code 095

### United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received 6/24/83 date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms* Type all entries—complete applicable sections

# 1. Name

historic Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City TR

code

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number roughly bounded by 11th Street; 14th Street; Wyandotte Street; and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Kansas City

\_\_\_ vicinity of

county

Jackson

29

state Missouri

# 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
_x_ district	public	$\underline{\mathbf{x}}$ occupied	agriculture	museum
<u>X</u> building(s)	$\underline{\mathbf{x}}$ private	_x_ unoccupied	$\underline{x}$ commercial	park
structure	both	work in progress	educational	private residence
site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	_X_ entertainment	religious
object	in process	<u>_x</u> yes: restricted	government	scientific
x thematic	y <u> </u>	yes: unrestricted	industrial	transportation
	X N/A	no	military	other:

# 4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership (see continuation sheets)

street & number

city, town	vicinity of	state
5. Location of L	egal Description	
courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Office of Recorder of Deed Jackson County Courthouse,	
street & number	415 East 12th Street	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
city, town	Kansas City	state Missouri 64106
6. Representati	on in Existing Su	rveys
title Central Business Distr	rict Survey has this property	been determined ellgible? yes _x_ no
date completed, 1981		federalstatecountyx_iocal
depository for survey records Lan	dmarks Commission of Kansas	City, Missouri
city. town 414 East 12th St	reet Kansas City	state Missouri 64106

# 7. Description

Condition	deteriorated	Check one X unaltered	<b>Check one</b> _x_ original si	te
_xgood fair	ruins unexposed	_X altered	moved	date

#### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### General Physical Description

The "Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City" thematic submission is composed of seven hotels in an area bounded by West 11th Street on the north, Wyandotte on the west, Baltimore on the east, and West 14th Street on the south. This four-block section is located in the Central Business District of Kansas City, Missouri. The seven hotels in this submission range in date from 1912 through 1931, with additions dating to 1966. They are constructed near the street lines and vary in size from seven to twenty-two stories. Each utilizes similar construction materials of brick, stone, and terra cotta. Within the submission there are two individually significant structures, and one clearly identifiable district consisting of five structures

#### Survey Methodology

The thematic submission of "Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City" was developed as a result of a systematic survey of the Central Business District. That survey, which took approximately one year and a half to complete, identified, researched, and documented all of the constructed resources located in the Downtown area of Kansas City, bordered on the north by 6th Street, on the south by 15th Street; on the west by Jefferson Avenue; and on the east by Troost Avenue.

The survey was conducted by the Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, and was funded in part from a grant from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. The survey was conducted by Sherry S. Piland, Linda Becker, and Ellen J. Uguccioni, all Architectural Historians on the staff of the Landmarks Commission.

The boundaries of the Central Business District were determined by the City Development Department of the City Hall and were accepted by the City Council of Kansas City, Missouri. The City Development Division in determining those boundaries considered what was popularly and historically considered the Downtown area, along with the man-made boundaries which had been created by various highway systems.

The hotels which were selected for National Register nomination are located in close proximity to each other, and share fundamental associations with the architectural and historical development of Kansas City's commercial center during the first three decades of the Twentieth Century. They represent all of the identified resources of this type which share these considerations within the area surveyed. The criteria used to isolate the seven hotels included in the submission, and to distinguish these hotels from other structures within the Downtown area which provided temporary housing facilities were: (1) date of construction; (2) the existence of facilities normally expected of a "full service" hotel; (3) architectural distinction; (4) association with significant events within the parameters of the hotel trade; and (5) association with prominent personalities. There are no other hotels within the Central Business District which thematically relate to the arguments presented in this submission for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The 'Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City' thematic submission portrays a distinguished part of the commercial, social and architectural history of the City of Kansas City.

# 8. Significance

1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture x architecture art x commerce communications	
Specific dates	1912-1966	Builder/Architect various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Hostelry has been a significant industry in Kansas City from its earliest beginnings, as the City's site at the natural confluence of rivers made it a logical stopping place for travelers. The Santa Fe Trail which had its course through the city also contributed to the need to provide temporary lodging. As the City made its transition from "boom town" to a sophisticated metropolitan center, the demands for hotel accommodations became greater, producing great booms in the construction of new hotels.<sup>1</sup> In 1922, there were 86 hotels in the City, and in 1925 twelve future hotels were planned, eight of which were under construction.<sup>2</sup> While hotels were built in other areas of the City, the Downtown hotel industry grew at a greater rate because of the convention trade business which was headquartered in the Downtown area. The competition with cities in the East for convention business was aggressive, as Kansas City strove to present the "biggest and best" to its potential customers. The "Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City" thematic submission includes seven hotels that were constructed in the Central Business District between 1912 and 1931, and are representative of the "heyday" of the grand hotel. Tens of millions of dollars were invested in their construction and decoration as each of the seven hotels provided gracious living and dining for its guests. Innovations were many and such advanced systems as air conditioning, frozen waste disposal, and central public address and radio were developed as significant features with which to promote the hotel's business. Significant architectural firms were selected for these very important commissions and included Holabird and Roche (Chicago), who had designed the first steel frame building in Chicago; and the Kansas City firms of Hoit, Price and Barnes; Boillot and Lauck; John Martling; Sanneman and Van Trump; Shepard and Wiser; and Phillip Drotts. Their elaborate architectural designs featured Italian Romanesque, Jacobethan, Beaux-Arts, and Neo-Classic Revival elements, and pushed skyward to enable the spacious floor plans which included cocktail lounges, banquet rooms, and restaurants. These hotels were associated with major convention activities, including the Republican National Convention in 1928.3

During the two decades that were encompassed by the construction and flourishing of these hotels, the Kansas City economy and downtown area were enormously enriched. The close proximity of these hotels to each other was a decisive factor in selecting the site for the Municipal Auditorium (completed in 1935) on West 13th Street between Wyandotte and Central Streets, a facility that ensured Kansas City a reputation as a first-rate convention city.<sup>4</sup>

