

Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)

767



United States Department of 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 757, 760, 800-810, 801-813, 817-831, 820-826 North 27th Street N/A not for publication
2632, 2711 West Wells Street
city or town City of Milwaukee N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Milwaukee code 079 zip code 53208

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Naomi A. Leuburn
Signature of certifying official/Title

9/22/2016
Date

State Historic Preservation Office - Wisconsin
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[X] entered in the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain):

Barbara Byatt (Signature)

11-8-16 (Date of Action)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)

- X private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- X building(s)
district
structure
site
object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Table with 2 columns: contributing, noncontributing. Values: 7, 0 total

Name of related multiple property listing: (Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

- COMMERCE/TRADE - Business and Specialty Stores
RECREATION AND CULTURE - Theater
HEALTH CARE - Medical Business/Office and Hospital
DOMESTIC - Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions

- COMMERCE/TRADE - Business, Specialty Stores, Restaurant
DOMESTIC - Multiple Dwelling
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

- Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival
Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movement: Commercial Style
Modern Movement

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Concrete and stone
walls Brick
Stucco
roof Rubber
other

Narrative Description

See attached continuation sheet.

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development (A)

Architecture (C)

Period of Significance

1916-1968 (A)

1916-1928 (C)

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dick, Gustave A. and Bauer, Alexander H.

Hosmer, Clare C.

Matt, Pius J. and Klenzendorff, George Erwin

Menge, John W., Jr.

Zagel, George

Narrative Statement of Significance

See attached continuation sheet.

27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Milwaukee
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

See attached continuation sheet.

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: Milwaukee County Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.83 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 422721 4765813
Zone Easting Northing

2 16 422796 4765813
Zone Easting Northing

3 16 422856 4765795
Zone Easting Northing

4 16 422856 4765732
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (See attached continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (See attached continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Donna Weiss, Founder and Kate Bissen, Preservation Associate	date	September 22, 16
organization	Prepared by Preserve, LLC for Near West Side Partners	telephone	262-617-1408
street & number	5027 North Berkeley Boulevard	zip code	53217
city or town	Whitefish Bay	state	WI

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Narrative Description

Introduction

The 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District is located on the seam between the Historic Concordia and Avenues West neighborhoods in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These neighborhoods are due west of Milwaukee's original central business district (downtown). The Concordia neighborhood is home to the Concordia and Highland Boulevard National Register Historic Districts consisting of more than 150 Victorian and early-twentieth century revival style residences. The Concordia area, which began as a suburban enclave for wealthy Milwaukeeans who chose to move out of the city along the Watertown Plank Road, became more and more part of the inner city as Milwaukee's streetcar system expanded and middle- and working-class residents followed. A commercial corridor developed along 27th Street between Wisconsin Avenue to the south and Highland Boulevard to the north in the early part of the twentieth century, meeting the demand for goods and services from the growing and diverse community. Development halted during the Great Depression and World War II.¹ The neighborhood's decline that had already started by the end of the war accelerated after Concordia University relocated to Mequon in 1983.² From the 1970s to 2000s, efforts to preserve and restore the historic housing stock in the area were more successful than efforts to revitalize the failing commercial strip along 27th Street. Recently, the area has become a focus of redevelopment due to westward expansion of Marquette University in the Avenues West neighborhood, rehabilitation of the Ambassador Hotel, redevelopment of the Concordia University campus by the Forest County Potawatomi tribe, economic development incentives and grants through City of Milwaukee partnerships, and active interest from business and property owners.

The 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District encompasses a group of seven commercial buildings built over a twelve-year period in the early twentieth century. (2711 West Wells Street had a large addition constructed in 1964. This addition also contributes to the significance of the district). In 1910, the area around the intersection of 27th Street (still referred to interchangeably as Washington Avenue) and Wells Street was characterized by wood frame dwellings with one or two brick homes per block. The first Grand Avenue School (Public School No. 2) at 28th Street and Grand Avenue (Wisconsin Avenue) and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on 27th Street south of Wells were the sole non-residential buildings in the four-block area surrounding the intersection of 27th and Wells.³ By 1910, the exodus of wealthy residents to Milwaukee's east side and suburbs like Wauwatosa and Whitefish Bay had begun in earnest. By 1920, mansions in the Concordia and Avenues West neighborhoods were being converted to rooming houses and a few had been razed to make way for apartment buildings. Between 1920 and 1930, the neighborhood's population increased more than 50

¹ City of Milwaukee Department of City Development, *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, (September 1984), 29.

² John Gurda, *Milwaukee – City of Neighborhoods*, (Milwaukee: Historic Milwaukee, Inc., 2015), 67-68.

³ *Insurance Maps of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Vol. 3* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1910), sheets 299, 300, 315, 316.

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percent. By 1930, this increase in density had forever altered the neighborhood. At the intersection of 27th and Wells, a cluster of two- to four-story brick commercial and apartment blocks anchored by the new Tower Theater replaced the frame houses in every direction.

Site Context

Wells Street was largely residential until the early-twentieth century. After the turn of the century, commercial development was limited to large apartment blocks and residences with first floors converted to storefronts. No commercial development on Wells existed west of North 27th Street, a trend that continues today.⁴ The Wells Street streetcar was Milwaukee's first electric streetcar, converted from horsecar service on April 4, 1890. The line had been established along a well-populated route, making it more profitable than others and therefore more profitable to electrify.⁵ The new electric trolley greatly increased property values west of North 27th Street, resulting in a building boom of upper middle class homes after 1890.⁶ The neighborhood of single family homes was well established by the early-twentieth century. During the 1890s, efforts to consolidate and electrify all Milwaukee streetcar lines further benefited the neighborhood, resulting in the extending of the Wells Line, which now ran from Mineral Road (Capital Drive) on the northeast side of the city south on Downer and Oakland through the central business district, and then west along Wells out to Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.⁷

North 27th Street formed part of Milwaukee's western boundary until 1880. It was the primary connector outside of the central business district of the city's most important commercial thoroughfares, Watertown Plank Road (now State Street) on the north and Wisconsin Avenue on the south. Circa 1910, the 27th Street viaduct was constructed over the Menomonee Valley, establishing 27th Street as a crosstown thoroughfare and greatly enhancing its standing as a transportation artery.⁸ The crosstown 27th Street streetcar line was established in 1913, from National Avenue on the south side of Milwaukee to Burleigh Street on the north side. At its peak in the late 1930s it had been extended all the way north to Silver Spring Road, the north edge of the city. The 27th Street Line was the first crosstown streetcar line, linking the entire west side of the city without traversing the central business district. The demand for crosstown service was significant and a bustling commercial strip developed quickly at important nodes along the 27th Street Line, especially at Wisconsin, Wells, Juneau, and State streets.⁹ The intersection with Wells represented a junction with the busy Wells Line

⁴ *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 23.

⁵ Clay McShane, *Technology and Reform: Street Railways and the Growth of Milwaukee, 1887-1900*, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin for the Department of History, University of Wisconsin, 1974), 78.

⁶ *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 223.

⁷ Central Electric Railfan's Association, *The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company*, (Chicago: Gregg-Moore Lithographing Company, 1972), 96.

⁸ *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 25.

⁹ Central Electric Railfan's Association, 94.

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streetcar route. Residents from the north- and southwest corners of the city now had access to jobs in the central business district and Menomonee Valley via 27th and Wells. 27th Street's status as a crosstown commercial corridor persists today.

The replacement of wood frame residences with imposing masonry apartment blocks on the west side began along Wisconsin Avenue after 1900. By 1920, apartment blocks were replacing single family homes in quick succession. Initially the area remained middle class, and the shift to apartment living signified a change in density, lifestyle and taste more than a shift in class.¹⁰

With the exception of a major hospital addition in 1964, the resources in this district are characterized by a high degree of architectural cohesion due to the condensed period of development (1916-1928) and the predominance of one architectural firm, Dick and Bauer, which designed all of the buildings fronting the west side of 27th Street. All of the other architects except Clare C. Hosmer were closely associated, partnering with or apprenticing under one another over the course of their careers. The majority of resources are commercial buildings with retail on the first floor and apartments and offices above, capped by an articulated masonry parapet and flat roof, and embellished with architectural details reflecting highly popular Period Revivals styles. The buildings south of Wells Street are oriented toward the intersection or facing north. The buildings north of Wells Street face 27th Street. Buildings at the four corners of the intersection feature corner storefronts that address both Wells and 27th streets. Buildings are predominantly cream or red brick with terra cotta or limestone accents.

For most resources in the district, stylistic references are limited to the cornice, parapet, entrance, and window detailing. The apartment blocks, the Cecelia and West Point apartments, are the most imposing, occupying several original lots of street frontage and rising to four stories each. The Tower Theater has the most street frontage; however, the bulk of its auditorium massing is masked by a two-story frontage of shops with offices above. Baebenroth's Pharmacy and the 820-826 N 27th Street property are the smallest buildings at three stories each with modest footprints occupying only one or two original subdivision lots each. The most architecturally expressive buildings are the Tower Theater, Liberty Building, and 820-826 N. 27th Street. The apartment blocks, by comparison, are more subdued with modest limestone accents.

Before the 1920s, 27th Street was largely residential with a small cluster of one- and two-story shops at Wisconsin Avenue and another at State Street. In the 1920s and 30s, 27th Street transformed into a shopping district with food markets, dry goods shops, drugstores, clothing shops, doctors' offices, laundries, and hair dressers that provided goods and services to the surrounding neighborhood.¹¹ The overwhelming majority of tenants in the retail and commercial spaces were pharmacists, doctors, and

¹⁰ *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 250.

¹¹ John Gurda, *The West End: Merrill Park, Piggsville, Concordia*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1980), 103.

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dentists.¹² In fact, as the city grew and wealthier residents moved outward, professional white collar classes continued to cluster around the central business district. Physicians and teachers concentrated in highest numbers in the fourth ward (surrounding the 27th and Wells Commercial Historic District).¹³ In 1948, the newly founded Doctors Hospital remodeled the Liberty Building for medical use, continuing the trend.

The area where this district is located is urban; the street is fully built up, with sidewalks extending the full width from curb to storefront. The district is predominantly flat. South of Wells Street, the land slopes down into the Menomonee Valley. Street parking lines all streets. This concentration of historic buildings is a cohesive collection in contrast to the surrounding area.

All buildings are contributing to the district. Doctors Hospital (then housed in the Liberty Building) underwent a series of expansions in the 1960s resulting in a nine-story precast concrete and brick-paneled hospital building that is characteristic of its era and contributes to the significance of the district, representing within the district its success as a center for medical services. What follows are detailed descriptions of the district's resources, organized by date of construction and starting at the earliest date.

Building Descriptions

BAEBENROTH'S PHARMACY
(See Figure 4 and Photo 01)

760 NORTH 27TH STREET

1916

The three story building at the southeast corner of North 27th Street and West Wells Street, at 10,000 square feet is one of the smallest in the district. Designed by Chicago architect Clare C. Hosmer, it incorporates design elements of the Commercial style. The original building was designed as an addition to a frame building that connected on the south east corner. This frame building has since been demolished. The overall plan is rectilinear with a 45-degree chamfer at the northwest corner fronting the 27th and Wells intersection. The main entrance to the largest retail tenant space is located on this chamfered wall face. At the west and north façades, the base of the building is composed of limestone from the sidewalk up to the storefront window sills. The walls are cream-colored stucco from the base up to the parapet coping with the exception of the area between the third floor windows. This stucco treatment on the upper floors is original; it is applied to a structural clay tile backup.¹⁴ The

¹² *Wright's Milwaukee (Wisconsin) City Directory*, "Street and Avenue Guide – Twenty-Seventh Street" and "Street and Avenue Guide – Wells Street," (Milwaukee: Wright Directory Co., Annual 1916-1940).

¹³ Roger David Simon, "The Expansion of an Industrial City: Milwaukee, 1880-1910, (Doctoral Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1971), 77.

¹⁴ "Milwaukee, Wis. – Contracts Awarded," *The American Contractor*, 37, no. 23, (3 June 1916), 100.

