detroit city limits, statewide commissions include Saint Augustine Church in Richmond, Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church in Ionia, Saint Joseph's Academy, Chapel and Chapel House in Adrian, Saint John's Sister House in Jackson and Saint Michael's in Monroe. Dederichs also designed prominent religious buildings in Wisconsin, Tennessee, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, including Fort Wayne's Saint Peter's Square, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Peter Dederichs Jr. died in 1924 and is buried in Mount Elliot Cemetery in Detroit, Michigan.

Joseph Eldred Mills was born in 1854 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and came to Detroit in 1876 after obtaining his education in Illinois. Upon arrival in Detroit, Mills worked as a draftsman under Elijah E. Myers, famed architect of many public buildings, including the state capitols of Michigan, Colorado, and Texas.³⁸ Mills employed the Late Victorian style for multiple projects constructed in Detroit and vicinity, particularly in the residential realm. Intact examples of his designs are prevalent in the Detroit's historic residential neighborhoods built in the late nineteenth century including at least ten in the Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District (NRHP 1980). Mills' designs are also represented in the Boston Edison Historic District (NRHP 1975), Hubbard Farms Historic District (NRHP 1993); Indian Village Historic District (NRHP 1972); New Center Area Historic District (NRHP 1982) and West Canfield Historic District (NRHP 1971). The West Canfield Historic District was designated as the City of Detroit's first local historic district in 1970.

The influence of Late Victorian styles are evident in Mills' designs for his residential commissions. The Late Victorian style is generally associated with the period between 1880 and 1890, the chronologically last of three style subsets including Early Victorian (1840-1860) and High Victorian (1860-1880). These three sets fall under the broader term Victorian, which is descriptive of an age that employed highly decorative and ornate architectural styles, and are themselves comprised of additional divisions relating to stylistic influence including Victorian Italianate (1860-1885), Victorian Romanesque (1870-1890), Gingerbread (1870-1910) and Queen Anne (1880-1905). The Victorian style in the United States is a revival of the architecture and design of Europe, particularly England. While elements of the Late Victorian style were often heavily applied to residential buildings, the features were also used by architects and builders to beautify commercial architecture. Turn of the century millwork catalogs enabled easy inclusion of stylistic components such as paneled wood doors, decorative window sashes, and ornamental vergeboard, brackets and columns that could be sourced directly by the builder or owner at a reasonable price. Advancements in glass productions allowed for expansive panes to fill large storefront window openings. Prevalent availability of pre-fabricated galvanized metal provided affordable options for grand exterior ornamentation. Queen Anne details such as wood porches, brackets and vergeboard, decorative brick chimneys, steeply pitched roof lines, turrets with conical tops, oversized and ornamented dormers and bay and oriel windows are common particularly in the Woodbridge and West Canfield neighborhoods. Joseph E. Mills' use of Richardsonian Romanesque design is shown

³⁸ Weeks, J.W. *Detroit City Directory for 1879*. Detroit, Mich.: J.W. Weeks Co. 1879. p. 559.

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through multiple red pressed brick buildings constructed on raised foundations with deeply recessed porches and buffed sandstone trimmings. These influences are noticed particularly in his designs located in Brush Park and a double residence constructed in 1893 at 914-918 West Willis in Detroit's Midtown neighborhood. Mill's design for Levi Barbour at 86 Eliot Street in Detroit's Brush Park neighborhood shows another project influenced by Late Victorian design. Constructed in 1895, the two-and-a-half-story brick building features a pitched roof and dormer covered with slate shingles and a rounded projecting corner bay on the primary façade. The building sits on a raised foundation faced in buffed red sandstone. An entry porch is recessed behind large masonry arches. A wide variety of window sizes and shapes are employed, including ocular and bay windows. In 1926 the building was gifted to the University of Michigan, of which Barbour was a two-time graduate and member of the Board of Regents. In 1928 the university leased the property to the Prismatic Club, an all-male literary society founded in Detroit in 1867 of which Barbour was a member, for use as their clubhouse. The club remains headquartered in the building, which underwent renovations in 2015. Much of the Brush Park neighborhood is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Woodward East Historic District, added in 1975 but 86 Eliot lies outside the nomination boundary.

In 1899 Mills designed a home for wholesale milliner Richard H. Macauley and again turned to the Late Victorian and Queen Anne styles for influence. The building, a contributing building to the East Ferry Historic District (NRHP 1980), is two-and-a-half stories with a steeply pitched roof with dormers, a projecting bay window, decorative brickwork, and stone trimmings. In 2019 the building is occupied and in good condition. Additional early solo commissions include a three-story brick school for the City of Dearborn in 1893; the 1895 Levi Barbour House (currently the Prismatic Club), 86 Eliot Street; the 1899 Richard H. Macauley House, 270 East Ferry Avenue; and the 1905 Oakland County Courthouse (demolished), which was selected from among the plans submitted by "several of the greatest architects in the United States."³⁹ Mills also designed the 1911 Harrison County Courthouse in Logan, Iowa; a number of industrial buildings and residences in Detroit, and several buildings around the state of Michigan.