### District I

The five hotel buildings which comprise the District reflect not only the solid, decorative architecture of an era, but also the facilities and entertainment amenities which attracted a clientele that demanded the availability of a full range of activities and services. The Phillips Hotel at 106 W. 12th Street,

9.	Major	Bibliog	raphica	I Refere	ences		
1.	"A Big Con	nvention Year	r." <u>Kansas C</u>	ity Times, 6	December	1928, p. 2.	
2.	"A Fund fo	or Convention	ns." Kansas	City Times,	16 Januar	y 1913, p. 7.	
3.	"A Hotel I	Design is Nev	ver Quite Goo	d Enough."	Business	Week, 19 Marc	h 1955, p. 43.
10	. Geog	graphic	al Data				
Quadi UTMI A Zoi C E G G	References	Kansas City,	nuation sho	eet B Zor D F L H		Quadrangle scale	
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street	& number 2	6th Floor,	City Hall,	, 414 E. 12	tilelephone	(816) 274	-2555
city o	town K	ansas City			state	Missouri	64106
12	. State	e Histo	ric Pres	ervation	n Offic	er Certi	fication
The ev	•	icance of this pro	operty within the s	state is: _X local			
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**Chief of Registration** 

## **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

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OWNERS OF SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES

(NUMBERS REFER TO SITE PLAN MAP)

- 1. Dixco Hotel Co. % Jerome L. Jacobson 1205 Baltimore Kansas City, MO 64105
- 2. First National Bank Trustee Heirs of Bucholtz Estate P.O. Box 38 Kansas City, MO 64141
- John J. Tucillo
   210 E. 52nd St.
   Kansas City, MO 64112
- 4. LCRA (Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority) % Kansas City Hotel Association P.O. Box 18403 Wichita, KS 67218
- 5. LCRA (Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority) % Phillips House Association P.O. Drawer 3197 Little Rock, AR 72203
- A. Kansas City Continental Corporation 106 W. 11th St. Kansas City, MO 64105
- B. Majestic Hotel & Inn 1329 Baltimore Kansas City, MO 64105

\*Owner of non-conforming additions to the Hotel Muehlebach

\*Equitable Life Assurance Soc of the U.S. Area 29K 1285 Ave of the Americas New York, N.Y. 10019



## United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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#### District I

District I is composed of five buildings located in a 2-block area between West 12th and West 13th Streets, and Baltimore and Wyandotte. They are individually described as follows: (numbers refer to location on site plan map)

1. Dixon Hotel - 1205 Baltimore

1912; architect, Sanneman and Van Trump; builder, Flanagan Brothers.<sup>1</sup> 1917 (addition); architect, Sanneman & Gould; builder, Western Construction Co.<sup>2</sup> 1954 (alterations); architect, Elmer Boillot; builder, Universal Construction Co.<sup>3</sup>

This seven-story hotel occupies a corner site with a frontage of 50 feet on East 12th Street and 135 feet on Baltimore. A 50 x 113 addition to the south was added The north facade of this commercial style building contains a store front in 1917. on the ground story. The 2nd and 3rd stories are articulated by three bays which contain fixed plate glass with narrow side lights. The remaining stories are fenestrated with one-over-one, double-hung lights enframed with a banding of lighter colored stone. The cornice is supported by paired brackets placed at regular intervals. Stepped in above the cornice, the wall of the facade rises to a level of approximately two feet and is ornamented and capped by the horizontal placement of blocks of stone. The east and west facades mirror the treatment of the north (12th Street) facade. The addition, which extends south on Baltimore, is faced with white limestone and separated into two equal bays by a pier which extends from the 2nd story to the roof. Each bay in the seven-story elevation is fenestrated with four narrow double-hung lights. Ornamentation below the windows consists of panels with rectangular designs. The cornice reflects the original structure and is similarly bracketed with curvilinear volutes. The addition is connected to the original structure across an alley. In 1954 the hotel added new shops on the ground level of the Baltimore Avenue frontage and hired architect Elmer Boillot to design a new front that would employ the use of glass and metal.

Hotel Muehlebach - 12th & Baltimore 1914-15; architect, Holabird and Roche (Chicago); builder, Westlake Construction Co. (St. Louis).<sup>4</sup>
\*1952 (addition); architect, Neville, Sharp & Simon.<sup>5</sup>
\*1957 (addition); architect, Neville, Sharp & Simon.<sup>6</sup>
\*1965-66 (addition); architect, Neville, Sharp & Simon; builder, Winn-Senter Construction Co.<sup>7</sup>

\*Only the original building constructed in 1914-15 should be considered in the nomination for listing. The additions are included only to describe the configuration of the building, and the relationship of its parts. The additions are non-conforming structures. United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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The Hotel Muchlebach consists of four separately-constructed buildings which occupy West 12th Street from Baltimore to Wyandotte. The original structure built in 1914-15 rises to a height of 12 stories. The architectural style is an adaptation of Beaux-Arts Classicism, expressed in the colossal paired pilasters of the upper stories, the repetitive cornices, and the use of classical ornament in the medallions and swags that occur across the facade. The regular round arches that pierce the ground story (now covered with canopies) lend a solid classical flavor to the building. Commercial and retail space is provided along the West 12th Street facade.

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An ll-story addition immediately west of the original building and constructed in 1952 is characterized by a minimum of ornamentation. The first floor which provides access to the older building, features bricks laid to form a diagonal pattern across the facade. The remaining stories are composed of regularly spaced, paired windows.

The third unit in the Muchlebach Hotel block, known as the Muchlebach Towers, was built in 1957 and is 18 stories in height. It fronts on both Wyandotte and West 12th Streets. A five-bay central section projects slightly beyond the two flanking side bays. This central section is further defined by a rectangular band which surrounds four paired window groupings. The ground story of the building is composed of glass panels that contain store fronts.

The five-story Muehlebach Convention Center, constructed of brick and concrete, was built in 1965-66. The principal facade faces east and is divided into rectangular panels on the second through fifth stories by concrete surrounds. The ground story is comprised of glass-fronted retail offices. A canopy on the roof shelters the pool and garden area.