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first floor has been altered since its original construction which is typical of commercial buildings located in historic districts. Most window and door openings are punched with two storefront windows at the south end of the west façade. At the sides of structural bays, window jambs are canted at a 45-degree angle. Within structural bays, jambs are perpendicular to the wall face and windows. Window heads and sills at the first floor storefronts are perpendicular to the wall face and windows. At the second floor, window heads and sills are sloped and contribute to the façade's unique appearance. Stucco returns to the window frame at all heads, sills, and jambs. The third floor window band is articulated with a decorative, exposed brown brick soldier course and a series of brick rowlock courses alternating with stucco bands. The rowlock courses occupy the space between the third floor windows. The soldier course band is interrupted by limestone accents at each corner. Historically a projecting cornice was located over the third floor windows, a design feature typical of commercial buildings of this era.

The west end of the south façade is finished similarly to the east façade, including a “pressed” second floor window opening and alternating brick and stucco bands at the third floor window. The rest of the south façade is largely windowless and finished with stucco. The east façade is exposed cream brick with periodic window openings corresponding to interior functions. The windows have limestone sills and jack arch heads.

In 1940, owners Phebe Baumgarten Wilbur and D.J. Mangan commissioned architect A.C. Hackenbruch to design a one-story addition to the east to expand the Walgreen Co. retail space.¹⁵ The addition is stucco up to a limestone storefront cornice. The light brown brick is exposed above. The addition lacks the expressive canted window jambs of the original. After 1940, the building was little altered until 2003. Long-deferred maintenance resulted in significant deterioration. A series of repairs and alterations occurred from 2003 to 2010 to address maintenance issues and prepare for new occupancy. The projecting cornice above the third floor windows was removed. Structural repairs, window replacement, and stucco refinishing were also part of the repair campaign. In 2014, the interior retail space was remodeled to include a commercial kitchen for the current restaurant tenant.¹⁶

Frank Wilbur purchased the property at 760 N 27th Street with its original, timber-framed house in 1887. In 1916, T. B. Wilbur hired noted Chicago Prairie School architect Clare Hosmer to design a commercial addition on the north side of the home at the corner of 27th and Wells. Craftsmen who worked on the project included mason Paul Nagtegaal, carpenter Bert Bergman, and plasterer F. W. Bauman.¹⁷ Baebenroth's Pharmacy was the first tenant in the new building and began a long

¹⁵ A.C. Hackenbruch. *First Floor Plan, Store Building – 27th & Wells Street*, [1940], architectural drawing, microfilm (Milwaukee City Records Center: Reel 99 Plan # 49).

¹⁶ City of Milwaukee Building Permits.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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façade, windows are grouped in alternating sets of two and three between entry bays. At the corner, the pattern changes to a single window and pair of windows. At the entrance bays, two separate windows are punched at each floor. The south façade, which does not have any entrance bays, is less rhythmic, with window heights and widths varying according to interior spaces. Another difference on the south façade is the inclusion of two shallow bay windows on floors two through four (six units total).

The fourth floor is separated visually on the west and south façades by a belt course that aligns with the fourth floor window sills. The windows are grouped in the same manner as the lower floors. A thick limestone cornice projects over the fourth floor windows, giving the fourth floor a recessed appearance. The parapet above the cornice is unadorned except for crown-shaped peaks and crenellations corresponding and aligning with those on the entrance bays.

The east façade is composed of cream common brick and free of ornament. Double-hung windows and rear entry doors have limestone sills and brick jack arches. The original concrete porch runs along the entire east façade at every apartment floor.

The storefronts were first altered in 1917 and underwent a series of modifications as tenants changed over the decades. The current replacements were installed in the late 2000s; the new storefronts are in keeping with the historic character of the building. The building was originally owned by Emma Reinhard who sold it to Alexander Kaplan and his wife Dora in 1924.²³ Reinhard was the owner when the previous wood framed buildings were razed and the permit for the new building was taken out in 1916. In 1931, the Kahn Investment Company bought the building. In 1940, M. L. Annenberg, who also owned several of the properties on the west side of the street, bought the West Point Apartments. Long-time tenants included the West Point Delicatessen and Home Bakery and the West Point Fruit and Green Market.²⁴ Other tenants included barbers, hairdressers, sandwich shops, and dress shops.²⁵ In 1971, a repair campaign addressed structural issues at the rear concrete porches and installed new guardrails. In 2007, the apartments were converted to condos and an elevator tower was built behind the building. The tower is connected to the original rear porches via concrete and steel bridges. All the railings were also modified at this time.²⁶

No historic name
(See Figure 7 and Photos 03 and 04)

820-826 NORTH 27TH STREET

1925

In contrast to the West Point Apartments to the south, 820-826 North 27th Street is a highly decorative

²³ Milwaukee County Register of Deeds Real Estate Records.

²⁴ *Wright's Milwaukee (Wisconsin) City Directory*, Street and Avenue Guide – Twenty-Seventh Street.

²⁵ City of Milwaukee Building Permits.

²⁶ City of Milwaukee Building Permits.

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example of period revival architecture. The 12,000 square foot Mediterranean Revival style building has a rectangular footprint with light wells notched into the north and south façades at the second and third floors. It is partied to the neighboring buildings on the north and south sides. The symmetrical west (front) façade is divided into three bays. At the storefront level these bays are articulated by thick square columns with recessed center panels. The columns support a projecting storefront cornice that visually separates the storefront from the floors above. The storefront windows have been boarded over. The apartment entrance is a single door with an arched divided-lite transom window in the center bay. The second and third floors are composed of cream city face brick with limestone accents. Each side bay is articulated by a center pair of double-hung leaded eight-over-twelve windows flanked by single leaded eight-over-twelve, double-hung windows. The apron, sill, and spandrels of these windows groups are limestone. Solomonic engaged columns separate the side windows from the center pair. On the third floor, windows are arched (the area above rectangular storms has been infilled with plywood). A small stepped Mediterranean Revival style limestone cornice tops the window area within the side bays. A green barrel-shaped tile mansard roof caps each side bay. At the center bay, two pairs of double-hung, leaded, eight-over-twelve windows mark each floor. The window pairs are surrounded by limestone with decorative serrated edges flush with the surrounding brick. A false fourth floor is created in the center bay using four arched recesses with limestone heads. The recesses are tiled with green tile that matches the mansard roof color. Iron French balconies are installed at the third floor windows and the center tiled recesses. The parapet coping is limestone and echoes the stepped Mediterranean profile with ogee curves used at the side bay window cornices.

The building was designed by George Zagel who designed many other buildings in the Mediterranean Revival style. Alfred A. Wild sold the property to Jacob Goldberg and his wife in May of 1925. The building was constructed shortly thereafter. In 1931, the property was sold to Emil. D. Gilbert. In 1936, foreclosure forced the sale of the property to new owner Gustav A. Koeffler.²⁷ The first tenant was Beatrice Beauty Shop which remained in the building until 1930. Other tenants included the Parker Pen Company, Lambert Pharmacy Company, and the Milwaukee Paper Box Company.²⁸

CECELIA APARTMENT BUILDING *801-813 NORTH 27TH STREET* *1925*
(See Figures 10, 11, and 12 and Photos 05, 06, and 07)

The four-story, red brick apartment block at the northwest corner of 27th and Wells is the largest contributing building in the district at almost 44,000 square feet. It was designed in a U-shaped configuration by Mediterranean Revival style specialists Gustave Dick and Alexander Bauer. The primary (east) façade is composed of storefronts on the first floor with punched windows above. The fenestration on floors two through four are alternating A and B window groupings. Group A is

²⁷ Milwaukee County Register of Deeds Real Estate Records.

²⁸ *Wright's Milwaukee (Wisconsin) City Directory*, "Street and Avenue Guide – Twenty-Seventh Street."

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composed of three, six-over-one, double-hung windows. Between floors two and three and floors three and four, the brick in the spandrel area is laid in a basket weave pattern. The fourth floor of Group A has limestone spandrels under brick arched heads. Fourth floor Group A windows are separated by limestone Solomonic engaged columns supported on limestone console brackets. Group B is simpler, with pairs of two, double-hung, six-over-one windows, limestone sills, and no arches or brick pattern changes. A limestone cornice projects below the parapet. At the parapet, an arched limestone grill style balustrade aligns with all Group A window bays.

Similar to the West Point Apartments, the south façade fenestration and details are less uniform to accommodate interior spaces. The Group A language (including arches and basket weave brick spandrel) is present, however, in two of the three south façade bays it is narrower than on the east façade, encompassing only two windows per group. The red face brick carries onto the south portion of the west façade. Once it reaches the hollow in the U-shape plan, the brick switches to common brick. Windows are single or paired double-hung, one-over-one units with limestone sills.

The building was commissioned by M. L. Annenberg, the owner of the Tower Theater. In 1924, Annenberg transferred ownership to his M.L.A. Investment Co., which had started to buy other properties in the district. Dick and Bauer were hired again by Annenberg in 1931 to remodel the apartments, subdividing 30 units into 69 efficiency and one-bedroom units.²⁹ In 1943, M.L.A. Investment Co. sold its property on the west side of 27th Street to Triangle Publications, including the Tower Theater, Cecelia Apartment Building, Cecelia Annex, Tower Garage (formerly West Point Garage), and the adjacent parking lot at 28th Street and Wells. Alterations to the first floor storefronts were made periodically throughout the building's history. In 1957, the structural glass storefront was replaced with aluminum. Storefronts were remodeled again in 1961. In 1965, fire code changes required that the interior stair shafts be enclosed. The largest storefront change occurred in 1970 when the current brick infill was added, minimizing the storefront windows and concealing the original limestone features.³⁰ Original retail tenants included the West Point Dye Works and the MacDonald Drug Shop, a combination drug shop, soda grill, and tea room; both companies remained in the building into the 1930s.

*CECELIA ANNEX/
WEST POINT GARAGE*

817-831 NORTH 27TH STREET

*1926/
1929*

(See Figures 8 and 10 and Photos 5 and 8)

The Cecelia Annex is a two-story, red brick, flat roof, Mediterranean Revival style building

²⁹ Dick & Bauer, Inc. Architects, *Remodeling of Cecelia Apartment Building*, [1931], architectural drawing, microfilm (Milwaukee City Records Center: Reel 112 Plan #76).

³⁰ City of Milwaukee Building Permits.

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constructed north of the Cecelia Apartments, also designed by Dick and Bauer. The 27th Street side of the building (east façade) is a more modest, smaller-scale version of the larger Cecelia Apartment building; however, the two are not connected on the interior. In plan, the building is nearly 24,000 square feet, deceptively larger than its street frontage suggests. The building is functionally divided into two parts, the front portion on 27th Street serving as a parts store and front of house for the West Point Garage with apartments above, and the rear portion serving as the auto maintenance garage and auto laundry area. The buildings are linked on the first floor; however the apartments are separated from the rear garage portion by a lower flat roof that runs the length of the building from north to south.

At the front portion, the building's storefronts follow the same language as the Cecelia Apartment Building, including stone bases and recessed entries with structural glass storefronts. A few decorative glass transoms are still visible behind modern signage. On the second floor, the alternating bays continue from the second floor of the Cecelia apartments, with slight variations in the details. The arched "Group A" bays are composed of three, six-over-one, double-hung units. Brick relieving arches adorn the tops of the windows. The spandrel area is also brick and flush with the wall face. A small decorative limestone circle is positioned at the center of each arch. Similar to the Cecelia Apartment fourth floor, the Group A windows are separated by Solomonic engaged columns. Group B windows consist of two pairs of six-over-one double-hung units with limestone sills. Also similar to the larger apartment block, the parapet above the Group A window bays is stepped and articulated with a stone baluster that aligns with the window bay. The rest of the parapet aligns with the Cecelia Apartments third floor window sills.

The rear portion of the building is constructed of concrete block, which is exposed. This block has been painted a salmon color. Tall chimneys project from the northwest and southwest corners of the garage portion. The auto maintenance garage features a double-height, largely undivided interior with a flat roof and six skylights evenly spaced throughout.

In 1929, the Milwaukee News Co. contracted Dick and Bauer to design a two-story addition at the north end of the Cecelia Annex for their offices. The addition is primarily composed of concrete block exterior walls with a brick and limestone east façade that matches the design language of the rest of the Cecelia Annex east façade. The offices occupied both the first and second floors. This addition remains in similar condition as the rest of the building.