After several years in solo practice, Mills partnered with his son Byron Eldred Mills, a graduate of the University of Michigan, in 1913 to form Joseph E. Mills & Son. In 1914 the partnership relocated to the newly opened Kresge Building on Adams Avenue in Grand Circus Park as "the growth of business required more commodious quarters."⁴⁰ The firm's public commissions in Michigan included school houses in Detroit and Dearborn, a State Asylum in Ionia, hospitals in Grosse Pointe and Pontiac, and at least one county building. Mills & Son continued to design single family residences, apartment houses and terraces, stores, and factories, in addition to the remodeling and expansion of existing buildings. Among the firm's numerous commissions are the 1916 Lafer Brothers Building, a contributing resource in the Broadway Avenue Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, in downtown Detroit; and the 1919 Marantha Baptist Church at 2900 East Grand Boulevard, a contributing resource in the City of Detroit Jam Handy/North End/East Grand Boulevard Local Historic District.

³⁹ Seeley, Thaddeus D. *History of Oakland County, Vol. 1*. Chicago, Ill: Lewis Publishing Co. 1912. p. 207.

⁴⁰ "Architect Firm Moves to Kresge Building" *Detroit Free Press*. September 14, 1914.

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Joseph E. Mills died in 1919 at his home in Detroit after an extended illness. After his father's death, Byron E. Mills retained the Kresge Building office and continued practicing architecture under his own name. He designed school buildings, commercial additions, and private homes in Detroit and surrounding suburban communities. Byron E. Mills retired after practicing architecture and working as an inspector for the Federal Housing Administration. He died in Detroit in 1969.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.993

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.331314 | Longitude: -83.091889 |
| 2. Latitude: 42.331340 | Longitude: -83.089035 |
| 3. Latitude: 42.331013 | Longitude: -83.088786 |
| 4. Latitude: 42.330914 | Longitude: -83.089524 |
| 5. Latitude: 42.330908 | Longitude: -83.090125 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The northern boundary of the Michigan Avenue Commercial historic District extends from the center line of Michigan Avenue at Twenty-Second Street and runs west to Twenty-Fourth Street. The western boundary extends from the center line of Twenty-Forth Street, ending at Michigan Avenue to the north and the public alley to the south. The southern boundary runs down the middle of the public alley running behind the buildings and parallel to Michigan Avenue. The eastern boundary of the district run down the center line of Twenty-Second Street between the public alley and Michigan Avenue.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District encompass the existing historic commercial core west downtown Detroit and Corktown and exclude areas that have suffered from demolition or decay. The boundaries of the district are the legal boundaries of the parcels on which the buildings are situated.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dawn A. Bilobran, Principal and Architectural Historian
organization: 313 Historic Preservation
street & number: P.O. Box 32853
city or town: Detroit state: Michigan zip code: 48232
e-mail dbilobran@313hp.com
telephone: (313) 355-3479
date: November 30, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District
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- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne

State: Michigan

Photographer: Dawn A. Bilobran

Date Photographed: April 2019 and November 26, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

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- 1 of 14. Streetscape, south side of Michigan Avenue, 3301-3365 Michigan Avenue.
Looking southwest.
- 2 of 14. Streetscape, south side of Michigan Avenue, 3401 and 3301-3365 Michigan Avenue. Looking southeast.
- 3 of 14. Streetscape, south side of Michigan Avenue, 3363-3419 Michigan Avenue.
Looking southwest.
- 4 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3315-3333 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 5 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3325-3333 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 6 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3363-3365 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 7 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3363 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 8 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3365 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 9 of 14. Intersection of Michigan Avenue and 23rd Street, 3365 Michigan Avenue.
Looking southeast.
- 10 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3401 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 11 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3415-3431 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 12 of 14. South side of Michigan Avenue, 3443-3461 Michigan Avenue. Looking south.
- 13 of 14. Intersection of Michigan Avenue and 24th Street, 3461 Michigan Avenue.
Conical tower of Grosfield Building, 3365 Michigan Avenue, mid-frame left.
Looking south.
- 14 of 14. East side of 23rd Street, rear of Grosfield Building, 3365 Michigan Avenue, and duplex associated with Anthony Grosfield. Looking northeast.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

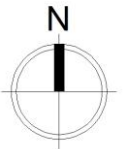
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



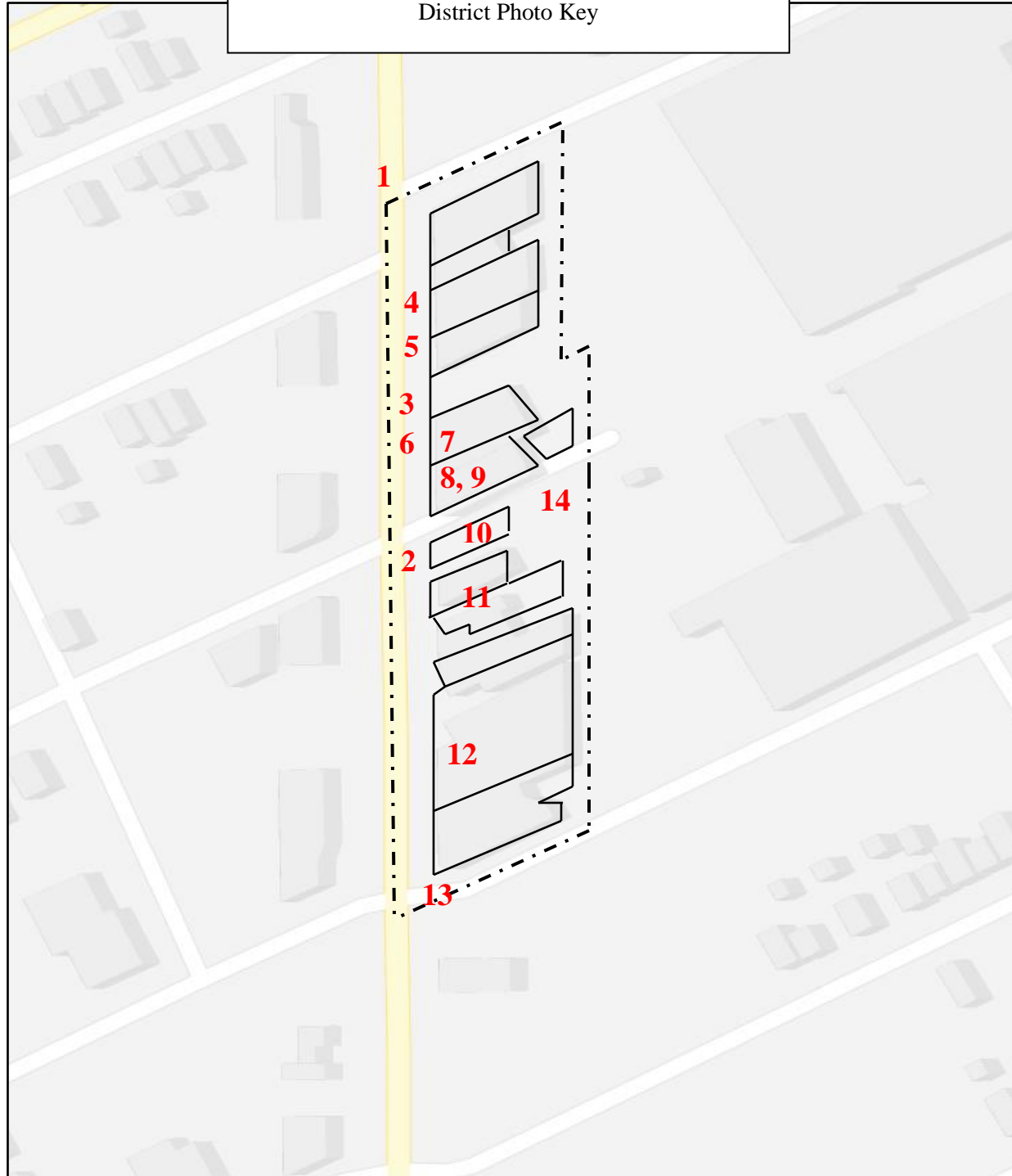
Michigan Avenue Historic Commercial District, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
 South Side of Michigan Avenue, between 22nd and 24th Streets

C = Contributing Resource
 NC = Non-Contributing Resource

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Latitude: 42.331314 | Longitude: -83.091889 |
| 2. | Latitude: 42.331340 | Longitude: -83.089035 |
| 3. | Latitude: 42.331013 | Longitude: -83.088786 |
| 4. | Latitude: 42.330914 | Longitude: -83.089524 |
| 5. | Latitude: 42.330908 | Longitude: -83.090125 |



Map 3. Michigan Avenue Commercial Historic District Photo Key





3301

CEDARHUNT PRINTING CO.

CEDARHUNT PRINTING CO.







CLARAMUNT PRINTING CO.
LETTERTYPE & OFF-SET
WOOD
594-1281 694-5270

Corrugated metal storefront with a white door and a window.

Corrugated metal storefront with two grey doors.

Yellow storefront with a white door and a window.



3521

87 812 51

CLARAMUNT PRINTING CO.
INTERPRESS & OFFS
FOR SALE
BROOK
THE EDOM VEE
(248) 943-4371
894-1288 - 894-5270





... CO.

BIG E
713
LITTLE CAKES
BIG E
713
LITTLE CAKES



7/13
LITTLE CAESARS
ARENA

**BIG
3**

7/13
LITTLE CAESARS
ARENA

**BIG
3**





NO
OUTLET



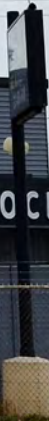
Michigan

NO
OUTLET





CASS LOCK CO.







CASSOCK

WEST 10th

10th

3461
3467



STOP

HEAD

1111111111

Handwritten graffiti on the fence, including the word "Coke" and other illegible scribbles.