3. New Yorker Inn - 1114 Baltimore 1913; architect, John Martling; builder, F.A. Crites.<sup>8</sup>

Constructed in the Jacobethan style, this hotel is nine stories in elevation. It is tall and narrow in appearance as a result of its 25-foot frontage, accentuated by the lower surrounding buildings to the north and south. The main facade faces east and consists of four bays of paired double-hung sash windows set in terra cotta surrounds. A projecting cornice forms a string course between the 7th and 8th floors. The facade terminates in a decorative terra cotta double gable. The summit of the roof is crenallated and accented with terra cotta.

4. Aladdin Hotel - 1213 Wyandotte (currently Embassy on the Park) 1925; architect, Phillip T. Drotts; builder, C.O. Jones.

The building is modeled in the Italian Romanesque style. The west facade, which contains the main entrance, is composed of a rectangular block, rising 16 stories



and capped by a gold tiled, pyramidal roof. The 1st through 3rd stories of this facade, 50 feet in width, are faced with white limestone. The ground and second stories are pierced by three round arches that contain alternating lighter and darker-colored stone voussoirs. The building extends 142 feet to the east as an elongated rectangular block which is placed perpendicularly to the west block. As the easterly projection is slightly more narrow and shorter than its western projection, the main facade takes on the appearance of a tower. On the upper floors of the north, south, and west facades are terra cotta pillars, with recessed window groupings that function to create a five-bay accent. A series of brick pilasters are carried up ten floors of the facade. They are crowned by life-size female figures of terra cotta. An enclosed roof garden on the l6th floor provided seating for 700 persons. Shops originally lined the lst floor along the alley to the north of the building, but have been bricked in. The hotel is connected by a tunnel to the Auditorium Plaza Garage across the street to the west.

5. Phillips Hotel - 106 W. 12th 1929-30; architect, Boillot and Lauck.

This 20-story Jacobethan-style hotel building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 4, 1979, and listed in the Kansas City Register on June 6, 1978.

#### INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE BUILDINGS

There are two hotel buildings within the thematic submission that warrant individual eligibility. While they share similar characteristics with the hotel buildings described in the District narrative, they are described separately because of their individual distinction, and because they are not within the geographic core of buildings within the district. The two buildings determined to be individually eligible are the Continental Hotel, 106 West 11th Street ("A" on Site Plan Map); and the President Hotel, 1327-35 Baltimore ("B" on Site Plan Map). They are individually described as follows:

A. Continental Hotel - 106 West 11th

Completed 1924; architects: Hoit, Price & Barnes. <sup>10</sup> 1971 (Remodeling); Herrie, Frashier, Architects, Inc.; Callegari Construction Co., builder.<sup>11</sup>

The Continental Hotel, located on the northwest corner of West 11th Street and Baltimore Avenue, is a Late Gothic Revival structure constructed of brick and stone. The ground through third stories feature a white marble chip facing which surrounds the bays of the south and east facades. Gothic motifs embellish the building and vertical finial type ornaments are interspersed on the string course that separates the third from the fourth stories. Stone surrounds and

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corner moldings are used in the enrichment of the two-tiered windows placed on the fourth through the seventh stories. Medallions of shields and fleur-de-lis are applied to the band molding between the fifth and sixth stories. Above the seventh floor level the fenestration consists of simple paired one-over-one, double-hung lights, until the stone detailing begins again above the 18th story. Stone enframes the windows and a brick parapet wall extends above the cornice line to terminate the building.

An enclosed roof garden was added to the top floor in 1925, designed by architects Hoit, Price and Barnes.<sup>12</sup> Two remodellings were accomplished in 1958 and 1971. In 1958 air conditioning was added on the first through sixth floors, and three hundred guest rooms were redecorated.<sup>13</sup> The 1971 renovations redesigned the facade from the first through the fourth stories by the addition of white marble chip aggregate facing on the south and east facades. A new 11th Street entrance was also added, with 24-foot wide glass doors as part of the design improvements by Herrie, Frashier, Architects, Inc.<sup>14</sup>

B. President Hotel - 1327-35 Baltimore

1925; architect: Shepard & Wiser; builder: George Siedhoff.<sup>15</sup>

This fifteen-story corner building has its main facade facing west, with a frontage of 130 feet on Baltimore and 108 feet on West 14th Street. The building incorporates Jacobethan elements in its design, particularly in its rectangular windows with rectangular lights created by stone mullions, the segmental curved gables which rise above the roof line at the four corners, and the strapwork ornament found in great quantity over the facade. The rectangular plan has been modified on the east to contain a light court with a gable roof at its base. The court is bridged at the upper floors by a span that connects the two wings. The facade derives its primary ornamentation from the use of terra cotta molding which enframes the window groupings on the 2nd and 3rd stories of the north, south, and west facades. The windows are further embellished by the use of decorative wrought iron railings and the spiral colonnettes which flank them. The ground story is faced with a contrasting lighter colored stone on the north, south and west facades. A banded terra cotta frieze forms a string course above the 12th floor. Above this the pedimented windows are surmounted by an intermittent balustrade and quatrefoils. Terra cotta coping follows the line of the parapet wall.

### Acreage

Individual sites A and B less than one acre each; District 1, approximately 2 acres.

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### CONDITION AND STATUS

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There was a great deal of interest expressed in renovating Kansas City's major downtown hotels beginning in 1980-81. Some of those renovation projects were accomplished, but the general decline in the nation's economic status stalled other projects and in general complicated the economic recovery of the hotels. The Vista Hotel, currently under construction at the northwest corner of 12th Street and Wyandotte, is viewed as a potential catalyst for a renaissance in the hotel trade industry.

#### Building A - Continental Hotel

The building is in good to excellent condition. The hotel, which was recently sold, is planned for conversion into office facilities. While the floors containing the guest rooms will be adapted to the needs of its clientele, the banquet rooms and the Kansas City Athletic Club facilities will be retained as originally designed and will be restored.

On January 21, 1983, the Continental Hotel was determined eligible for individual listing in the National Register by the Missouri State Office of Preservation Program's Chief of Review and Compliance.