All storefront window glass at the Cecelia Annex has been replaced or covered with boards. The majority of storefront frames and transoms remain intact. In 1941, the building ceased use as an auto laundry and shop. The Esquire Record Shop leased the storefront space. The rear garage portion was converted to a five- and ten-cent variety store by the L. Wiemann Company in 1949. Subsequent

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discount and variety stores occupied the space, including the Ben Franklin Variety Store and a dollar store.³¹ A garage door opening was replaced with a modern black aluminum storefront window and entrance. Original industrial steel sash windows have been replaced with glass block.

TOWER THEATER

757 NORTH 27th STREET

1926

(See Figure 13 and Photos 13 and 14)

The 20,000 square foot, light tan face brick, Mediterranean Revival style Tower Theater was designed by Dick and Bauer for Saxe Amusement Enterprises, one of Wisconsin's most successful and prominent movie and entertainment companies. Each volume of the theater auditorium and lobby spaces is tucked behind a strip of retail spaces with offices above. The building is roughly square in plan with the northeast corner chamfered at 45-degrees to address the intersection. This chamfer matches Baebenroth's Pharmacy and the West Point Apartments across the intersection.

The east and north façades of the building are characterized by a series of uniform bays with storefronts on the first floor and two, six-over-one, double-hung windows per bay at the second floor. The storefronts are uniform, occupying two bays each. The historic storefront window openings are infilled with modern aluminum storefront windows and brick. Historically, storefronts had a tile base and decorative glass transoms. A terra cotta belt course divides the building horizontally at the second floor sill height. Above the belt course, the structural bays are expressed by shallow pilasters. Brick relieving arches with brick spandrels adorn the top of each window. The parapet is corbeled between pilasters up to the terra cotta cornice. A terra cotta baluster with a trefoil pattern runs along the top of the parapet. A decorative terra cotta urn sits atop the coping at each pilaster location.

On the east façade, the rhythm of bays is interrupted by the main theater entrance portal, the second floor office entrance portal, and the northeast chamfered corner bay. The main theater entrance in the center of the east façade is wider than the other bays and features a terra cotta elliptical arch across the width of the bay. The window below the arch is a group of six, nine-over-one, single-hung units with upper sashes that follow the curve of the arch. In relief within the terra cotta spandrel above the arch are a series of sculpted lancet arches and decorative Spanish-inspired embellishments continuing up to the parapet. The namesake octagonal tower once sat above this parapet bay and supported a two-story blade sign bearing the theater's name. The tower was characterized by tall arched windows and a series of three octagonal terra cotta wedding-cake tiers. The top of the tower was a tall lantern with arched windows and faceted domed roof. The second floor office entry bay is characterized by a terra cotta arch over the entrance with a set of three double hung four-over-four windows at the second floor. A French balcony is mounted across these windows. The windows are framed with terra cotta relieving

³¹ City of Milwaukee Building Permits.

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arches, terra cotta spandrels with decorative sculpted shields, and terra cotta Solomonic engaged columns between the windows. The parapet above this bay is stepped with a larger decorative urn at the center. The belt course and cornice continue around this bay, which projects approximately eight inches from the wall face. The chamfered northeast corner at 27th and Wells also features a brick arch over the entrance to the corner retail space. The window above was a pair of 9-light casements with a French balcony and a decorative terra cotta lintel. The parapet above this bay is articulated with a sculpted arched unit at the center.

The south and west façades are composed of light tan face brick. The only window penetrations are at the second floor, east side, where two windows provide light to the upper office area and restroom.

On the interior, the theater building incorporated Spanish motifs, a large lobby with decorative tile mosaics, and a grand staircase up to the balcony promenade.³² It sat 1,609 people and operated a 3/10 Barton theater organ.³³ Many of the theater features are intact. The balcony itself has not been altered, although seats have been removed. Decorative plaster at the organ lofts, proscenium, ceiling, balcony railing, box seats, and balcony walls is intact. The grand foyer and promenade are also intact with some modifications. Much of the plaster has been repainted in non-historic color schemes. The lower flight of the grand foyer stair has been removed. A fire in the foyer blackened many of the finishes and destroyed others. Modern restrooms were inserted in the box office lobby area. On the exterior the primary alteration is the tower, which was removed in the 1970s above the octagonal tower base, which is now the tallest point on the building along the street frontage (the fly loft in the southwest corner of the building is taller). The marquee and Tower sign were also removed. Modern brick was used to reduce the size of the storefront window openings. This brick, which is a near, but not exact match, was also used for masonry repairs at the marquee location and entrance bays.

The Tower Theater was built as part of a bold new venture by Saxe Amusement Enterprises, one of Milwaukee's preeminent movie and entertainment companies. The Tower was one of a group of new neighborhood movie theaters Saxe opened at developing commercial strips outside the central business district. These theaters were designed in the "movie palace" style, utilizing exotic motifs, intricate tile work, Period Revival style furniture, and lush oriental carpets to transport patrons to far-away worlds.³⁴ The Tower Theater was less lavish than the grand downtown movie palaces or its sister theater, the Oriental, but its Spanish and Mediterranean stylistic details and decorative interior made it a popular local landmark.

³² *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 207.

³³ Larry Widen and Judi Anderson, *Silver Screens: A Pictorial History of Milwaukee's Movie Theaters*, (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2007), 146.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 41.

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Saxe's success made the company a valuable commodity. Before the Tower's completion, the theater was sold to M.L.A. Investment Co. (M. L. Annenberg) in part of a selloff that preceded the sale of the entire company in 1927.³⁵ The M.L.A. Investment Co. sold the Tower Theater, its sister theater the Oriental, and several other commercial blocks including the Cecelia and Cecelia Annex, to Triangle Publications in 1943. Ownership of the Tower Theater passed to the Prudential Theater Co. of Wisconsin by 1960 and to United Artists Theaters of Wisconsin Inc. by 1971.³⁶ By 1970, the decline of the surrounding neighborhood had taken its toll. The Tower Theater became a venue for pornographic films.³⁷ In 1975, the Tower Theater closed and was sold for \$120,000 to Family Hospital (formerly Doctors Hospital), by then well established on the west half of the block. A wall was constructed behind the balcony railing to divide the theater. The main theater floor was leveled to create a room below the balcony and a cafeteria in the main floor and stage space.³⁸ Plans to remodel the second floor as new administrative offices were never completed. The theater's ornamental features remain intact.

*LIBERTY BUILDING/
DOCTORS HOSPITAL*

2711 WEST WELL STREET

1928, 1964, 1967

(See Figures 14, 15, and 16, and Photos 9, 10, 11, and 12)

The five-story, tan brick and terra cotta building west of the Tower Theater is the tallest historic building in the district. It was designed by Milwaukee architect John Menge in the Commercial style with a rectangular footprint. The original first floor storefront has been concealed behind a mid-century modern treatment of glossy red granite panels and stainless steel storefront windows. The historic entry to the upper floors was retained at the east end of the north façade. The current storefront retains the expression of the original three-bay façade. The second floor is characterized by a tall, decorative, ochre-colored terra cotta cornice with sculptured frieze that runs across the width of the building over the second floor windows. The second floor windows have been replaced and partially infilled with black-painted brick. The original drawings indicate a Chicago-style window with a center fixed plate glass window flanked by two double-hung windows forming an elongated Tudor arch. The terra cotta and window patterns continue around the west façade until the first structural bay termination and junction with the Contemporary style Doctors Hospital Addition. The third and fourth floors are identical, featuring pairs of window openings (bricked in) and white terra cotta pilasters dividing the three bays. Windows have decorative terra cotta sills and heads. The fifth floor window opening sizes and locations match the lower floors. New windows have been installed at the fifth floor. Terra cotta console brackets between the fourth and fifth floors support thicker pilasters that tie into a white terra

³⁵ Ibid, 76.

³⁶ *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 207.

³⁷ Gurda, *The West End*, 106.

³⁸ *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 93.

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cotta frieze below the cornice. Additional false pilasters are supported by console brackets starting a few feet below the fifth floor windows. Above a tan colored terra cotta cornice, the masonry parapet displays one crenellation between each pilaster. This motif is carried for one bay on the west façade until the junction with the hospital addition. The hospital addition was set back to retain the west façade decorative bay, which remains.

The Liberty Building was constructed for Granek Realty to house a bowling alley in the basement, a first floor store, second floor restaurant, third floor health clinic, and apartments on the top two floors.³⁹ Bowling alleys, restaurants, and taverns had become popular companions to movie palaces, in part ushered in by the Saxe brothers.⁴⁰ The Liberty Building was later referred to as the Bergholz Building. The building became important locally when Harold Dvorak and his wife, Laura M. Fisher Dvorak, both physicians disheartened by a hospital shortage after World War II, purchased the building and converted it to Doctors Hospital in 1949. They purchased army surplus hospital equipment to furnish the facility. The hospital was modernized and expanded several times in the subsequent decades.

The most significant modification was the addition of a nine-story Contemporary style hospital building designed by the architecture firm of Darby, Bogner & Associates to the west of the historic building. Phase 1 of the 3.5 million dollar addition was built in 1964. This phase included a six-story elevator tower and a three story, 103 bed hospital building on the west edge of the block.⁴¹ In 1966 and 1967, the second phase was completed, adding six floors above the 1964 addition. The hospital changed its name to Family Hospital in 1974.⁴² In 1975, the hospital purchased the recently shuttered Tower Theater with the intention of turning it into a cafeteria and administrative offices.⁴³ The hospital folded in the 1980s before the administrative offices could be built. In 1984, Milwaukee County bought the property and converted it to the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex. The complex was later converted to the Milwaukee County City Campus which included remodeling hospital spaces into offices.⁴⁴ Milwaukee County vacated the buildings in 2015.

The Doctors Hospital addition is a modern red-orange brick and concrete building with three asymmetrical cubic volumes that appear to float over a recessed first floor paneled with glossy red granite and matching red-orange brick. The concrete mix features a large visible aggregate that gives concrete sections a rough texture and slight sheen. The east volume is the tallest volume in the shape of

³⁹ J. Menge Architect, *Store, Recreation, Office, and Apartment Building*, [undated], architectural drawing, microfilm (Milwaukee City Records Center: Reel 17, plan #5).

⁴⁰ Widen and Anderson, 38.

⁴¹ "Scheduled for completion in September..." *Milwaukee Journal*, 1 March 1964, Part 7, P. 12.

⁴² *West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey*, 93.

⁴³ Joslyn, Jay, "Family Hospital Eyes a Neighborhood Role for Tower Theater," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 24 May 1985.

⁴⁴ City of Milwaukee Building Permits.

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a long, vertical rectangle on the main north façade. This volume houses the main circulation spaces, including the elevator that was installed to serve the Liberty Building as well as the addition. The façades of the circulation tower are predominantly brick with a band of precast concrete panels extending the full height of floors two through nine. All punched windows on floors one through three and north façade windows on all floors are a two-part composition, with a larger fixed picture window and a narrow operable casement on alternating sides. Window frames are stainless steel throughout.

The middle volume is a large red-orange brick cube with an inset precast concrete paneled volume that appears to cut through the north and south façades. On the north and south façades, the asymmetrical two-part windows are set within this concrete volume in a regular grid. The west façade is characterized by punched openings on floors five through nine framed in concrete, with the third major volume spanning the width first three floors. This third volume is composed of alternating bands of concrete and brick, with the asymmetrical windows set into the concrete bands. The third volume is capped at each end by a three story brick stair tower with stainless steel curtainwall infilling the east and west sides of the tower. The majority of the first floor is windowless, with the exception of a lobby and intake area on the north façade where a driveway cuts below a projecting stainless steel canopy. This area is fronted by aluminum storefront windows facing the drive. The addition is Contemporary style representative of techniques and massings popular in the middle of the twentieth century. It incorporates modest mid-century modern detailing and a mixture of elements of Brutalism, New Formalism, and the International Style. It is set back from the Liberty Building, which gives the Liberty Building prominence and prevents the larger building from overpowering its historic neighbor. This building represents the last significant construction in the district and closes the period of substantial building activity in the district.

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Building Inventory

<u>Map Key*</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Historic Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Class**</u>	<u>Style</u>
A	760 North 27 th Street	Baebenroth's Pharmacy	1916	C	Commercial
B	2632 West Wells Street/800-810 North 27 th Street	West Point Apartments	1916	C	Elizabethan Revival
C	820-826 North 27 th Street	No historic name	1925	C	Mediterranean Revival
D	801-813 North 27 th Street	Cecelia Apartment Building	1925	C	Mediterranean Revival
E	817-831 North 27 th Street	Cecelia Annex/West Point Garage	1926/ 1929	C	Mediterranean Revival
F	757 North 27 th Street	Tower Theater	1926	C	Mediterranean Revival
G1	2711 West Wells Street (center)	Liberty Building	1928	C	Commercial
G2	2711 West Wells Street (west)	Doctors Hospital (Addition to Liberty Building)	1964/ 1967	C	Contemporary

* Letters correspond with keyed buildings on Photo Key map.

** Class Key: C = Contributing, NC = Non-Contributing

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Statement of Significance

Introduction

The 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. It is locally significant under criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as a highly intact portion of a business and services strip that developed as middle class individuals relocated in greater numbers outside the central city, creating a demand for local establishments to provide goods, services and entertainment. The distribution of people and commercial activities to these peripheral neighborhoods was made possible in large part by the expansion of streetcar routes, most notably the crosstown 27th Street route which connected the west side of the city.

The district is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its cluster of Period Revival style buildings constructed during Milwaukee's building boom in the early-twentieth century. Architects were given an opportunity to experiment with Period Revival styles on a smaller scale making these distinct from the central business district in their size and level of detail. The buildings also represent an inter-related group of designers and architects who were considered local experts in Period Revival architecture.

Other architectural styles located in the district include the Commercial and Contemporary styles. Exterior building alterations are minimal, primarily limited to storefront alterations, window and door replacement or modifications within original openings, and additions as is typical in commercial historic districts. The historic style of these buildings is still easily identifiable due to the integrity of the rest of the façades. Alterations and remodels outside the period of significance have largely protected the historic brick façades, preserved limestone and terra cotta ornament, and avoided significant alterations of building massing and lines. With the exception of the Doctors Hospital complex, the district is free of modern additions and modifications that dramatically altered the building character. The result is a well-preserved cluster of buildings that speaks to the importance of 27th Street as a shopping and entertainment hub driven by an expanding urban transit network and the growing working- and middle-class neighborhood it triggered.

Other commercial strips remain from this era, including North Third Street (now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) on the north side, Farwell and Prospect avenues on the east side, and West Mitchell Street and on the South Side. However, the district at 27th and Wells represents the city's largest-scale example where all four historic corner buildings remain at an intersection through a prominent commercial strip. Healthier urban development along the other prominent commercial strips of the same era has resulted in more extensive demolition, modern replacements, and character-altering

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additions to historic building stock. As a result, the intersection of 27th and Wells is one of the few places in the city where an individual standing at the intersection of two commercial thoroughfares can experience the historic context in all cardinal directions.

Period of Significance

The period of significance in the area of Architecture is 1916-1928 which coincides with the dates of construction of the first and last Period Revival buildings in the district. The period of significance in the area of Community Planning and Development is 1916-1968 which coincides with the development of this commercial, entertainment and service node and encompasses the expansion of medical services and facilities. Early on, this district was a hub of medical services and the expansion of the hospital facility is the culmination of this trend.

Integrity

Like most urban areas and as typical in urban historic districts, the buildings have undergone some changes due to remodeling, especially in the storefronts, but considerable historic character and integrity remains. Alterations to the buildings do not significantly detract from the overall architectural or historical significance of the district. The buildings, as a collection, retain historic details, massing and scale, having sufficient integrity to convey their identity as an intact shopping, entertainment, and services center reflecting their historic design and use.

Historic Context

The City of Milwaukee is located along Lake Michigan at the confluence of the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic rivers. The first mention of a community at this location was during the visit of Father Zenobius Membre to Fox and Mascouten Indians at what is now Jones Island near the mouth of the Milwaukee River. The native population of the area grew in subsequent years, including Potawatomi, Sauk, Ottawa, Chippewa, and Menominee groups.⁴⁵ As the early United States pushed west, land was forcibly taken from Natives, many of whom were relocated to Iowa and Kansas. The early settlements that became Milwaukee were founded in the 1830s by Solomon Juneau (Juneautown, with business partner Morgan Martin), Byron Kilbourn (Kilbourntown), and George Walker (Walker's Point). Each claimed a piece of the land and began settlements around the rivers, drawn by the large bay and deep mouth of the Milwaukee River, the deepest on the western shore of Lake Michigan. Although the settlement's growth was driven by commerce, political, religious, and cultural institutions quickly followed. The Town of Milwaukee was officially established in 1839 when Juneautown and Kilbourntown combined; Walker's Point was incorporated in 1845.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee*, (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 7.

⁴⁶ Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee*, 49.

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Boosted by an influx of European emigrants, Milwaukee's population more than doubled in the four years following incorporation. By 1860, it had doubled again. After the Civil War, the trend increased. The economy was growing at an astounding rate. In the twenty years following incorporation, Milwaukee became Wisconsin's center of commerce. The railroad, new regional roads, and the harbor made Milwaukee a trade hub. It was the greatest shipper of wheat on earth and one of the top twenty cities in America in the trade of a wide range of other products.⁴⁷ In the years after the Civil War, wheat began to wear out the Wisconsin soil so farmers shifted to dairy. As market forces caused wheat to decline, manufacturing rose to take its place, driven in part by steam railroads, a national rail network, readily available raw materials, and an abundance of enterprising personalities. Tanning, milling, meat-packing, iron production, and brewing rose to prominence. By 1880, industrial workers made up 44.6 percent of the local labor force. As manufacturing outgrew its current quarters, the Menomonee River valley, with its access to water and rail transportation, offered an ideal location for industry to expand.⁴⁸ By 1900, industry was still expanding. The Edward P. Allis Company reached the capacity of their Walker's Point plant and built a new plant at Greenfield Avenue and South Seventieth Street. The new suburb of West Allis prompted other industrial titans to create similar corporate suburbs at points accessible by the early transit and rail systems.

In 1900, growth reached a tipping point. The boundaries of the city – Keefe Avenue to the north, Thirty-Fifth Street to the west, and Cleveland Avenue to the south – had changed little in the nineteenth century. At the turn of the century, aided in large part by electrification of the streetcar system, residents, mostly affluent, relocated to Bay View, Wauwatosa, South Milwaukee, Whitefish Bay, Cudahy, North Milwaukee, East Milwaukee (Shorewood), West Allis, and West Milwaukee.⁴⁹ More information regarding the expansion of streetcar lines and the effect on community planning and development is included in the next section.

By 1920, Milwaukee had benefited from the industrial boom in the years following World War I. The city grew economically and geographically in the years following the war. The exodus of wealthy individuals to neighborhoods further from the central business district left large lots and vacant mansions in the near west and near north sides. Some large homes and mansions were subdivided into flats and rooming houses, especially in areas such as Highland Boulevard where apartment buildings were prohibited. Many others were demolished entirely to make way for new apartment blocks, typically styled after one of several popular Period Revival trends that peaked in the 1920s. Population was growing at an unprecedented pace filling these new buildings. Between 1920 and 1930, Milwaukee saw the greatest increase in population for a ten year period in the city's history. In 1920,

⁴⁷ Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee*, 103.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 117-128.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 183.

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Milwaukee's population density per square mile was exceeded only by New York City.⁵⁰

The first street railway in Milwaukee was started in 1860 to ease congestion and provide greater mobility. It operated on iron tracks with horse-pulled cars (horsecars). The early transit system was operated by three separate firms, initially the Milwaukee City Street Railway, the Cream City Railway, and the West Side Railway. Physical growth of the city had been limited by the time commuting to work. The horse cars provided a faster commute, allowing the city to expand. The streetcar's relationship to recreation was also established in the nineteenth century, with horsecars providing access to outlying parks and cemeteries. The Miller Brewery beer garden was a popular destination, an easy walk from the early terminus of the Wells Street line. These early systems struggled for ridership and were less than perfect. They followed established transportation thoroughfares, limiting their impact on new development, and were often stymied by the endurance of the horses that provided their power. Competing franchises made for redundant service in some areas and gaps in service in others.

In Milwaukee, electrification began with the Wells Street Line in the 1890s and by 1900 all horsecars had been replaced.⁵¹ Electric streetcars were a significant improvement over horsecars. They harnessed an inexhaustible energy source, operated at twice the speed, carried twice the amount of passengers, and could make more frequent routes. These benefits resulted in a significant expansion of the system and a significant increase in ridership. The streetcar created entirely new suburbs with their own commercial strips. Commercial strips also developed in traditionally wealthy, established parts of the city as those neighborhoods transformed from large homes and mansions to working-class and immigrant communities.

In 1890, Henry Villard, an associate of Thomas Edison from New York, purchased all of Milwaukee's streetcar lines and the lighting utilities. This gave him a monopoly over the city's electrical grid during daytime streetcar use and nighttime electric lighting. By 1896, the city's streetcar system was reorganized as The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company (TMER&L). It was the "first city-wide completely interconnected and unified streetcar system" in the world.⁵²

It was this combination of rapidly growing population and increased mobility through truly rapid transit that facilitated the twelve-year building boom of commercial buildings at 27th and Wells.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 246.

⁵¹ Barbara Wyatt, Project Director, *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, Vol. 2 (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), Transportation 9-2.

⁵² Ibid., Transportation 10-1 to 10-2.

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Area of Significance: Community Planning and Development

A well established narrative of urban development is that prior to the advent of streetcars, working class individuals needed to live within easy walking distance of work, and that this work was typically in the central business district. Instability in the job market meant working-class individuals also needed to be centrally located so they could transition from one job to another without relocating. The resulting urban pattern was a compact central city surrounded by residential neighborhoods limited to the wealthiest individuals, for whom wagons and drivers were financially feasible. As urban rail networks developed, horse-pulled cars – moderate in speed but faster than walking – allowed individuals without personal transportation to move to neighborhoods surrounding the central business district. As those neighborhoods became denser, wealthy residents continued to push outward, attracted by newly subdivided land and utility expansions. With the advent of traction – electric streetcars – the new middle class and white collar professionals had access to a transit system that was truly rapid. They could now live further from the central city and spend less time commuting. This pattern is well documented in urban histories, including Sam Warner’s *Streetcar Suburbs* and Charles Glaab’s and A. Theodore Brown’s *A History of Urban America*. Roger David Simon summarizes this pattern in his dissertation, *The Expansion of an Industrial City*: “The essential operations in the process of urban expansion varied little from section to section [of the city]: subdivision came first, with land along major arteries being subdivided earliest, and the rest of the area being taken up in the order of its distance from the center of the city... Essential urban services usually followed a set order: streetcars came first, followed by water and sewer mains, and then graded streets.”⁵³

Simon demonstrates the way this pattern is applied to Milwaukee, but also points out that the development of individual neighborhoods and the streetcar system’s influence on those neighborhoods varied. By 1910, industry in Milwaukee was well distributed throughout the city. The Menomonee Valley provided industry ready access to water and rail transportation at greater distances from the central business district than was common in other cities. This allowed workers to walk to plants even though they lived three to four miles from the central business district. Prior to 1910, the lack of crosstown routes limited the streetcar ridership to individuals who needed to enter the central city. Milwaukee’s central business district was never as large as its size would suggest, largely because Milwaukee’s immigrant communities and distribution of manufacturing locations and jobs resulted in many dispersed “downtowns.” Examples are North Third Street on the north side (now Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.), Mitchell Street on the South Side, and 27th Street on the west side.⁵⁴

Before the creation of a crosstown 27th Street Line, streetcars did not bisect the Menomonee Valley

⁵³ Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee*, 298.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 188.

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west of 5th Street.⁵⁵ The establishment of a crosstown 27th Street Line greatly enhanced access of workers to Menomonee Valley from points north and south. This route provided workers with more flexibility, allowing them to move further out where access to light and air was greater without losing access to multiple workplaces. Also of note, the 27th Street Line intersected several main east-west routes, allowing workers to access other parts of the city without making the longer and more crowded trek into the central business district. The Wells Street Line was among the most heavily trafficked of the routes intersecting 27th Street. Once the crosstown service was established in 1913, residents from the entire west side of the city were connected to the central business district and Wauwatosa through 27th and Wells. Combined with the population surge after World War I, the neighborhood at 27th and Wells became a prime location for more dense development.