### Building B - President Hotel

The President Hotel closed in 1980. At that time, renovation of the hotel was under consideration. The economic picture has halted those plans and the building remains closed.<sup>16</sup> It is in good condition.

### DISTRICT I

### New Yorker Inn

The present owner of the New Yorker Inn purchased the building in 1979. He opened a lounge and restaurant on the first floor. The upper floor hotel rooms were to be converted into apartment units, but the project has been delayed.17 Currently only the restaurant and lounge is in operation, although the plans for its renovation are still being considered as economic details are worked out. The building is in good condition.

### Phillips House Hotel

In 1981 a \$10 million renovation began on this hotel, converting it into a luxury hotel with 220 rooms and suites. In 1982 a Chapter II bankruptcy action was filed by the operators of the hotel, citing the general decline in occupancy, mounting debts, and the difficulties of competing with hotels in the outlying areas as reasons for the financial difficulties.<sup>18</sup> The hotel has remained open while being

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reorganized under the bankruptcy act, and has been involved in discussions with Ramada International Hotel chain concerning a franchise operation after the financial problems are resolved.<sup>19</sup> The hotel is in excellent condition.

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#### Hotel Muehlebach

The Hotel Muchlebach, being operated by the Radisson Hotel chain, is in excellent condition and continues to operate as a first-class hotel. It serves as the anchor for the downtown hotel trade.

#### Aladdin Hotel

After extensive interior renovations, the Aladdin Hotel reopened in July of 1981 as the Embassy-on-the-Park, a luxury hotel. A year later its occupancy rates, while disappointing, were growing slowly. In 1982 it became a Sheraton Corporation franchise, with an optimistic view that the reservation services provided by the large hotel chain would help its financial recovery.<sup>20</sup>

The hotel is in excellent condition.

### Dixon Inn

This hotel is in good condition and is still operating. Hotel rooms are gradually being remodeled and an exterior upgrading is being considered.<sup>21</sup>

### NOTES

- 1. Western Contractor, 3 January 1912, p. 18.
- 2. Western Contractor, 17 January 1917, p. 19.
- 3. Kansas City, Missouri, Architectural Records Collection of the Missouri Valley Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- 4. "New Hotel Deal Closed", Kansas City Star, 18 November 1913, p. 1; "Big Hotel in 11 Months", Kansas City Star, 13 May 1914, sec. A, p. 4.
- 5. "Hotel 'Go' Sign", Kansas City Times, 13 July 1950, p. 1.
- 6. 'Modern Theme in Downtown's Boom', Kansas City Star, 6 October 1957, sec. D, p. 8.
- 7. "To Add a Convention Center", Kansas City Star, 31 January 1965, sec. A, p. 2.
- 8. Building Permit #11558, 28 July 1915, Building Permit Office, 18th floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

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- 9. Western Contractor, 9 September 1925, p. 32.
- 10. "Three Big Projects Start", Kansas City Star, 30 July 1922, sec. D, p. 12.
- 11. "Hotel Continental New Face and a New Heart", Kansas City Star, 7 March 1971, sec. E, pp. 1-2.

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- 12. Building Permit #80787, 12 January 1925, Building Permit Office, 18th floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.
- 13. 'Boost in Hotel Work', Kansas City Star, 4 May 1958, sec. G, p. 4.
- 14. 'Hotel Continental', Kansas City Star, 7 March 1971, sec. E, pp. 1-2.
- 15. Building Permit #14319(1), 9 June 1925, Building Permit Office, 18th floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.
- 16. George Koppe, "Hotel President to Close; Renovation a Possibility", Kansas City Star, 22 July 1980, sec. D, p. 1.
- 17. Mark Fraser, "Old Hotels Get New Lease on Life", <u>Kansas City Times</u>, 16 February 1981, sec. A, p. 1.
- 18. Paul Wenske and John T. Dauner, "Phillips House Hotel Files Petition to Reorganize Under Bankruptcy Act", Kansas City Times, 29 June 1982, sec. A, p. 1.
- 19. Steve Nicely, "Embassy to Become a Link in Sheraton Chain", <u>Kansas City Times</u>, 23 July 1982, sec. B, p. 8.
- 20. Ibid.
- 21. Fraser, 'Old Hotels", Kansas City Times, 16 February 1981, sec. A, p. 1.

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twenty stories in height and completed in 1931, was the last of the five hotels to be constructed in this group. Its lavish sculptural decoration of the exterior reflects a period of architectural elegance. The New Yorker Hotel, in comparison, is the smallest hotel of the five, but it also derives architectural distinction from its finely executed Jacobethan detailing normally associated with buildings of a much larger scale.

The Muehlebach Hotel has throughout its long history earned a reputation for gracious hospitality and lavish appointments. The Muehlebach's dining facilities were some of the best in the city. The one million dollar hotel building, which opened in 1915, displayed a European sophistication in its use of Beaux-Arts architectural detail.

The Dixon Hotel, earliest of the five hotels in this submission, was designed utilizing elements of the Commercial style of architecture. It reflects the tastes of the public during the time in which it was constructed. The architects provided space for a billiard parlor, which was once considered "...one of the best in the world." <sup>5</sup> The hotel, which boasted two hundred and twelve guest rooms, was host to many a traveler or convention guest, and established a standard for the other grand hotels which were to follow.

The sixteen-story Aladdin Hotel featured the most whimsical adaptation of a classical form of architecture, with terra cotta figural sculpture, and other extraordinary decorative embellishment. In keeping with the other hotels, the Aladdin featured quality dining and recreational facilities which included an enclosed roof garden for as many as 700 guests.

All of the hotels included within District I are participants and witnesses to a period in Kansas City's history in which the city saw an enormous economic growth. Kansas City, which today bases a large part of its economy on the convention trade business, owes much to the legacy presented by these grand hotels.