Another factor that contributed to the density at 27th and Wells was the razing of mansions and building of institutions along newly renamed Wisconsin Avenue (formerly Grand Avenue). Hospitals arrived first with the relocation of Deaconess Hospital to 18th Street in 1917 and Children's Hospital to 17th Street in 1923, replacing historic mansions. A national fraternal group, the Eagles, established a clubhouse at 24th and Wisconsin in 1926. The Shriners opened the first Milwaukee temple, Tripoli Temple, in 1928. In the period between 1910 and 1930, Marquette University became the area's largest institution, adding programs in engineering, business, journalism, music, and speech. Enrollment grew from 709 in 1907 to 4,357 in 1930. These institutions attracted established immigrant groups who created their own enclaves within the Avenues West and Concordia neighborhoods. Mansions were increasingly razed or divided to create additional housing for the growing community. Many other mansions were converted to lawyer offices following the construction of the Milwaukee County Courthouse on 9th Street in 1931.⁵⁶

Interestingly, doctors and dentists were among of the first professionals to offer services to the expanding community around this urban intersection. As such, they historically occupied the commercial rental spaces in this district. Soon, a majority of tenants in the retail and commercial spaces were pharmacists, doctors and dentists. Physicians continued to concentrate in high numbers in the fourth ward surrounding the subject district, providing medical services to the professional, white-collar classes that lived here. This trend expanded with the founding of Doctors Hospital in 1949 which occupied the Liberty Building, having been remodeled for medical use. The culmination of the expansion of this area as a medical hub was when the Doctors Hospital constructed a large addition in two phases, in 1964 and 1967.

Land along major streetcar thoroughfares and at intersections of important routes tended to rise

⁵⁵ Roger David Simon, *The Expansion of an Industrial City*, 122.

⁵⁶ Gurda, *Milwaukee – City of Neighborhoods*, 53-54.

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exponentially in value, driving density. The increased land value of property along the routes necessitated larger buildings so developers could generate satisfactory profit. The expanding residential market propelled by the mobility of the streetcar created a demand for neighborhood stores, grocers, hair dressers and barbers, and tailors that were readily accessible. Wise to this demand, investors often bought up land along proposed route with the intention of building commercial blocks. For commercial business owners, these new “main streets” were the ideal because they provided a significant local customer population without the higher rents of the central business district. Larger stores started relocating to these commercial strips for the same reasons, followed quickly by entertainment venues such as movie palaces. The buildings were intentionally small and relatively simple. Developers planned these commercial strips to hold the land and create a fast profit as the land’s value grew and became prime for redevelopment. The area at 27th and Wells and districts like it throughout the city are preserved largely due to the rise of the automobile and subsequent change in urban living that resulted after World War II. Rather than increasing in density as developers expected, the working- and middle-class neighborhoods continued to move outward as cities sprawled. Blight took over as once outlying districts became truly inner-city.⁵⁷

In 1953, the 27th Street Line was replaced with bus service. 1958, Milwaukee’s last streetcar made a historic journey down Wells Street.⁵⁸ Bus routes initially followed many of the old streetcar lines, however, the routes changed often during the subsequent decades. One great advantage of bus service, route flexibility, prevented it from becoming the kind of impetus for development that the streetcar had been. Bus routes changed to follow development that was increasingly dictated by the automobile’s need for wider roads and ample parking. Thoroughfares such as 27th Street remained important arteries, but restricted parking and road width limited by fully built out blocks prevented businesses from retaining the increasingly automobile-dependent customer base. Some buildings were demolished to make room for parking lots, but the once vibrant neighborhoods had mostly declined too far to be reinvigorated. Already suffering from middle-class exodus and falling property values, the phasing out of the streetcars solidified the area’s decline.

With the growth of the commercial node, the 27th and Wells Commercial Historic District also served the area’s entertainment and recreation needs. While smaller amenities, such as a bowling alley, were located here, the Tower Theater is the most prominent example of this trend. The Tower Theater was affiliated with Saxe Amusement Enterprises (Saxe AE), one of Wisconsin’s most important movie and entertainment companies.

⁵⁷ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company Inc., 1985), 12-15.

⁵⁸ Central Electric Railfan’s Association, *The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company*, (Chicago: Gregg-Moore Lithographing Company, 1972), 99.

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Saxe AE was founded by brothers Thomas and John E. Saxe. They were born in Newbridge, Ireland before their family immigrated to Fox Lake, Wisconsin. They became entrepreneurs early in life, selling the Milwaukee Journal and starting a sign painting business. Their sign painting business exposed them to the entertainment industry as they created weekly promotional signs for opera houses, dime museums, and established theaters. Seeing the profits that could be earned as entertainment providers, they founded and took over management of several theaters. They incorporated at Saxe AE in 1908, and spent the next decade expanding their theater stock throughout Milwaukee and other Wisconsin cities. While Thomas remained active in the movie business, John started America's first hamburger chain, White Tower. The Saxes correctly predicted the powerful synergy made by locating the White Tower restaurants near or in the same buildings as their theaters. Saxe AE also combined with Walter Schroeder to create a series of hotels. In 1927, after years of investor interest, Saxe AE sold most of its holdings for two million dollars to 20th Century Fox. Thomas Saxe continued to be involved in the entertainment industry through investments in amusement parks, dance halls, a roller rink, carnival rides, and nightclubs. He reentered the theater business in 1933 as a partner in the Warner-Saxe Theaters until his death in 1938. John Saxe remained the administrator of the White Tower restaurants until his death in 1939.⁵⁹

As described in the previous section, streetcar access allowed people to live further from the central city. Lower rents and a growing customer base attracted retail shops to developing commercial strips along major thoroughfares and intersections of important routes. Entertainment venues soon followed. The Saxe brothers, seeing that their company Saxe Amusement Enterprises facing stiff competition from local and national theater owners, ushered in the concept of the movie "palace" in Milwaukee with the construction of the Wisconsin Theater. As competition for movie patrons heated up, Saxe AE tried a new approach, building theaters on developing commercial strips outside the central business and entertainment district. Saxe AE quickly commissioned the Uptown, Plaza, Garfield, Tower, and Oriental theaters. Dick and Bauer were hired to design the Garfield and the Oriental Theater as well as the Tower. Saxe AE applied the movie palace philosophy to these theaters. They featured grand foyers, lush balconies and promenades, and plaster and tile work, all reflecting the exotic flavors of Hollywood films shown during the period.⁶⁰ Concession stands were not widely featured until after World War II, so sweet shops, ice cream parlors, and restaurants often filled storefronts around neighborhood theaters. The Tower Theater attracted other entertainment venues to the district, including a bowling alley and restaurant in the Liberty Building next door. Nearby ballrooms, nightclubs, and a dancing school helped reinforce the area's reputation as a mini entertainment district.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Widen and Anderson, 40-41.

⁶⁰ Widen and Anderson, 67-68.

⁶¹ Gurda, *The West End*, 10.

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The golden age of movie palaces spanned from 1932 to 1947. There were more than seventy-five theaters in operation in Milwaukee during this period. Before TVs became standard home accessories, a neighborhood theater like the Tower would feature new programming two or three times a week. Promotions and discounts on slower nights made movies accessible even to working-class individuals without significant disposable income. Theater staff requirements expanded with the development of the movie palace. Ushers and doormen went through rigorous training programs and were only allowed to serve the main auditorium after a probationary period in the balcony. Carpenters and artists created elaborate displays with props and signage for the theater lobbies and exteriors in the theme of the week's films. Peddlers sold handbills for each film.

Theater attendance peaked in 1946. By the end of the decade, television quality had improved and prices were within consumers' reach, providing free entertainment without leaving home.⁶² At about the same time, an antitrust ruling made it illegal for movie studios such as Paramount and Fox to own movie theaters. Older theaters fell into disrepair as funding was cut off and maintenance neglected. Newly constructed suburban theaters valued cost-effectiveness, convenience, and parking over the exotic movie palace theaters of the first half of the twentieth century. New theaters were also built as multiplexes, giving owners more profitability with the option to screen multiple movies simultaneously. Combined with stymied growth in the older, denser neighborhoods, single-screen movie palaces faced the challenge of operating large, aging buildings at a rapidly growing profit disadvantage.⁶³ As the movie palaces failed, so did the entertainment districts in which they were located. As a result, the decline of the movie palace coincides with the decline of the streetcar network and the growing importance of the automobile that allowed middle-class citizens to relocate to more distant suburbs. These factors coalesced into an insurmountable challenge for many of Milwaukee's commercial strips, including the area at 27th and Wells.

Area of Significance: Architecture

Architecturally, the district represents a collection of Period Revival style buildings that serve as examples of popular architectural styles of the period designed by a small, interrelated group of architects. The integrity of this collection of buildings helps retain the appearance of a cohesive historic commercial strip that represents an important period of community development. Some of the most popular Period Revival styles are represented. While there are other buildings in the district in the Commercial and Contemporary styles, these do not detract from this cluster of Period Revival style buildings. The following describes all of the styles found in the district in further detail.

⁶² Widen and Anderson, 93-94, 102.

⁶³ Ibid, 104-105.

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Commercial Style

The Commercial style rose to prominence in the late-nineteenth century and remained popular until about 1930. It is characterized by a construction type – iron or steel framing – that allowed for non-bearing walls and large window penetrations. Common features include a regular fenestration pattern and flat roof. The “Chicago window,” a large fixed central plate glass window flanked by two double-hung or divided light operable sashes, is common with the Commercial Style.⁶⁴ Ornamentation is typically minimal; however terra cotta or limestone details are often used to delineate the tripartite composition of base (the lower floor or floors), shaft, and top or cornice (sometimes including the top floor). Commercial style buildings are typically five stories or taller and the character and rhythm of the façade is determined largely by fenestration and sometimes expressed pilasters. The structural system allows the total area of glass to exceed brick and other facing materials, giving the walls a skeletal appearance. The façade treatment often includes a balance of vertical and horizontal lines.⁶⁵

The Liberty Building (2711 West Wells) is the primary example of this style in the 27th and Wells Commercial Historic District. It features Chicago windows on the second floor, as well as a clearly divided base, shaft, and cornice. Base, pilasters, and cornice are delineated with decorative terra cotta. The apartment blocks in the district are influenced by the Commercial Style, primarily the lack of ornament except at key locations, but are discussed in other styles which they more strongly represent. Although the windows have been removed, recessed black brick infill at window openings preserves the original fenestration rhythm. The Baebenroth’s Pharmacy building (760 North 27th Street) is also an example of this style, identifiable by the scale, massing, storefront configuration, fenestration and flat roof.

Period Revival – Elizabethan Revival Style

Period Revival encompasses a range of motifs and elements architects used between 1900 and 1940. During the 1920s, Period Revival was in such demand that architect’s advertised popular Period Revival styles as part of their range of services. Despite better access to historic documentation of the period on which a style was based, architects tended to widely interpret a given period’s style, often applying it to an uncharacteristic building type and massing.⁶⁶

The Elizabethan Revival style is inspired by sixteenth century English architecture. The style is characterized by large, formal brick buildings with stone detailing. Other characteristics include

⁶⁴ Wyatt, Architecture 2-25.

⁶⁵ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles*, (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992), 183-185.

⁶⁶ Wyatt, Architecture 2-28.

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multiple chimneys, gables, and window configurations, often with many mullioned subdivisions.⁶⁷

The West Point Apartments (800-810 North 27th Street) are an example of Elizabethan Revival motifs applied to a commercial block. The limestone detailing and crown-shaped parapets evoke the Elizabethan style; however, the style is only skin-deep. The architects, Matt and Klenzendorff, deviated from the style in the mullion pattern, which is a Prairie School design. The gabled, irregular massing characteristic of the style is omitted in favor of a simpler apartment block massing with an ordered, repetitive interior and exterior expression.