#### Dixon Hotel

The Dixon Hotel, constructed in 1912, is the earliest hotel of the five included within this District. As such, it set a standrad for others that were to follow. The architectural firm of Sanneman & Van Trump who designed this building placed an emphasis on the fenestration to provide the building with its specific character, relating it to the Commercial style of architecture especially popular in the U.S. from 1890-1915. The Dixon Hotel is the only hotel within the District which exemplifies this style of architecture, and as such provides a reference with regard to the architectural evolution expressed by the buildings included in this submission.

The hotel was built for John Kling and Bennie Allen. Kling was a former catcher with the Chicago Cubs, and later became owner of the Kansas City Blues baseball club.



Bennie Allen was once the World Pocket Billiards champion, and his special interest led to the establishment of a billiard parlor on the second and third floors of this hotel which served as the site for world tournaments. When the hotel was modernized in 1955 with new elevators and the addition of air-conditioning, the famous billiard rooms were closed and this area was converted to hotel rooms, bringing the total to 212. The Pennant Cafe located in the basement of the hotel was a popular meeting place in the decade of 1910 and a bowling alley was added to the basement in 1920.<sup>6</sup>

The hotel has changed owners several times and in 1973 was in danger of being closed permanently as a result of the owners' failure to pay the required taxes. The hotel was sold to a group of Wichita, Kansas, investors in 1974 and is now in use as a hotel with the ground floor rented to merchants, who include a restauranteur.<sup>7</sup>

#### 2. Hotel Muchlebach (currently Radisson Muchlebach Hotel)

The hotel, with frontage on West 12th Street, Baltimore Avenue, and Wyandotte Avenue, was built in a succession of additions to the original structure in response to increasing space requirements. The original 12-story hotel was erected by the Muehlebach estate on the site of the old First Baptist Church in 1914-15. It fronted 158 feet on West 12th Street and 138 feet on Baltimore. The Chicago architectural firm of Holabird and Roche designed the building and had as their local representatives the firm of Baird and Huselton.<sup>8</sup>

The Hotel Muchlebach from its opening in 1915 has typified the elegance associated with the Downtown hotels. The Muchlebach's architects chose to design the hotel utilizing architectural elements with a European flavor. That association was carried through in a plush interior decor, and the amenities which are provided for its guests. The hotel's emphasis was in providing a solid "old world" ambiance in its drawing rooms, lounging and dining facilities which belied the hotel's purpose as a temporary lodging facility.

In 1952, the old Gayety Theater was razed to provide space for an ll-story, 80xl32 foot addition immediately west of the original building. The architectural firm of Neville, Sharp and Simon designed the addition, in which the basement adjoined the level of the original building's main kitchen. A new restaurant, bar, ballroom and 115 guest rooms were features of the new building.<sup>9</sup>

The Muehlebach Towers, an 18-story addition fronting on both West 12th Street and Wyandotte was completed in 1957. At a cost of approximately \$5 million, the building and rooms were equipped with such modern devices as air-conditioning, soundproofing, glarefree reading lamps, adjustable lighting, and 7-foot-long beds. The building was connected by a tunnel to a parking garage directly across Wyandotte Street.<sup>10</sup>

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The final addition to the Muehlebach Hotel Complex was the Convention Center built in 1965-66, and designed by Neville, Sharp & Simon. On the site of the old Orpheum Theater, the 5-story building was bridged to the hotel on the first level, which allowed a passageway for vehicles on the ground level. The building contains a rental area, meeting rooms, and a private dining room on the first floor; an exhibition hall on the second, a ballroom on the third and a rooftop pool and patio comprised the fourth and fifth floors.<sup>11</sup> The \$4 million structure served to approximately double the capacity of the hotel in its guestrooms, ballrooms, and private function rooms.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. New Yorker Inn

This hotel was constructed in 1915 as the Hotel Bray. Fronting 25 feet on Baltimore, it is one of the smallest hotels in Kansas City and is the smallest in this hotel district. The 9-story, 100-room building was designed by architect John Martling. In 1947 an extensive remodelling was undertaken and the name of the hotel was changed to the New Yorker Inn. The renovation included the addition of a cocktail lounge and a restaurant.<sup>13</sup>

### 4. Aladdin Hotel (currently Embassy on the Park)

This hotel was erected for the Armour Building Company, a firm controlled by W. B. Weaver and C. O. Jones, a locally prominent insurance executive and builder. At the time of its construction in 1925, it touted several innovations including an enclosed roof garden and a row of shops that faced an alley on the north wall of the building.<sup>14</sup> In 1925 the hotel won a third-place award in a contest of new structures erected in the downtown district, sponsored by the Business District League.<sup>15</sup> The hotel received extensive interior renovations, and opened in July of 1981 with the new name "Embassy on the Park".<sup>16</sup>

### 5. Hotel Phillips

This hotel is listed in both the National Register of Historic Places and the Kansas City Register.

### INDIVIDUALLY ELIGIBLE BUILDINGS

Continental Hotel (formerly Kansas City Athletic Club; Hotel Kansas Citian) Building "A" on Site Plan Map 106 West 11th Street

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1923 the building at the Northwest corner of 12th and Baltimore opened as the largest club facility in the nation. $^{17}$  Its significance to Kansas City's history

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is threefold. First, in its architectural distinction; second, in its associations with the Kansas City Athletic Club organization; and third, in its associations with the Downtown hotel industry.

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At the time of its construction, the twenty-two-story building was one of the tallest to be erected in the Central Business District of Kansas City and fore-shadowed the high-rise developments that were still in the future. The architects employed a sensitive design formula which divided the building into "zones" which were each articulated differently. The building contained the most up-to-date facilities for the athletic club, and its regulation-size swimming pool on the 8th floor was remarkable both for the challenges it presented to the structural engineer, and for the attention paid to its lavish artistic embellishment.

The building today continues to house the Kansas City Athletic Club facilities, but its popular association is a hotel. Though not officially named a "hotel" until 1933, the building was originally equipped with hundreds of "guest rooms" as well as banquet, dining, and other facilities integral to a hotel operation. Since 1923 the building has provided temporary lodging and gracious dining opportunities for the public.