Period Revival – Mediterranean Revival and Spanish Revival Styles

Mediterranean Revival is closely linked to the Spanish Revival style. Both are characterized by flat wall surfaces interspersed with arcading and ornamentation. Common materials are brick and stucco, with terra cotta, plaster, and tile ornamentation and tile roofs. Spanish Revival references include iron grillwork and shaped gables. Towers and dome-capped turrets may be incorporated in larger or more significant buildings. Courtyards are common features, sometimes ornamented with classical motifs.⁶⁸ Mediterranean Style commercial buildings often feature curvilinear, multi-shaped parapet gables in place of or in addition to tile roofs. Arches are typically semicircular, but Moorish and segmental arches are also popular. Elaborate carved or cast ornament often decorates building surfaces. Doorways and window openings may be flanked by freestanding or engaged columns and pilasters. Significant variance in window size and fenestration may be visible on a single façade, with larger, more elaborate windows and ornament at primary focal points, such as a main entrance. Specific motifs are wide ranging, subject to the individual style of the architect or client.⁶⁹

At 27th and Wells, four buildings are designed in the Mediterranean Revival style, often with Spanish elements. 820-826 North 27th Street is the most characteristic of the style, featuring shaped parapets, green tile roofs, green tile work at false window openings, iron balconies, arcaded window bays with engaged columns, and decorative plaster and limestone at the two side bays. The saw-tooth limestone window surrounds and arched window openings also evoke the Mediterranean Revival style. The squat rectangular columns at the storefront more closely resemble the other commercial blocks. The Cecelia Apartment Building (801-813 North 27th Street) and Cecelia Annex (817-831 North 27th Street) are more restrained examples of the Mediterranean Revival style. Architects Dick and Bauer applied Mediterranean motifs, including Solomonic engaged columns, arched fourth floor windows, and a limestone grill-like balustrade at the parapet to evoke the Mediterranean style with little additional ornament. The most decorative building in the district is the Tower Theater. Arched bays interrupt the

⁶⁷ Ibid, Architecture 2-30.

⁶⁸ Ibid, Architecture 2-23.

⁶⁹ Whiffen, 225.

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regular fenestration rhythm and terra cotta urns decorate the balustrade parapet. The original tower evoked Mediterranean elements with a domed lantern at the top. In the interior, a two-story grand foyer evokes the traditional Mediterranean courtyard with decorative plaster and terra cotta columns, balustrade, tiled wall murals, and a floor pattern designed to transport theater-goers to a far-away world. The auditorium contains intact Mediterranean-inspired forms such as loggia, arches, colonnade, proscenium arch, and decorative wall arcades. The juxtaposition of the decorative Tower Theater near the simplified Cecelia Apartment Building and Annex demonstrates how one architectural firm, Dick and Bauer, interpreted the same style at two different extremes depending on the building's use and project budget.

Contemporary

According to *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, contemporary architecture is that constructed after 1950 that has not been sufficiently studied to be classified as a definitive style. For more recent buildings, styles are continually shifting and being redefined as a more comprehensive survey of buildings in the recent past is conducted. Styles in this period do not have wide enough recognition or enough scholarly attention for their significance to be definitively stated. Some popular characteristics and materials of this period relevant to the 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District include precast and poured concrete, panelized systems, cantilevers, floating masses, asymmetrical façade expression, and volumetric forms.

The Doctors Hospital Addition to the Liberty Building is an example of contemporary architecture. The lower story is recessed at all sides, creating the illusion of floating upper stories. Each façade varies in its pattern of concrete and brick, creating a different composition from every angle. Traditional building elements of storefronts and cornices are omitted, and the building is set back from the sidewalk as well as the Liberty Building next to it. Asymmetrical windows and massing complete the contemporary styling.

Architects

Gustave A. Dick and Alexander H. Bauer

Gustave Dick and Alexander Bauer managed the firm Dick and Bauer with their partner, Harvey M. Risseuw. They were prominent theater architects in the movie palace era, employing their expertise in Period Revival styling at the Milwaukee, Colonial, Oriental, Garfield, and National Theaters in Milwaukee, the Capitol Theater in Racine, the Sprague in Elkhorn, and the Oshkosh Theater in Oshkosh.⁷⁰ They also remodeled the Pabst and Davidson Theaters in Milwaukee. They formed their

⁷⁰ "Theatre Architects, A Directory of Leading Designers of Motion Picture Theaters," *Exhibitors Herald-World* (Chicago), 12 April 1930, 143.

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practice in 1921 and designed many period revival commercial buildings, churches, and homes in Milwaukee and surrounding communities. Gustave A. Dick was born March 29, 1873.⁷¹ He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture in 1896 and apprenticed at the Milwaukee firm of Henry C. Koch and Company before partnering with Bauer. Dick died July 10, 1935.⁷² Alexander H. Bauer grew up in Milwaukee and graduated from the University of Wisconsin School of Engineering. Before joining with Dick, he was a senior appraiser for the American Appraisal Co. When Dick retired, Bauer continued the firm under his own name. He designed the Gaenslen School for Crippled Children with Alexander Eschweiler. Bauer was also president of the Wisconsin chapter of the American Institute of Architects for two terms totaling twelve years. He died December 12, 1956.⁷³

27th and Wells Commercial Historic District buildings attributed to Dick and Bauer:

Tower Theater	757 North 27 th Street	1926
Cecelia Apartment Building	801-813 North 27 th Street	1926
Cecelia Annex/West Point Garage	817-831 North 27 th Street	1926/1929

Clare C. Hosmer

Clare C. Hosmer was a Chicago Prairie School architect born May 24, 1880.⁷⁴ He served as the director of the Illinois Society of Architects. He was the managing director of the Architectural Exhibition League in Chicago and managed the annual Chicago Architectural Exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1924. That same year he relocated to Sarasota, Florida. He was known for his stucco treatments, partnering with well-regarded Sarasota architect Thomas Reed Martin as the firm Martin-Hosmer Stucco. He collaborated with Martin on the Bachellor-Brewer Model Home and the Lemon Bay Women's Club, both listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He separated from Martin to establish his own firm in 1926. He was also associated with architect Grover Donald. In Florida, Hosmer experimented with the Mediterranean Revival style which peaked in popularity during the 1920s. In 1925, he was elected to the board of directors of the Florida Association of Architects and was appointed to the "Committee on School Building Standards" of the American Institute of Architects. In 1930, Hosmer left Sarasota for Houston, Texas. He later moved to East Orange, New Jersey, where he worked with the New Jersey Housing Authority. Before his death in 1940, he was

⁷¹ The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, s.v. "Dick, Gustave A.," (ahd1010976), accessed March 1, 2016, <http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki>.

⁷² Wisconsin Historical Society, *Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory*, "Property Record, 742 N Hi-Mount Blvd," accessed February 11, 2016.

⁷³ "Bauer, Theater Designer, Dies," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 13, 1954, Section L, Page 9.

⁷⁴ The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, s.v. "Hosmer, Clare C.," (ahd1020673), accessed March 1, 2016, <http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki>.

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architects in the state and practiced architecture for more than fifty years. During the First World War, Zagel discontinued his practice to serve in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Following the war, both brothers traveled to Cologne, Germany, and Paris, France, to study architecture. The firm George Zagel and Brother was established in 1920 and remained in operation through 1975 when Ferdinand died. Zagel is credited with more than 1500 projects, including stores, apartment blocks, residences, and industrial buildings. He was particularly active during the 1920s building boom, designing several buildings in the Mediterranean Revival/Spanish Colonial style. He often incorporated tiled roofs, arched windows, iron grillwork and balconies, and decorative stone corner coins. Zagel died in May 1977.⁷⁹

27 th and Wells Commercial Historic District building attributed to George Zagel:		
820-826 North 27 th Street	820 North 27 th Street	1925

Conclusion

The 27th and Wells and Streets Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as an intact example of a small urban commercial, entertainment, and service node, outside of Milwaukee's urban core. The district retains a high degree of integrity, with many of the buildings appearing as they did during the period of significance with only storefront and window alterations. Other such streetcar-driven "Main Streets" that existed throughout the city have been obliterated by redevelopment and neglect. Changes in American life, income distribution, and community development after World War II resulted in a deactivation of streetcars and the decline of neighborhoods surrounding the central business district. By 1968, development and improvements halted completely, in effect preserving the district as it appeared during its prime.

The district is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. A group of architects, respected Period Revival specialists, designed a cluster of Period Revival style buildings in a relatively short period of time. The result is a cohesive grouping of buildings located at a key Milwaukee intersection that represents an active building period of Milwaukee's history and demonstrates the way popular styles were incorporated to greater and lesser extents depending on building use, client tastes, and budget.

⁷⁹ City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission, "Final Historic Designation Study Report, 47th Street Bungalow Historic District," 18-19.

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Statement of Archaeological Potential

The presence of Native American tribes in Milwaukee is well documented. While it is almost certain that the construction of buildings within this historic district would have disturbed archeological artifacts, the archaeological potential of extant Native American resources within the boundaries of this district remains unassessed.

Preservation Activity

The City of Milwaukee has managed preservation activity in the city through the Historic Preservation Commission for over thirty-five years. At 27th Street, an active neighborhood association, SOHI District, seeks to aid redevelopment efforts between Highland Boulevard to the north and St. Paul Street to the south. This effort has included master planning, market analysis, street-scaping plans, and investment partnerships. The City of Milwaukee designated this strip along 27th Street, including the proposed 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District, as one of six Main Street Milwaukee locations. The award includes \$350,000 Community Development Block Grant funds and matches resources contributed by its partners. The goal of the program is to promote economic development to support new businesses, jobs, and wealth in urban communities. The 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District is also part of Business Improvement District (BID) #10 – Avenues West Association, which offers programmed funding for façade improvements and provides support programming for local organizations within the BID. Within the proposed boundary of the 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District, preservation activity is, limited to the relatively modest efforts of individual building owners. All buildings suffered from the neighborhood's decline in the 1950s and 1960s. The decline also served as a de facto preservation tool, making significant alterations and remodels unfeasible financially. As a result, the resources in the subject historic district retain integrity but suffer from deferred maintenance.

Baebenroth's Pharmacy underwent rehabilitation activities in 2006 and is now the home of the SOHI District neighborhood association. The West Point Apartments were recently rehabilitated as affordable condominium homes. The other buildings have suffered from the neighborhood's decline. New ownership for all but 820-826 North 27th Street brings new possibilities for rehabilitation. The inclusion of this district in the National Register of Historic Places will help ensure facilitate the sympathetic rehabilitation as redevelopment continues in the future. The owners of the Tower Theater, Liberty Building, Doctor's Hospital, Cecelia Apartments, and Cecelia Annex plan to apply for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit program pending nomination of this district to the National Register of Historic Places.

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UTM Coordinates, Continued

Zone	Easting	Northing
1. 16	422721	4765813
2. 16	422796	4765813
3. 16	422856	4765795
4. 16	422856	4765732
5. 16	422841	4765683
6. 16	422793	4765649
7. 16	422701	4765649
8. 16	422703	4765716
9. 16	422759	4765716
10.16	422759	4765769
11. 16	422721	4765772

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District begins at the northwest corner of the property at 801 North 27th Street, plat 38810, Assessment Subdivision No. 2, block 3, lots 5 and 6. It continues east, jogging north slightly, east, and back south with the building and property lines. It continues east from the east curb line of 801 North 27th Street to the northeast corner of the property at 820 North 27th Street, plat 38934, Harrison's Subdivision, Block 276, lot 9. It continues south to the south curb line of the property at 800-810 North 27th Street, plat 38934, Harrison's Subdivision, Block 276, lot 8. It jogs west along the curb line before continuing south along the east property line of 760 North 27th Street, plat 38935, Assessment Subdivision No. 48, block 1, lots 8 and 9 to the southeast corner of this property. It continues west to the east curb line of the property at 2711 West Wells Street, plat 38811, Assessment Subdivision No. 2, block 1, lots 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18, and Lafayette Square Subdivision block 1, lot 1. It jogs south to the southeast corner of this property and continues west along the property line to the southwest corner of the property. It then continues north to the northwest corner of the property. It continues east along the north curb line of the property and then north along the line between lots 6 and 7 of the property at 801 North 27th Street (near the west building edge). It jogs west and north around the building on lot 5 to the starting point.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District encompasses the commercial apartment and retail blocks that originally clustered at the historic crossings of two major streetcar

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lines, 27th Street Line (Route 27) and Wells Street Line (Route 10). The boundaries follow the current owners' property lines, minus large flat parking lots. Adjacent properties outside the boundaries represent a change in use (schools and single-family homes typically converted to two- and three-flat apartments), vacant properties, or modern development. The result is a boundary encompassing the historic resources while excluding extraneous area.

The original Grand Avenue School at 28th and Wisconsin burned in 1916 and was replaced in 1921 with the current elementary school located just outside the district.⁸⁰ As part of the rebuilding effort, the Milwaukee Public School District purchased a large tract of surrounding land for a play yard that occupied half of an entire city block north of Wisconsin Avenue between 27th and 28th Streets, creating a visual boundary between the school and the commercial district to the north. The other side of 27th and Wisconsin was occupied by St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and Wadham's Filling Station, a Chinese pagoda-inspired building. These buildings have been razed and the lot remains vacant. The resultant void creates a visual boundary on the southeast side of the district. Modern development forms the boundary on the north side of the district. The east and west boundaries are characterized by a change in use. Residences converted to two- and three-unit rental properties are the primary building type east and west of the 27th Street commercial corridor. Properties converted to parking lots east and west of the 27th Street Corridor also create a visual buffer for the district.