### HISTORY

By 1917 rapid growth in the membership of the Kansas City Athletic Club necessitated developing plans for the erection of a new club facility. A 19-story building, to cost in the vicinity of one million dollars, was planned. The prestigious local architectural firm of McKecknie and Trask, was commissioned with its design. Work on the building began in 1919 and the skeletal steel frame was erected in short order. However, inadequate financing coupled with the rising cost of construction materials brought the project to a halt. 18

The skeleton of the building sat idle until 1922 when there was a receiver's sale. Fred Fitch, owner of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, purchased part of the property to protect the indebtedness due on the fabrication of the steel frame. Albert Jones, of the A. R. Jones Oil and Operating Company, purchased a half interest in the project. The new owners, Jones and Fitch, selected another distinguished architectural firm from Kansas City--Hoit, Price and Barnes--to plan for completion of the structure. The new design called for a height of 22 stories and included many of the features originally planned for the Kansas City Athletic Club, and which leased a portion of the building. 19

The building opened on September 1, 1923. Throughout its history the building has been equipped with those facilities associated with a first-class hotel. Three hundred and twelve guest rooms were included on the first through the twenty-first floors, to accommodate club members and visitors. Each of these guest rooms included features associated with a full-service hotel such as running water and numerous clothes closets. These facilities enabled the building to easily be

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converted to commercial hotel use.

The Athletic Club leased facilities on the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth floors which were among the most sophisticated and modern in the nation. The club area was equipped with four handball courts, a gymnasium, and "passive" exercise room. A management office was on the tenth floor. On the eighth floor was a swimming pool measuring 30 feet by 75 feet, with a depth of nine feet. A balcony above the pool provided a gallery for as many as one thousand spectators who might come to watch the aquatic contests.

A banquet room was located on the sixth floor and encompassed a ceiling height of two stories. It was designed so there would be no pillars, columns or piers to obstruct the 100 by 55 foot open space. Art glass panels in the windows featured escutcheons of various athletic clubs, including the distinctive blue diamond insignia of the Kansas City Athletic Club.

The building was also equipped with a grill room featuring an 'Old English' motif, a billiard room, and a writing room. When the building opened, the offices of the Chamber of Commerce were housed on the third floor.<sup>20</sup>

The building was renamed and fully adapted to commercial hotel use in 1933 when it became the Hotel Kansas Citian. The impact of the depression had sapped the membership of the Kansas City Athletic Club. While the club no longer needed the guest rooms, they continued to maintain such facilities as a men's Turkish Bath, locker rooms, billiard and card rooms, lounge, dining rooms, and swimming pool.

In 1938 the ownership of the building changed and the name was changed to the Continental. The Kansas City Athletic Club continues to lease space in the building today.<sup>21</sup>

President Hotel Building "B" on Site Plan Map 1327-35 Baltimore

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The President Hotel constructed in 1925, typifies the qualities and associations present during the grand hotel era. The architecture of the building is replete with terra cotta and stone ornamentation, forming gables, colonettes, medallions, quatrefoils, string courses and friezes across the facade. The elaborate architectural embellishments testify to an opulent period in Kansas City's history. The hotel was designed to incorporate the most modern of conveniences for the comfort of its guests. The President Hotel was a social hub during the twenties and thirties as it offered beautifully decorated lounges, public spaces and an elegant Roof Garden facility for the recreation of Kansas City's citizens.

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#### HISTORY

The hotel was constructed at a cost of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 million. The architects and engineers of the building lavished their attention on providing the most modern of hotel conveniences, along with sumptuous artistic decoration of the public rooms. The hotel contained 453 guest rooms and 19 private rooms.<sup>22</sup> The owners of the hotel, the Westport Hotel Operating Company, employed an art decorator, a sculptor and a master decorator to provide the hotel's interior decoration.<sup>23</sup>

When the hotel opened in February of 1926, it boasted such remarkable features as a "radiocasting" system (i.e. public address system) and an ice manufacturing plant that could produce some 8,000 pounds of ice per day.<sup>24</sup> The hotel provided dining facilities, cocktail lounges, and a roof garden which could accommodate 650 persons.<sup>25</sup>

In 1941, a new cocktail lounge named the "Drum Room" opened, which continued a tradition of artistic elegance. New York City artist Winold Reiss was commissioned to paint a 280-square-foot mural which featured South Sea Island motifs.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout its turbulent history of changing ownerships and financial difficulties, the President Hotel remained a fashionable social center for both a transient overnight population and native Kansas Citians.

### SIGNIFICANCE: HOTELS IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF KANSAS CITY

### SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE

The substantial, opulent architecture of the seven buildings collectively convey a period in our history which was unparalleled. The transition from the sleek Commercial style buildings to lavishly ornamented buildings which interpreted a classical vocabulary is evidenced in the Hotel buildings included within this submission.

Major architectural firms were commissioned with their designs, firms which had already established a reputation for distinguished designs, both inside and outside of Kansas City.

The increasing achievements in engineering and building technology are demonstrated not only by the great heights achieved in the buildings (e.g. Continental Hotel--22 stories; President Hotel--19 stories), but also in the provision for "state-ofthe-art" advances (e.g. "radio-casting" systems) and the incorporation of special features (e.g. swimming pool on the 8th floor of the Continental Hotel, and roof gardens--Continental, Aladdin, and President Hotels).

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Today the Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City provide a reference to an era long passed, and their architectural elegance and sophistication have made them prime candidates for preservation.

### SIGNIFICANCE: COMMERCE

Kansas City, Missouri, located in the geographic heart of the United States, has enjoyed a unique position in the convention trade industry. Because of its location, equidistant from both coasts, it has pursued an agressive competition for national convention business.