⁸⁰ Bobby Tanzilo, "Urban Spelunking: The recently surplussed Wisconsin Avenue School," *OnMilwaukee.com*, published February 2015, <http://onmilwaukee.com/buzz/articles/spelunkingwisaveschool.html>.

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Continuation Sheet

27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic
District
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI

Section Photos Page 1

Photographs

RESOURCE:

27th and Wells Commercial Historic District
City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Donna Weiss and Kate Bissen, July through August 2015

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL DIGITAL FILES:

Wisconsin Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office
816 State Street, Madison, WI 53706

PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS:

Photograph 01 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0001)
View of Baebenroth's Pharmacy from the intersection of North 27th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking southeast.

Photograph 02 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0002)
View of West Point Apartments from the intersection of North 27th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking northeast.

Photograph 03 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0003)
View of West Point Apartments (right) and 820 N 27th Street (left) from across North 27th Street, camera looking northeast.

Photograph 04 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0004)
View of 820 N 27th Street from across North 27th Street, camera looking northeast.

Photograph 05 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0005)
View of Cecelia Annex/West Point Garage from across North 27th Street, camera looking southwest.

Photograph 06 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0006)
View of Cecelia Apartment Building and Cecelia Annex from the intersection of North 27th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking northwest.

Photograph 07 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0007)

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View of Cecelia Apartment Building from the intersection of North 27th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking northwest.

Photograph 08 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0008)
View of rear one-story portion of the West Point Garage from the intersection of North 28th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking northeast.

Photograph 09 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0009)
View of Doctors Hospital Addition from the intersection of North 28th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking southeast.

Photograph 10 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0010)
View of the district from North 28th Street, camera looking west down West Wells Street. Resources visible from left to right: Cecelia Apartment Building, West Point Apartments, Baebenroth's Pharmacy, Tower Theater, Liberty Building, and Doctors Hospital Addition.

Photograph 11 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0011)
View of Liberty Building (left) and Doctors Hospital Addition (right) from the intersection of North 28th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking southeast.

Photograph 12 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0012)
View of Liberty Building from across West Wells Street, camera looking southeast.

Photograph 13 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0013)
View of Tower Theater from the intersection of North 27th Street and West Wells Street, camera looking southwest.

Photograph 14 of 14 (WI_Milwaukee County_27th and Wells Commercial Historic District_0014)
View of Tower Theater from across North 27th Street at the intersection with West Hazelton Court, camera looking northwest.

See Figure 3 for Photograph locations keyed to the district map.

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Figure 5

West Point Apartments looking northeast, c1925.

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West Point Apartments and surrounding buildings looking northeast up 27th Street from the Tower Theater, c. 1950.

Figure 7

820-826 North 27th Street looking southeast during construction, 1925.

Figure 8

Cecelia Annex/West Point Garage looking southwest, 1926.

Figure 9

Cecelia Annex storefront. Portions of this storefront remain intact behind boards and signage.

Figures 10 and 11

Cecelia Apartment Building looking northwest, 1926.

Figure 12

West Point Apartments (foreground) and Cecelia Apartment Building looking west, c 1950.

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Figure 14

Liberty Building elevation drawing, 1928.

Figure 15

Liberty Building looking southwest during the construction of the Doctors Hospital addition, 1963.

Figure 16

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Figure 1
Map of district boundary within the surrounding context; base satellite image and scale from Google Earth, accessed March 4, 2016.

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Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI

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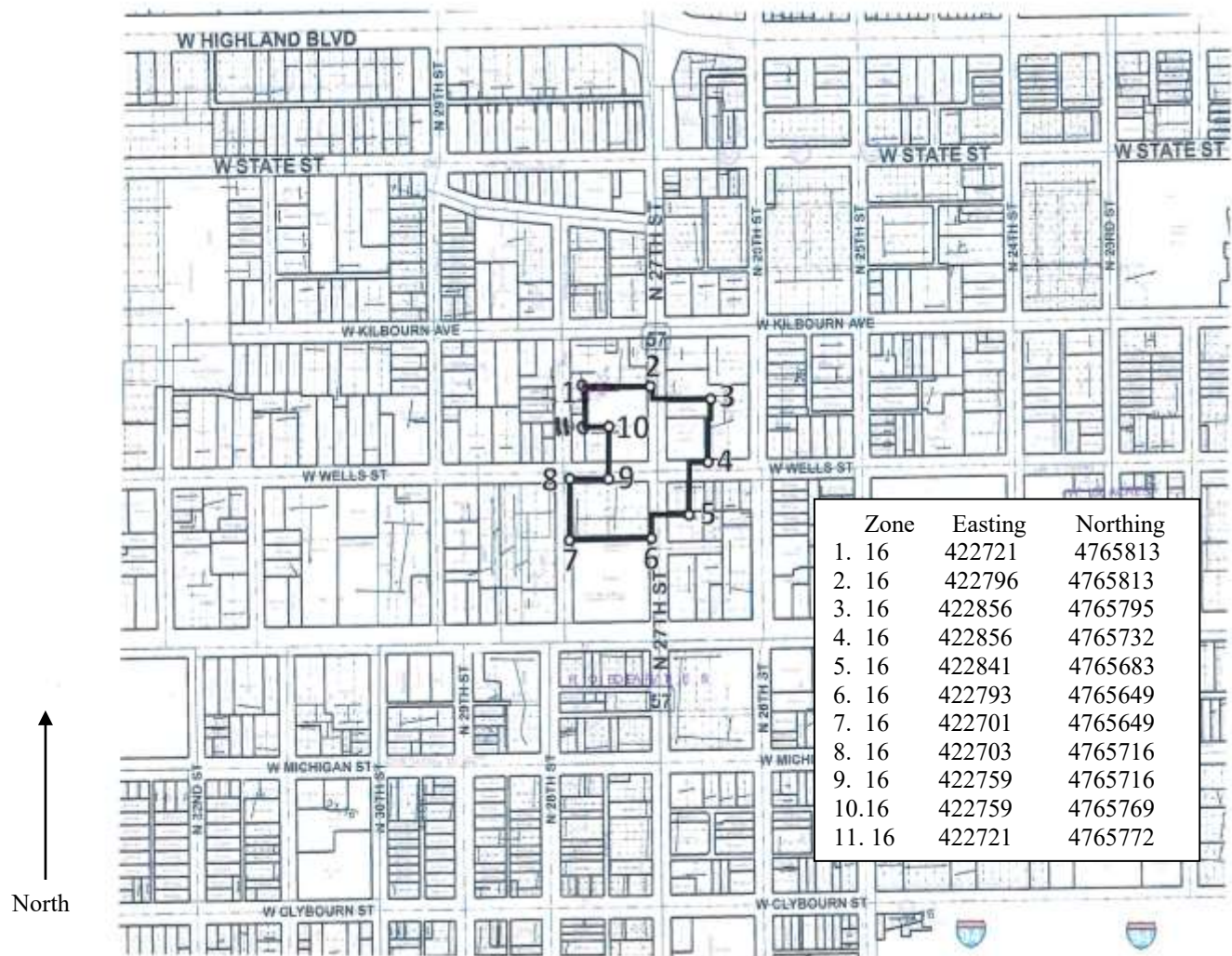


Figure 2
Map with UTM coordinates at district boundary (UTM references from Section 10 are also included); base satellite image, coordinates, and scale from Google Earth, accessed March 4, 2016. (To be referenced in place of USGS Map) Datum:

**United States Department of the Interior
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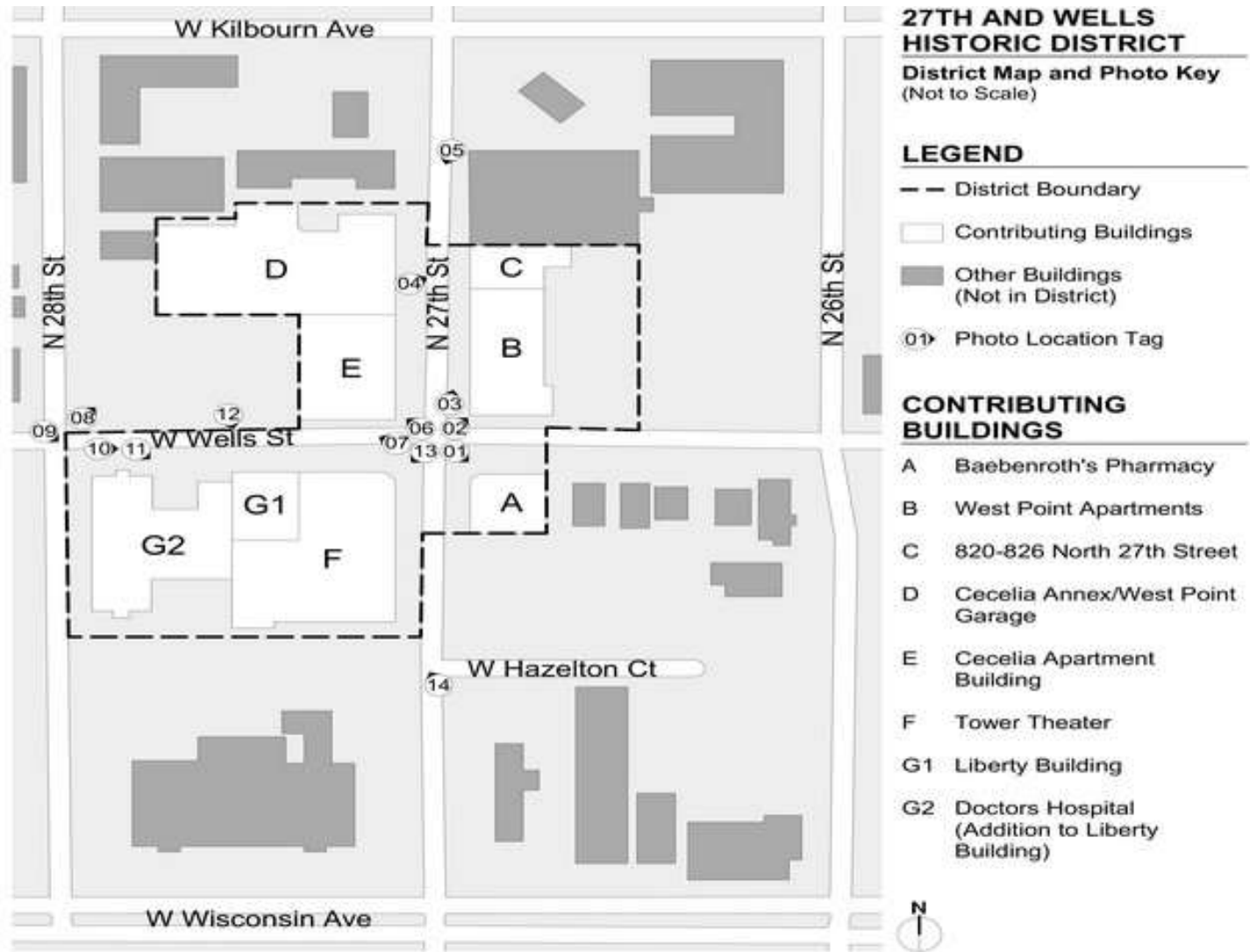


Figure 3
District map and photo key.