The city's serious quest for the convention trade began in 1913 with the organization of a Convention Bureau within the Commercial Club (which later became the Chamber of Commerce). The Bureau was able to rapidly obtain three major conventions for the city in 1913: the Fraternity of Operative Millers (1,500 delegates), the Photographer's Association of America (1,500 delegates), and the National Dental Association (2,500 delegates),<sup>27</sup> In 1917, 22 conventions held meetings in Kansas City with an attendance of 14,000.<sup>28</sup> The years between 1918–19 and 1927–28 showed a steady and impressive increase in convention business for Kansas City. During the 1918-19 fiscal year, 51 conventions were held in the city, with an attendance of 26,650, with those delegates spending \$1,332,500. In 1925 Kansas City was ranked as the third largest convention city nationally. By the 1927-28 fiscal year, 229 conventions were held; attendance was 97,513; and gross receipts were \$4,875,650.<sup>29</sup> There was a great variety to the conventions to which Kansas City played host: national, regional, trade, fraternal, religious, educational, agricultural, and professional. These conventions included: the first Boy Scout Exhibition (1912); the National Red Cross (1917); the second American Legion Convention (1921); the National Convention of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (1924); and the National Flower Show (1925). The most significant convention held in Kansas Citv during the 1920's was the Republican National Convention, held June 12-15, 1928. This convention nominated Herbert Hoover as its presidential candidate.<sup>30</sup>

From 1900 until the opening of the Municipal Auditorium in 1935, Convention Hall served as Kansas City's primary convention facility. Convention Hall was located on the block bounded by 12th, 13th, Central and Wyandotte Streets (which is now occupied by the Barney Allis Plaza/Auditorium Garage). The construction of new hotels to serve the convention trade logically took place in the areas adjacent to the Convention Hall. All of the hotels included within this submission provided elegant accommodations for the City's guests, and ensured Kansas City's competitive edge in pursuing that trade.

The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history as outlined in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan". "Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City" is therefore being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "Architecture" and "Commerce".

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- 1. "Kansas City is Fifth in Hotels", <u>Kansas City Journal Post</u>, 27 August 1922, sec. 2, p. 5; "Trail Brought First Hotels", <u>Kansas City Journal Post</u>, 6 September 1925, sec. G, p. 1; "Area Innkeeping History a Long One", <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 18 August 1967, sec. E, p. 7.
- 2. 'Big Crop of New Hotels', Kansas City Star, 29 March 1925, sec. D, p. 1.
- 3. "Facts About Kansas City and Its Convention Facilities", Convention and Tourist Council of Greater Kansas City, n.d.
- 4. George Ehrlich, <u>Kansas City</u>, <u>Missouri:</u> An Architectural History 1826-1976 (Kansas City: Historic Kansas City Foundation, 1979), p. 106.
- 5. "Dixon Hotel To An Investment Group, Including Lamar Hunt", Kansas City Star, 30 January 1966, sec. F, p. 8.
- 6. Ibid.
- 7. Joe Roberts, "Roundup", Kansas City Star, 2 December 1973, sec. D, p. 6.
- 8. "Over Three Million Dollars in New Downtown Buildings", Kansas Citian, March 1914, pp. 56-59.
- 9. 'Hotel 'Go' Sign'', Kansas City Times, 13 July 1950, p. 1.
- 10. "A Hotel Design Is Never Quite Good Enough", Business Week, 19 March 1955, p. 43.
- 11. "To Add a Convention Center", Kansas City Star, 31 January 1965, sec. A, p. 2.
- 12. Fred Fitzsimmons, "Big Muehlebach Unit", Kansas City Star, 17 January 1963, pp. 1-2.
- 13. "The Bray to Become the New Yorker in Transaction", Kansas City Star, 23 November 1947, sec. D, p. 9.
- 14. "Kansas City's Tallest Hotel, the New Aladdin, at 1213 Wyandotte", <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 8 November 1925, sec. A, p. 2.
- 15. "Prize to Household Fair", Kansas City Star, 9 February 1926, p. 2.
- 16. Joe Roberts, "Aladdin's Facelift to Start in Spring", <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 4 March 1980, p. 7.

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- 17. "Start the K.C.A.C. Building This Week", Kansas City Star, 16 February 1919, sec. A, p. 3; Giles C. Mitchell, There is No Limit: Architecture and Sculpture in Kansas City (Kansas City: Brown-White Co., 1934), pp. 135-36.
- 18. Mitchell, There is No Limit, pp. 135-36.
- Mitchell, <u>There is No Limit</u>, pp. 135-36; Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Valley Room, clipping file (Clubs; Kansas City Athletic Club), <u>Kansas City Times</u>, 7 January 1939.
- 20. "Brick and Art in K.C.A.C", Kansas City Star, 17 May 1923, p. 21.
- 21. "Area Innkeeping History a Long One", <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 13 August 1967, sec. E, p. 7.
- 22. "Announcing the Opening of the Hotel President", <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 31 January 1926, sec. A, p. 13.
- 23. "Goal Reached in Hotel President", <u>Kansas City Journal Post</u>, 7 February 1926, sec. C, p. 2.
- 24. Ibid.
- 25. Ibid.
- 26. "Hotel Opens Drum Room", Kansas City Times, 29 August 1941, p. 2.
- 27. "A Fund for Conventions", Kansas City Times, 16 January 1913, p. 7.
- 28. "A Real Convention City", Kansas City Times, 22 September 1923, p. 6.
- 29. "A Big Convention Year", <u>Kansas City Times</u>, 6 December, 1928, p. 2; "100 Sessions Booked for '25", Kansas City Journal, 30 December 1924, p. 12.
- 30. "Thirty Years in 'Temporary' Post, He May Decide to Stay", <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 15 May 1931, p. 16; "Byrd's Lecture to Be Closing Event for Hall", Kansas City Journal Post, 6 April 1936, p. 7.

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4. "Announcing the Opening of the Hotel President." <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 31 January 1926, sec. A, p. 13.

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- 5. Architectural Records Collection of the Missouri Valley Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri.
- 6. "Area Innkeeping History & Long One." <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 13 August 1967, sec. E, p. 7.
- 7. "A Real Convention City." Kansas City Times, 22 September 1923, p. 6.
- 8. "Big Crop of New Hotels." Kansas City Star, 29 March 1925, sec. D, p. 1.
- 9. "Big Hotel in 11 Months." Kansas City Star, 13 May 1914, sec. A, p. 4.
- Building Permits, #11558, 28 July 1915; #80787, 12 January 1925; #14319(1), 9 June 1925, Building Permit Office, 18th Floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.
- 11. "Boost in Hotel Work." Kansas City Star, 4 May 1958, sec. G, p. 4.
- 12. "Brick and Art in K.C.A.C." Kansas City Star, 17 May 1923, p. 21.
- 13. "Byrd's Lecture to Be Closing Event for Hall." <u>Kansas City Journal Post</u>, 6 April 1936, p. 7.
- 14. "Dixon Hotel To An Investment Group, Including Lamar Hunt." Kansas City Star, 30 January 1966, sec. F, p. 8.
- 15. Ehrlich, George. <u>Kansas City</u>, <u>Missouri: An Architectural History 1826-1976</u> Kansas City: Historic Kansas City Foundation, 1979.
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- 17. Fitzsimmons, Fred. "Big Muehlebach Unit." <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 17 January 1963, pp. 1-2.
- Fraser, Mark. "Old Hotels Get New Lease on Life." <u>Kansas City Times</u>, 16 February 1981, sec. A, p. 1.
- 19. "Goal Reached in Hotel President." Kansas City Journal Post, 7 February 1926, sec. D, p. 2.
- 20. "Hotel Continental New Face and a New Heart." <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 7 March 1971, sec. E, pp. 1-2.

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- 21. "Hotel 'Go' Sign." Kansas City Times, 13 July 1950, p. 1.
- 22. "Hotel Opens Drum Room." Kansas City Times, 29 August 1941, p. 2.
- 23. Kansas City Public Library, Missouri Valley Room, Clipping Files.
- 24. "Kansas City is Fifth in Hotels." <u>Kansas City Journal Post</u>, 27 August 1922, sec. 2, p. 5.
- 25. "Kansas City's Tallest Hotel, the New Aladdin, at 1213 Wyandotte." Kansas City Star, 8 November 1925, sec. A, p. 2.
- 26. Koppe, George. "Hotel President to Close; Renovation a Possibility." Kansas City Star, 22 July 1980, sec. D, p. 1.
- 27. Mitchell, Giles C. <u>There Is No Limit: Architecture and Sculpture in Kansas</u> <u>City.</u> Kansas City: Brown-White Co., 1934.
- 28. "Modern Theme in Downtown's Boom." <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 6 October 1957, sec. D, p. 8.
- 29. "New Hotel Deal Closed." Kansas City Star, 18 November 1913, p. 1.
- 30. Nicely, Steve. "Embassy to Become a Link in Sheraton Chain." <u>Kansas City</u> <u>Times</u>, 23 July 1982, sec. B, p. 8.
- 31. "100 Sessions Booked for '25." Kansas City Journal, 30 December 1924, p. 12.
- 32. "Over Three Million Dollars in New Downtown Buildings." <u>Kansas Citian</u>, March 1914, pp. 56-59.
- 33. "Prize to Household Fair." Kansas City Star, 9 February 1926, p. 2.
- 34. Roberts, Joe. "Aladdin's Facelift to Start in Spring", <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 4 March 1980, p. 7.
- 35. . "Roundup." Kansas City Star, 2 December 1973, sec. D, p. 6.
- 36. "Start the K.C.A.C. Building This Week." <u>Kansas City</u> Star, 16 February 1919, sec. A, p. 3.
- 37. "The Bray to Become the New Yorker in Transaction." Kansas City Star, 23 November 1947, sec. D, p. 9.
- 38. "Thirty Years in 'Temporary' Post, He May Decide to Stay." <u>Kansas City Star</u>, 15 May 1931, p. 16.

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- 39. "Three Big Projects Start." Kansas City Star, 30 July 1922, sec. D, p. 12.
- 40. "To Add a Convention Center." Kansas City Star, 31 January 1965, sec. A, p. 2.
- 41. "Trail Brought First Hotels." Kansas City Journal Post, 6 September 1925,
- 42. <u>Western Contractor</u>, 3 January 1912, p. 18; 17 January 1917, p. 19; 9 September 1925.
- Wenske, Paul and Dauner, John T. "Phillips House Hotel Files Petition to Reorganize Under Bankruptcy Act." <u>Kansas City Times</u>, 29 June 1982, sec. A, p. 1.

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Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City

District I

Acreage: Approximately 24 acres.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries for this district were selected because of the intensive concentration of properties of a similar character and use that were each a part of the "grand hotel era". Though different in scale and decoration, each of the hotels within the district participated in assuring Kansas City's success as a convention center, and added to its reputation as a sophisticated metropolitan center.

### Boundary Description:

Beginning at the curb line of the southeast corner of West 12th Street and Baltimore Avenue, thence east along the south curb line of West 12th Street 50 feet, thence south 135 feet, thence west approximately 59 feet, then south along the rear property line 50 feet, thence west to the west curb line of Baltimore Avenue, thence south 50 feet, thence west 142 feet, thence north along the rear property line 50 feet, thence west 142 feet, thence north along the rear along the south curb line of West 12th Street approximately 158 feet, thence east to the north curb line of West 12th Street, thence north 100 feet, thence east 142 feet, thence south 160 feet to the south curb line of West 12th Street, thence east 60 feet to the point of beginning.

### Boundary Justification, Sites A and B:

The two hotels are in close proximity to the core of hotels defined in District I. Because they are non-contiguous and significant in and of themselves, they were cited as individual structures. Their importance relative to the arguments presented for the hotel district are virtually identical.

Site A, Boundary Description:

Lots 8, 9, 10, & 11 B1k 17 Ashburns Add. Acreage: less than one

### Site B, Boundary Description:

Reids Add. lots 9-12 Blk 8 & N  $\frac{1}{2}$  Vac E/W aly adj. lot 12 & Reids Add. 2nd Res. Lots 1-4 Blk. E & S  $\frac{1}{2}$  vac Aly N & adj.

Acreage: less then one

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1.	District I	Substantive Review	Keeper	Bet Grosvena 8/8			
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