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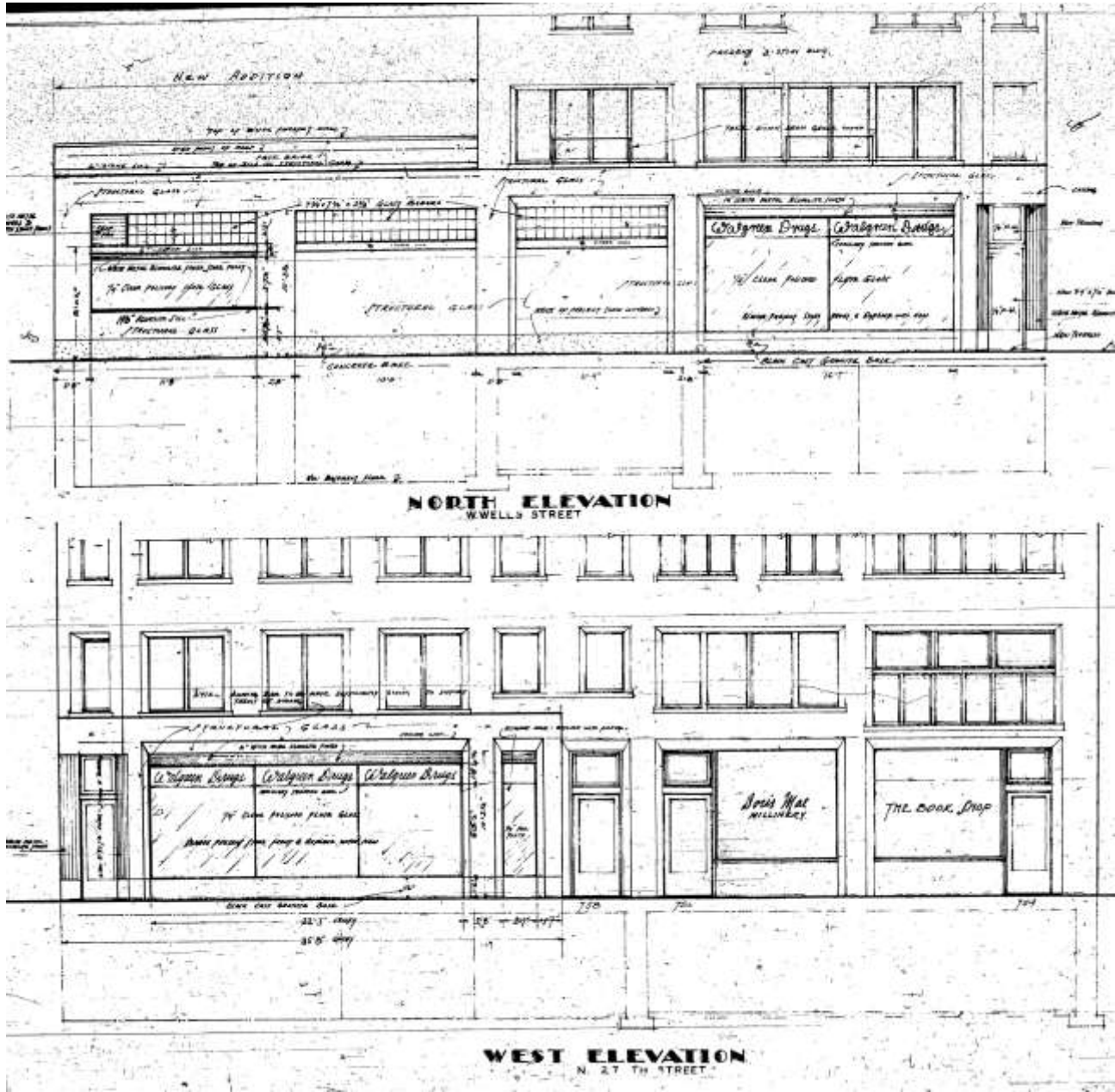


Figure 4
Elevation drawings of Baebenroth's Pharmacy, 1940, excerpted from the original drawing set, A.C. Hackenbruch Architect. (Milwaukee City Records Center, Microfilm Reel 99 Plan #49)

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Figure 5

West Point Apartments looking northeast, c. 1925. 820-826 N 27th Street and the 27th Street streetcar are also visible.
(Milwaukee Public Library Historic Photo Collection)

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Figure 6

West Point Apartments and surrounding buildings looking northeast up 27th Street from the Tower Theater, c. 1950.
(Milwaukee Transit Archives, Jack Galloway Photo Collection)

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Figure 7

820-826 North 27th Street looking southeast during construction, 1925. (Milwaukee County Historical Society Milwaukee Streets Photographic Collection)



Figure 8

Cecelia Annex/West Point Garage looking southwest, 1926. (Milwaukee County Historical Society Milwaukee Streets Photographic Collection)

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Figure 9

Cecelia Annex storefront. Portions of this storefront remain intact behind boards and signage. (Milwaukee County Historical Society Milwaukee Streets Photographic Collection)



Figures 10 and 11

Cecelia Apartment Building looking northwest, 1926. (Milwaukee County Historical Society Milwaukee Streets Photographic Collection)

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Figure 12

West Point Apartments (foreground) and Cecelia Apartment Building looking west, c. 1950. The Wells St Line streetcar is visible at the center of the image. (Golda Meir Library University Manuscript Collection 228, Robert W. Eichelberg Papers)

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Figure 13
Tower Theater looking southwest, 1957. (Milwaukee County Historical Society Historic Theaters Photographic Collection)

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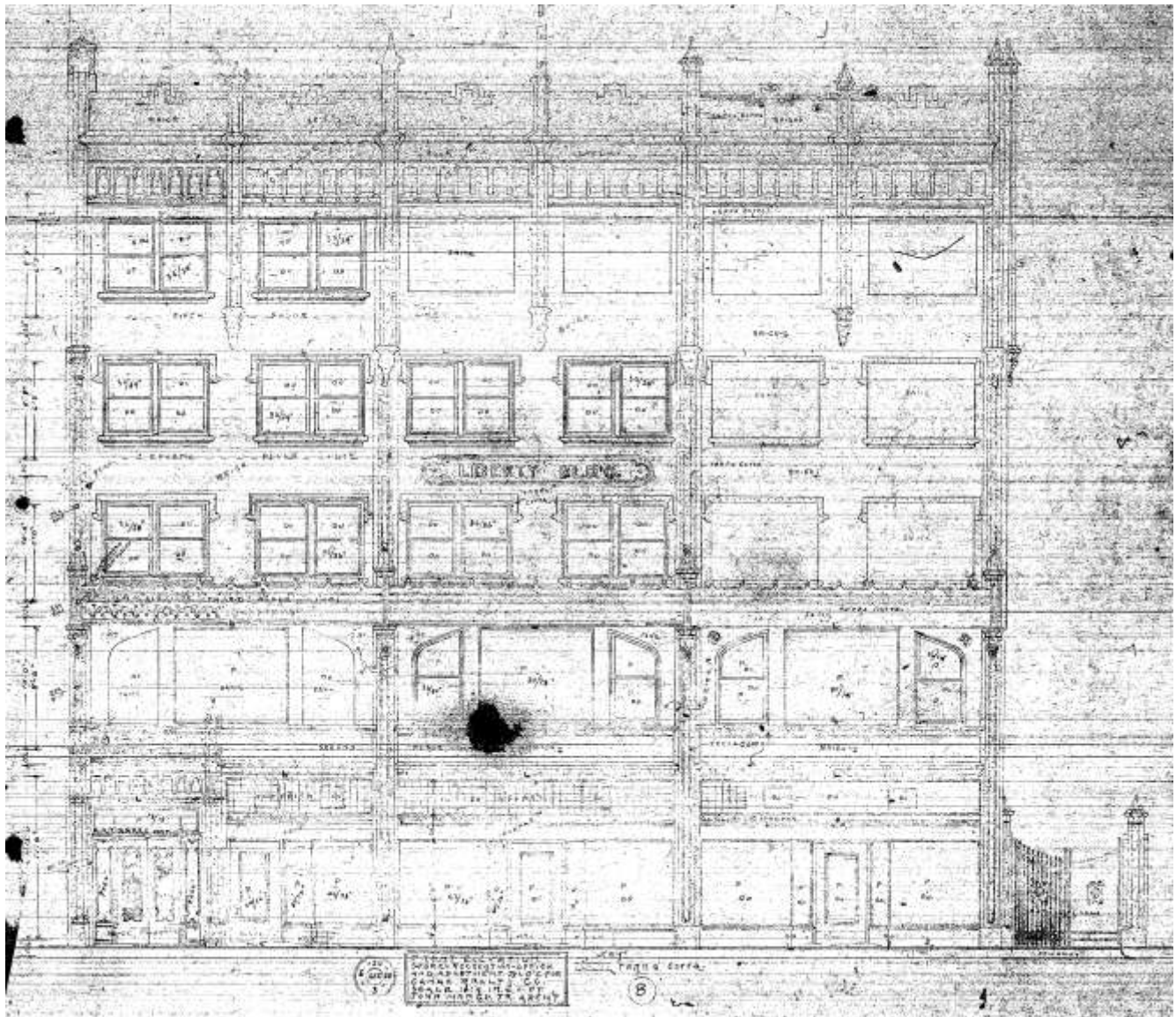


Figure 14
Liberty Building elevation drawing, excerpted from original drawing set, John Menge Architect, 1928. (Milwaukee City Records Center, Microfilm Reel 17 Plan #5)

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Figure 15

Liberty Building looking southwest during the construction of the Doctors Hospital addition, 1963. (Owner's personal collection)



Figure 16

Doctors Hospital 3-story addition looking southeast (prior to addition of 6-story tower), 1964. (Milwaukee Journal, May 21, 1964)



27

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: 27th and Wells Streets Commercial Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WISCONSIN, Milwaukee

DATE RECEIVED: 9/23/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/21/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/07/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/08/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000767

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: Y PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The 27th and Wells Street Commercial Historic District is listed in the National Register under Criteria A and C in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture. The period of significance is 1916 - 1968 under Criterion A and 1916 - 1928 under Criterion C. The district is locally significant as a fine collection of early 20th century Period Revival style buildings and for demonstrating the movement of Milwaukee's middle class outside of the central city, following streetcar routes, with commercial development appearing soon after.

RECOM./CRITERIA A&C

REVIEWER Barbara Wood

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE 202-354-2252

DATE 11-8-16

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
18th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

RECEIVED
AUG 04 2016

BY: _____



August 1, 2016

Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board
c/o Peggy Veregin
Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board:

I am writing to express my support for the nomination of the 27th and Wells Street Commercial District at 2632, 2711 West Wells Street and 760, 801, 810, 820 North 27th Street in the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin to the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. I live in the Historic Concordia Neighborhood and own a historically-designated home just a few blocks away. Our rich history is a major draw for home owners and visitors. As a neighbor, historic property owner, and elected representative I understand this area is being considered at your August 19, 2016 and I am respectfully requesting the Board's approval of this nomination.

By way of background, the 27th and Wells Commercial Historic District is situated between Wisconsin Avenue and Wells Street, and 26th Street and 28th Street. This area is comprised of seven (7) historic brick buildings that are the character and charm of North 27th Street, the South of Highland (SOHI) District. These seven (7) buildings, built in the late 1920's and early 1930's housed well known Milwaukee businesses and organizations such as the Tower Theater, Doctor's Hospital and Babenroth Pharmacy.

I have been impressed by the commitment and leadership of Near West Side Partners, Inc. a non-profit organization dedication to revitalizing Milwaukee's Near West Side which includes the 27th and Wells Street Commercial District. Near West Side Partner's was formed over 18 months ago by five anchor institutions—Aurora Health Care, Harley-Davidson, Marquette University, MillerCoors, and Potawatomi Business Development Corporation—with the mission of making Milwaukee's Near West Side a great place to live, work, and play.

Further, Business Improvement District #10 has dedicated funding to support the application of this historical designation to continue the work currently taking place along Wisconsin Avenue and around the near west side. A state and national historical designation would allow for access to additional funding streams that will support the work of committed stakeholders.

In addition to the possibility of accessing new funds for the work of improving these properties and supporting the life of these buildings, projects associated with the historical district will be a part of the Near West Side Partners and Business Improvement District #10 work in business recruitment and retention, job creation and neighborhood and economic development.

Again, I believe the 27th and Wells Street Commercial District in the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin is worthy of being designated as a part of the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Evan Goyke", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

State Representative Evan Goyke
18th Assembly District



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



TO: Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Peggy Veregin
National Register Coordinator

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this Twenty-second day of September 2016, for the nomination of the 27th and Wells Street Commercial Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places:

- 1 Original National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form
- 1 CD with NRHP Nomination form PDF
- Multiple Property Nomination form
- 14 Photograph(s)
- 1 CD with image files
- Map(s)
- 16 Sketch map(s)/figures(s)/exhibit(s)
- 1 Piece(s) of correspondence
- Other:

COMMENTS:

- Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed
- x This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do or do not constitute a majority of property owners
- Other: