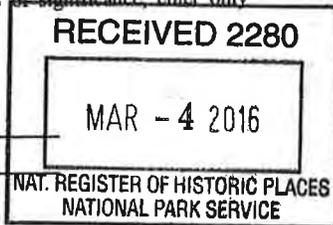


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

182

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Professional Plaza Tower

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 3800 Woodward Avenue

City or town: Detroit State: Michigan County: Wayne

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Martha J. Martelatas 3/1/16

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

Michigan State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

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

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

4.19.16
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> | buildings |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | sites |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | structures |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

HEALTH CARE/Medical Business/Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property:

CONCRETE

METAL: Bronze-Anodized Aluminum

GLASS

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Professional Plaza Tower is a twelve-story, square-plan building located at 3800 Woodward in Detroit's Midtown neighborhood. Constructed in the International style, its exterior is characterized by a glass and aluminum curtain wall punctuated with pre-cast concrete columns and topped by a pre-cast concrete penthouse and flat roof. The interior is organized around a central service core with open tenant space ringing the perimeter. The Professional Plaza retains its integrity to the period of significance.

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Narrative Description

Site context

The Professional Plaza Tower is located at 3800 Woodward Avenue, in Detroit's Midtown neighborhood. It is located immediately adjacent to Woodward Avenue in the center of a large block bounded by Woodward Avenue on the west, Alexandrine Street on the north, John R. Street on the east, and Mack Avenue on the south. This block was created in the 1960s from a number of smaller blocks as part of the implementation of the "superblock" plan for the Detroit Medical Center. The neighborhood is varied in character and in the size, scale, and age of its building stock. Woodward Avenue is Detroit's main north-south thoroughfare, and in this area it is represented by a mixture of late nineteenth and early twentieth century one- to three-story commercial buildings, mid-twentieth century retail buildings and apartment towers, and contemporary residential, retail, and office building infill. To the east is the Detroit Medical Center complex, and to the west the commercial buildings on Woodward and Cass Avenues gradually give way to residential apartment buildings and single family residences. The block on which Professional Plaza sits is largely open, with an expanse of parking to the east of the building. Directly north are two attached apartment buildings of twelve stories each. At the south end of the block is a multi-story parking garage, a five-story mixed-use residential/retail building, and Detroit's first Whole Foods Market. A two-story building adjacent to the tower was recently demolished, and a new five-story medical building is under construction on the site.

The tower sits on a slightly raised rectangular concrete plinth, with two shallow concrete steps ringing the plinth. On the Woodward Avenue side of the building, an asphalt drive leads up to the building from the south and then curves back out onto Woodward Avenue; the remainder of the space between the plinth and Woodward is concrete sidewalk. A narrow concrete plaza is located directly north of the building; it has two rows of trees set in circular concrete rings and a number of benches and picnic tables set around the plaza (the plaza does not date to the period of significance; the original design had a street, Martin Place, immediately north of the building. The street was closed and the plaza added at a later date). The plaza is bordered on the north by a wooded area bound by a raised concrete curb and with short metal light posts lining it. The plaza is separated from Woodward Avenue by an iron fence; a similar fence also stretched across the east side, but only the posts now remain. To the east of the building is an asphalt parking lot. To the south, the area immediately beyond the plinth is an active construction site.

Exterior

The Professional Plaza Tower is a twelve-story, square building. The four exterior sides are nearly identical, except for the entrances on the east and west sides of the first floor. Each elevation consists of three square structural steel columns encased in pre-cast concrete extending from the plinth to just short of the penthouse roof. The first floor is recessed under the upper floors and its exterior walls are constructed of bronze anodized metal with bronze-tinted glass windows and projecting bronze mullions. At the east and west entrances, the center of the facade

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is recessed slightly from the plane of the rest of the first floor; centered in these recesses are the glass and metal revolving doors with regular glass and aluminum doors to each side. The second through eleventh floors are faced between the structural columns with alternating horizontal bands of bronze anodized metal and bronze-tinted glass, with thin bronze anodized metal mullions running vertically to the deck of the gallery at the twelfth floor. The panels are mostly intact but some window units are missing and have been boarded up. Bronze-tinted window film was added after the period of significance to improve the thermal performance of the window; much of the film is now failing. The twelfth floor is also recessed from the exterior plane of the building. It has a curtain wall of bronze anodized metal and bronze-tinted glass, and is ringed by a gallery. The curtain wall at this floor is a later replacement, although it replicated the earlier curtain wall in design and finishes. A metal railing runs around the exterior of the gallery. The penthouse above the twelfth floor is faced with rectangular precast concrete panels. On the north and south sides, illuminated signs consisting of three hammers and a nail are attached to the penthouse walls. When illuminated in sequence, they represent a hammer striking a nail, emblematic of the Carpenters Union which occupied the upper two floors of the building beginning in the 1980s (the signs date from that period and are no longer functional).

Interior

The building interior is arranged around a central core that serves as structure and to contain the essential building services. The core has two back-to-back stairs and two elevator shafts on the north, another elevator, restrooms, and a duct shaft on the south, and a short elevator lobby/corridor in between. Due to the structural design of the building, the tenant spaces ringing the central core out to the perimeter wall were clear of columns. Historically, there were short public corridors adjacent to the core on the east and west, while the remainder of the interior of each floor was laid out according to the designs and needs of the individual tenants. This resulted in a variety of layouts that were frequently subject to change as tenants cycled through the building. Building materials and finishes also varied accordingly. The public spaces in the first floor lobby and core were plain vinyl tile, plaster walls, and suspended tile ceilings. The only higher-end finish was marble wainscoting in the first floor lobby. As with the layouts, the finishes depended on the tenants' preferences, so these varied throughout the building and were frequently changed. The Carpenters Union, for example, completely remodeled the upper two floors when they leased them in the 1980s.

Integrity Assessment

The building was previously slated for demolition, and in preparation for demolition the current owner performed hazardous material abatement. The majority of the interior finishes (floors, ceilings, walls) were removed to accommodate the abatement of asbestos-laden (friable) fire-proofing materials that are sprayed onto the columns and ceilings, with the exception of some of the wall finishes in the core. However, given the history of the building's tenant spaces, this does not significantly impact the integrity of the building. The exterior, as noted above, is largely intact aside from some missing window panes.

This nomination was prepared as part of a project to save the building from demolition and rehabilitate it for adaptive use.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1964-1966

Significant Dates

1964

1966

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Crane and Gorwic

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

The Professional Plaza Tower is significant under Criterion A at the local level for its association with the Detroit Medical Center urban renewal plan. The plan, which debuted in 1958, envisioned a core of basic medical facilities centered on four of Detroit's existing hospitals with a peripheral ring of support buildings. The Professional Plaza Tower represented an important element in that peripheral ring – an entire building devoted to medical professional offices which was planned to bring those professionals back into the city and provide them with office space convenient to the hospital complex. The Professional Plaza Tower was one of the few fully realized architectural works of the architecture and urban planning partnership of Crane and Gorwic, and is an example of International style architecture that reflects a specific planning goal, namely the accommodation of medical professionals in a professional building located close to the Detroit Medical Center, a significant urban renewal project in the City of Detroit.

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

Criterion A

Urban Renewal in Detroit

Urban renewal can be a general term referring to any process of redeveloping cities. In the context of this nomination, it refers specifically to urban redevelopment programs initiated and carried out under Title I of the Federal Housing Act of 1949, entitled "Slum Clearance and Development," and its subsequent amendments, a program in which local government agencies utilized federal funding to acquire parcels of land in urban centers, clear them of "blighted" buildings, and repackage them for redevelopment by private entities. Urban renewal in the United States generally extended from 1949, when the first housing act was passed, until 1974, when a moratorium was placed on housing programs, although some cities were moving toward an urban renewal model before 1949 and implementation often extended beyond 1974. Although the term "housing" is often used in the literature surrounding urban renewal, it was not a classic public housing program in which the local government built and operated housing; the focus of federal urban renewal was instead on redevelopment, with subsequent private ownership within a wide range of uses.

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Detroit in the 1940s epitomized the conditions that led to urban renewal. The city had rapidly industrialized in the early decades of the twentieth century, and it grew exponentially, spurred in large part by the growth of the automobile industry. White migrants flooded into the city from the rural Midwest and the south to work in the new industrial jobs and related businesses which allowed many to afford their own homes and automobiles. As the population grew, the upper and middle classes progressively moved farther beyond the nineteenth century core of the city below Grand Circus Park. With the coming of the street car and then the automobile, new neighborhoods were developed, leapfrogging over the late nineteenth century upper class enclave of Brush Park into many new neighborhoods including what would later become known as Midtown and the New Center. At the same time, large numbers of African-Americans from the South crowded into Detroit, part of the Great Migration that saw approximately six million migrate to the north between 1915 and 1975.¹ Attracted by the jobs offered by northern industries and the businesses that supported them, African Americans nonetheless found themselves facing continued discrimination in the north. Most were forced into the oldest, most dilapidated neighborhoods of the city, prevented from moving elsewhere by discriminatory housing practices. These became known as “black belts” and included Black Bottom in Detroit, the South Side of Chicago, and Foggy Bottom in Washington, DC. Detroit was among the cities which received the greatest number of migrants, and much of the early twentieth century population increase was due to the influx.²

All of these factors – rapidly expanding population, the movement of the more wealthy residents to new areas of the city, and the subsequent crowding of African-Americans into the older housing they left behind (most of which was rental rather than owner-occupied property) – created ideal conditions for what were designated as “blight” or “slum” areas, typically characterized by poorly maintained building stock that by the mid twentieth century was nearing or beyond 100 years of age. The Great Depression of the 1930s further exacerbated the problem, and while the coming of World War II ameliorated financial hardships to a certain extent, the expansion of the defense industry, especially in Detroit, brought even more migrants to the area to work in the bomber factories.

Detroit at the end of World War II was reaching the height of its growth and expansion. The world automobile industry was headquartered in the city, and its population was approaching its peak (1.86 million in 1950); at the time the city was the fourth largest in the United States, behind New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. The city was also a leader in the earliest urban renewal efforts. The city’s “Detroit Plan” of 1946 outlined a strategy for slum clearance and redevelopment that anticipated the passage of the 1949 Housing Act. Through acquisition, clearance, and private redevelopment of key areas, the city hoped to reshape the urban landscape. The city’s first urban renewal project focused on an area just to the east of the central business district, in a belt of African-American housing known as Black Bottom. Originally called the

¹ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2011), 6.

² Detroit’s black population rose 611 percent just from 1910 to 1920, while the general population rose only 113 percent. Zellmer R. Pettet and Charles E. Hall, *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States, 1920-32* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Commerce, 1935), Table 1, 55.

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Gratiot Redevelopment Project, it was later renamed Lafayette Park, and would eventually become one of the best-known and most successful urban renewal projects in the country. Although the development of Lafayette Park would take time, the city forged ahead with other urban renewal plans, including the Central Business District, the Civic Center, the Cultural Center, and the University City. The passage of the 1949 Housing Act, and the subsequent availability of federal funding for acquisition and clearance, only accelerated the city's plans.

Much of the credit for Detroit's early planning efforts and its high visibility was due to Charles Blessing, the head of the City Plan Commission. A native of Montrose, Colorado, Blessing was one of the earliest trained urban planners in the country (urban planning was still a young profession, having developed as such during the early twentieth century), and by the early 1950s he was internationally known. Blessing traveled extensively and maintained a large correspondence and friendships with planners, architects, and other professionals during his years with the City Plan Commission. Blessing's work with Lafayette Park, and his securing of world-renowned architect Mies van der Rohe for the project, brought national attention to Detroit's urban renewal programs. Blessing and his team created innovative three-dimensional plans for the entire city, and his approach attracted many talented architects and planners to the city.³

The Detroit Medical Center

One of the more unusual of Blessing's projects was the urban renewal plan for the Detroit Medical Center, which integrated a number of the city's existing hospitals into a redevelopment plan for the surrounding area. The medical center area, just north of Mack Avenue and east of Woodward Avenue, was first established in 1863 with the founding of Harper Hospital, one of the country's oldest medical teaching institutions. At the time, this area was on farmland well outside the city limits. Harper was joined in 1868 by Women's Hospital (renamed Hutzel Women's Hospital in 1965), in 1886 by Children's Hospital, and in 1888 by Grace Hospital (merged with Mount Carmel in 1991 and Sinai Hospital in 1999, now known as Sinai-Grace Hospital). In 1868, another medical institution, the Detroit Medical College, was founded in two buildings at the intersection of Woodward and Martin Place. This would eventually become the oldest college of the future Wayne State University; the Detroit Medical College would move in 1883, but it was on this land that the Professional Plaza would eventually be constructed.

By the early 1950s, these medical institutions had been surrounded by the growing city, and sat within what the city had identified as its worst slum. This was the combined neighborhoods of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley, the city's so-called "Black Belt" that extended along the east side of the city centered on the main thoroughfare of Hastings Street. While many of the neighborhoods' African-American residents were crowded into substandard, poorly maintained

³ Blessing served as the Director of City Planning until 1977, when he was appointed professor of architecture at the University of Detroit. He retired from the university in 1985 and passed away on December 19, 1992. "Charles Blessing, 80, City Planner Noted for Urban Drawings," *New York Times* (obituary), December 19, 1992. Downloaded from <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/19/obituaries/charles-blessing-80-city-planner-noted-for-urban-drawings.html>, December 17, 2014.

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housing, the area was also a thriving center of African-American culture, and the epicenter of Detroit's jazz scene. During the 1950s and 1960s, however, the construction of Interstate 375 along the former Hastings Street and the creation of urban renewal projects like Lafayette Park and Elmwood Park would destroy much of this district and cause the displacement of its residents...often without sufficient provision for rehousing them.⁴

To promote redevelopment in the area of the hospitals, in 1955 the Detroit Medical Center Citizens' Commission was formed. Comprising the directors and two trustees for each medical institution, as well as the Dean of the nearby Wayne State University Medical College, the committee was charged with planning the creation of a medical center surrounding the hospitals. A mid-1955 letter to Charles Blessing outlined the problem of blight surrounding the existing hospitals and contained the Commission's hopes that urban renewal could help create a world-class medical facility in Detroit; beyond the institutions themselves, they envisioned a belt of supportive development that would include middle-class housing, professional offices, and other support businesses and services. To assist the commission in developing its proposals, Charles Blessing helped them secure the services of English planner Gerald Crane, whom Blessing had recently persuaded to come to Detroit, as well as a hospital consultant, Dr. Anthony J. J. Rourke.⁵ The area identified for the medical center included 250 acres of land stretching from Mack Avenue to Warren Avenue and from Woodward Avenue to the newly created Chrysler Expressway (I-375). Clustered around the hospitals was a densely packed neighborhood with numerous through streets. One-, two-, and three-story commercial buildings dating from the early 1900s lined Woodward Avenue and included commercial storefronts, gas stations and automobile showrooms, and banks. Lining the side streets was a mixture of building types, ranging from single dwellings to duplex housing to boarding houses (many were present in the late 1800s), small and large apartment buildings, restaurants and gas stations, funeral homes, private hospitals (including a "colored" hospital) and, closer to Hastings, light industrial.⁶ One of the most notable buildings in the district was the Hotel Gotham. Originally constructed in 1925, the nine-story, 200 room hotel was purchased in 1943 by two African-American businessmen who transformed it into "a social center for Detroit's black community." African-American visitors to Detroit including Jesse Owens, Langston Hughes, Thurgood Marshall, Ella Fitzgerald, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Duke Ellington stayed at the Gotham, and Joe Louis frequently ate at the hotel restaurant. By the early 1960s, however, the hotel had declined and was the center of a notorious gambling operation; following a massive raid by Detroit police, it fell vacant in 1962.⁷

After several years of study, the plan for the Detroit Medical Center was unveiled in 1958. The overall principle for the plan was based on the concept of the "superblock" which was a

⁴ Projects initiated prior to the passage of the 1949 Housing Act often were "grandfathered in" and not subject to the act's requirements for providing alternate housing.

⁵ "Medical Center Issue," *The Harper Star* (newsletter of Harper Hospital), Volume 14, No. 7, in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65"; undated letter in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65"; W. Hawkins Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit: A History* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1980), 366.

⁶ Sanborn Map Company. *Detroit, Michigan: 1910-1951*, Volume 3, sheets 31, 33, 34.

⁷ Roneisha Mullen and Dale Rich, "Detroit's Gotham Hotel Exuded Glamour," *Detroit News*, February 3, 2011. <http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20110203/METRO/102030381>, downloaded December 17, 2014.

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dominant feature of many urban planning schemes during this era. Superblocks had their origin in the "Garden City" movement, which originated in England in the late 1800s and became popular in the United States in the early 1900s. Garden cities were designed as self-contained communities with a mixture of work, living, and support services, ideally surrounded by greenbelts. The superblock aimed to re-create this concept within the city by consolidating large parcels of land and creating self-contained developments with green spaces. For the Medical Center, the superblock would be assembled from the "blighted" city blocks immediately surrounding the established medical institutions; these institutions would form the medical core with hospitals and basic functions. Surrounding that would be a peripheral belt organized by land use patterns, with specific areas identified for other medical services (medical offices, pharmacies, labs, etc.), housing (chiefly understood to be for medical professionals, thus middle-class), churches, schools, and stores. In order to create these parcels, "unnecessary" streets would be eliminated and new traffic patterns created to divert vehicular traffic around the development. Under the plan, Brush, Beaubian and the east-west streets between Mack and Warren avenues would be eliminated, John R. would be closed at its north end to become a two-way service drive linked to Hancock Street, and a new boulevard would begin at the junction of Beaubian and Mack and swing diagonally northeast to connect to St. Antoine. The goal was the maximum possible separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic; parking would be scattered throughout the development and connected to the buildings with covered walks.⁸ The project would require \$20 million of federal funds matched by \$10 million of city funds for acquisition, clearance, and public improvements.⁹

Although the Detroit Medical Center plan followed classic principles of urban renewal, its supporters attempted to address several of the criticisms that had arisen against urban renewal plans, including the displacement of current residents and their tendency to foster isolation from the surrounding city. The Detroit Housing Commission in its forward to the plan emphasized that the plan should not "overlook the significant fact that people now living or operating businesses in the area are to be served. Whenever extensive clearance is undertaken, those who are required to leave their homes and businesses must be given every possible aid." Blessing notes in his introduction that the medical center is "a component of a large concept – a rebuilt city. The actual physical form of the Medical Center bears a relationship to the form of the adjoining areas." While the Medical Center would be fully self-contained, Blessing also believed that with its residential areas, schools, and parks, that it could also be integrated with the downtown. The Medical Center would also be a critical link between the downtown's Central Business District and Civic Center plans and the Cultural Center and University Center projects to the north.¹⁰

One controversy that the Medical Center plan would not avoid was the racial one. Concurrent with the development of the Medical Center plan, the Detroit Commission on Community Relations had formed a Medical and Hospital Study Committee, chaired by Bishop Richard S. Emrich (Episcopal Diocese of Michigan), to investigate racial factors related to the city's

⁸ "Medical Center Issue," *The Harper Star*.

⁹ The Detroit Medical Center Citizens Committee, "The Detroit Medical Center" (plan), September 1958 in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 24 (Reports and Publications).

¹⁰ The Detroit Medical Center Citizens Committee, "The Detroit Medical Center."

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medical and hospital facilities. The committee reported harshly on discrimination in the medical field in Detroit. The discussion over the Medical Center plan provided an opportunity to bring these concerns to a wider audience. On January 15, 1960, during a Detroit Common Council public hearing on the plan, "responsible voices" demanded that the hospitals address racial exclusion in their facilities; three of the four hospitals reportedly practiced racial discrimination in filling staff and training positions. Ten days later, Detroit Common Council member William T. Patrick, the first African-American elected to the Council since the 1880s, brought a motion to withhold approval of the Medical Center plan until the matter of racial discrimination in the hospitals was resolved, proposing that the Advisory Committee on Hospitals (the successor of the Detroit Commission on Community Relations' Medical and Hospital Study Committee) be given a chance to comment and that "persons with demonstrated social conscience and concern for social issues" be included on the Detroit Medical Center Citizens Commission.¹¹ After several months of community controversy, Mayor Louis Miriani convened a meeting of the hospitals and community groups; the issue ended with the four hospitals (Children's, Harper, Grace, and Women's) signing a statement certifying that "all phases of the operation of (their institution) shall be without discrimination."¹² The Common Council also established a policy prohibiting institutions that practice discrimination from purchasing property in the Medical Center development.¹³ Racial discrimination in the medical facilities was not the only concern; the original plan called for removal of all the predominantly African-American churches, but not the white ones. The subsequent opposition and community advocacy resulted in at least a partial reversal of the policy.¹⁴

Despite these controversies, the plan continued to make its way through the approval process. The Detroit Housing Commission had approved the plan in September of 1959, and in the wake of the hospitals' pledge to end racial discrimination, approved the first phase of the plan in February of 1960.¹⁵ Later that year, financing and other factors were in place, and the process of acquisition began. Although not strictly part of the urban renewal plan, new medical facilities were being planned and constructed during the same period, including a new research building for the Wayne State University College of Medicine, a new building for Children's Hospital, and new housing for Harper Hospital.¹⁶ The first clearances took place the following year (1961), with completion on the first phase (bounded by Woodward Avenue, Mack Avenue, the Chrysler

¹¹ William T. Patrick to Fellow Members of the Detroit Common Council, "Motion and Statement Opposing Immediate Approval of the Medical Center Rehabilitation Project," dated January 25, 1960, in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65."

¹² Detroit Commission on Community Relations, "Highlights of the Commission Meeting," February, 1960 in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65." Parentheses in original.

¹³ Jean Sharley, "Center Designed to Serve People," *Detroit Free Press*, January 27, 1963, 3A. One potential institution was refused land due to this policy.

¹⁴ Joe T. Darden, Richard Child Hill, June Thomas, Richard Thomas, *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), 172.

¹⁵ W. Jos. Starrs, Letter to Charles Blessing, September 2, 1959, Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65"; Detroit Commission on Community Relations, "Highlights of the Commission Meeting," February, 1960 in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65."

¹⁶ "Reality Shaped from Dreams," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 1, No. 1, June 1964), 2.

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Expressway, and Alexandrine) expected by the end of 1962. The promoters hoped to begin the second phase, which would clear land up to Canfield, at the end of 1962.¹⁷

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With the land being cleared and parcels being assembled for the superblocks, the Commission was eager to secure private development outside existing hospitals in the Medical Center core to demonstrate the feasibility of the urban renewal approach. The first such project was launched in January of 1963. At an official event in the offices of Detroit mayor Jerome Cavanaugh, the developer, the Arden-Campbell Company, revealed its plans for a new professional office complex in the peripheral zone (see discussion of Arden-Campbell Company, below). The \$25 million project envisioned a complex of sixteen buildings on the 15.4 acres of land bounded by Woodward Avenue, Mack Avenue, John R., and Alexandrine.¹⁸ They would include three twelve-story professional medical office buildings, two general office buildings, one seven stories, the second one story, five one-story retail buildings, and four parking facilities. The developers claimed this would be "one of the largest of this type to be erected in the country" and "one of the most modern centers for medical services designed especially for physicians and those supplying the medical profession." The penthouses of the twelve-story towers would include amenities such as a doctor's dining club, a public restaurant, and a public cafeteria, and all buildings in the complex would be linked via underground concourses.¹⁹ The architects for the project were Gerald Crane, who had previously worked on the Medical Center plan, and Norbert Gorwic (see discussion below).

Within days of the announcement and press release, the Arden-Campbell Company had secured approval of the plan from the Detroit Housing Commission and their blessing to continue contract negotiations.²⁰ Most of the land had already been condemned, with the exception of some land north of Martin Place.

While negotiations for the land were ongoing, the developers and architects engaged in unusually intense research for the project. Crane, M. Drenfeld of the Arden-Campbell Company, and Dar Martin, Jr., of the public relations firm Kenneth Drake Associates, embarked on a multi-city research tour of medical centers. Stops included Columbus, Ohio, St. Louis, Missouri, and Chicago, Illinois. The planners also sent questionnaires to more than 11,000 physicians, surgeons, and dentists in Michigan asking for suggestions on how to improve their facilities; both the findings of the survey team and those of the questionnaires were incorporated into the final plan. As the plans progressed, the team met with hospital administrators and groups of physicians and dentists (the anticipated occupants of the buildings) to review their work. By

¹⁷ "Medical Center Issue," *The Harper Star*.

¹⁸ Over 80 buildings were cleared from this area.

¹⁹ Arden-Campbell Company, "Announce \$25-Million Project for New Medical Center," (Press Release) in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65."

²⁰ M. E. Arden to Charles Blessing, January 25, 1964 (letter) in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65."

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December of 1963, the Detroit Housing Commission had formally approved the purchase of the land, and final plans were ready for review by the City Plan Commission.²¹

Groundbreaking for the first buildings at the new development, named Professional Plaza, was held on February 11 of 1964. By this time, the Detroit Medical Center project was drawing national attention. The *New York Times* noted in March of 1964 that "the project has aroused considerable interest because it is the first time so many existing medical facilities have joined in a new center," and the article described in detail the new Professional Plaza development, complete with a rendering of the three planned towers.²² It was on the first of these towers that work began in early 1964; work on a second building, a two-story building adjacent to the tower, began shortly thereafter. The twelve-story tower would exclusively house the offices of physicians, surgeons, and dentists. The pharmacy on the first floor of the tower, which carried no merchandise and had no commercial signs, was claimed to be the "first and only one of its kind in Michigan."²³ This development was expected to attract staff doctors from Grace and Harper Hospitals, the Rehabilitation Institute, the Wayne State University School of Medicine, and other new buildings. The two-story building would hold a mixture of medical/dental-related offices as well as a bank and retail stores.²⁴

Although expected completion was initially in mid-1965, construction continued slowly throughout the spring and summer of 1964. The engineers had to conduct extensive testing before driving the pilings because of "unique sub-strata conditions": a stream bed formerly ran through the area. The tower required 152 pilings, each driven through a strata of clay and gravel down to the hardpan, a distance of 148 feet. Each piling consisted of 10 ¾ inch diameter steel casing with hollow centers filled with concrete, and the piling groups were each covered with a five foot concrete cap.²⁵ Pouring of the concrete floor base commenced in August.

By March of 1965, the building's structure was in place and the bronze-tinted glass and bronze-anodized aluminum curtain walls were being installed. The exterior work was largely completed in the fall and the developers optimistically anticipated an early fall opening; further delays, however, pushed that to the early spring of 1966. National interest in the development remained high; in September developers of a proposed medical center in Toronto came to Detroit to tour the Detroit Medical Center and the Professional Plaza. Locally, interest was also high. Arden-Campbell had established a dedicated leasing organization for the project and was filling both the twelve-story tower and the two-story concourse building with tenants. They noted that "no branch of medicine predominates" in the tower; the following spring the tenants included

²¹ "Reality Shaped from Dreams," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 1, No. 1, June 1964), 3.

²² "Detroit Medical Institutions Join Forces to Build a 236-Acre Center Medical Center in Detroit," *New York Times*, March 1, 1964, R1.

²³ "Plaza Facts and Faces," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 3, No. 2, May 1966), 5.

²⁴ "Construction of the First Professional Plaza Building Progresses on Schedule," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 1, No. 1, June 1964), 1; "Professional Plaza Begins Work on Concourse Walls," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 1, No. 2, September 1964), 3.

²⁵ "Construction of the First Professional Plaza Building Progresses on Schedule," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 1, No. 1, June 1964), 1; "Professional Plaza Begins Work on Concourse Walls," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 1, No. 2, September 1964), 3.

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professions in obstetrics/gynecology, internal medicine, plastic surgery, thoracic surgery, general surgery, psychology, psychiatry, and dentistry.²⁶

Tenants began moving from their temporary quarters in the Doctors Building or former offices into the tower in early 1966. On April 13, 1966, a dedication was held and the two buildings formally opened. Participants included Charles Blessing, Director of the City Plan Commission; Dr. Ernest Gardner, Dean of the Wayne State University School of Medicine; Robert Knox, Director of the Detroit Housing Commission, and architect Norbert Gorwic.²⁷ A time capsule was placed under the paving on the plaza between the two buildings; the following year (1967), a historical marker was unveiled marking the site as the birthplace of Wayne State University.²⁸ The tower, which had been 37% leased at its opening, reached 97% occupancy by 1971, and the developers noted they were taking reservations for a second tower.²⁹

Aftermath

By the late 1960s, the Detroit Medical Center appeared to be a success as an urban renewal plan. Less than ten years after the unveiling of the plan, the entire southern half of the district had been cleared and a new medical office development had arisen on a very visible parcel along Woodward Avenue. Federal funding for Wayne State University's Basic Science Building was interpreted as the federal government's endorsement of the concept of the medical center, and architects/planners Crane and Gorwic continued to revise the plan. By 1971, a number of projects were attributed to the success of the plan, including: Children's Hospital, the remodeling of Hutzel Hospital, the Harper Residence, Wayne State University's research building, the Children's Center, Cathedral Terrace, the Medical Center Courts, the Shiffman Library, and the first two buildings of Professional Plaza, and five more projects were under construction.³⁰

Yet, like so many urban renewal projects of the era, the Detroit Medical Center plan had stalled by the early 1970s, and, with the moratorium on federal funding in 1974, it eventually died out. Clearance for the second phase of the project (north of Alexandrine) never took place, although later individual developments would be built in the area. The alteration of vehicular circulation was only partially completed; Brush was closed between Mack and Willis, as were the east-west streets between Mack and Alexandrine, and Beaubian was rerouted and turned into a boulevarded street. However, most of the east-west streets remain between Alexandrine and

²⁶ "Toronto Planners Visit Detroit Medical Center," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 2, No. 3, September 1965), 1. "Plaza Buildings Reach Final Stages; Paving, Mall, Landscaping Started," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 2, No. 3, September 1965), 2. "Campbell Sets UP Own Leasing Organization," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 2, No. 3, September 1965), 3. "Plaza Buildings Open, Add Glamour to Woodward," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 3, No. 1, February 1966), 2-3.

²⁷ "Plaza's Dedication Attracts Hundreds," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 3, No. 2, May 1966), 4.

²⁸ "Professional Plaza is on Historic Site," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 4, No. 4, November 1967), 1.

²⁹ "5th Anniversary of Opening of Professional Plaza," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 8, No. 2, Summer 1971), 3.

³⁰ "U.S. Endorses Whole Medical Center," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 3, No. 2, May 1966), 1. Ferry, *Buildings of Detroit*, 366; "5th Anniversary of Opening of Professional Plaza," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 8, No. 2, Summer 1971), 3.

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Warren, and John R. never became a service drive; it remains a major north-south connector. Portions of the land use plan were implemented, but others were not. The displaced residences and businesses never found accommodation in the new district, and neither did the middle-class medical professionals that the planners had envisioned. And the Professional Plaza tower and its two-story neighbor would never be joined by the additional towers and mid- to low-rise buildings initially envisioned for the block. Instead, two massive parking lots, one directly east and the other to the north, occupied the spaces to the east and north of the tower, and the rest of the land stood vacant for many years thereafter.

For good or ill, the urban renewal movement of the 1950s and 1960s remade vast swaths of American cities, including Detroit, and it represented a significant era in the history of urban planning. In Detroit, it affected areas of the central business district and civic center, the area to the east encompassing Lafayette Park and Elmwood Park, the Medical Center and the Cultural Center. As a movement, it often had a troubled history, steeped in segregation, "negro removal" and the callous disregard for the city's historic fabric. While the Detroit Medical Center was never fully realized as a plan (few urban renewal plans were), it did achieve its goal of convincing the city's major medical institutions to remain in the city, and it remains a distinctive district within the city. The Professional Plaza Tower is the most fully realized element of the peripheral zone established in the Detroit Medical Center urban renewal plan and is emblematic of the principles that characterized it.

Arden-Campbell Company, Developer

Established in 1962, Arden-Campbell was the partnership of M. E. Arden, who owned a well-established firm that had previously developed a number of shopping centers and parking garages in Michigan, including working with J. L. Hudson's on the development of Westland Mall and several projects adjacent to Northland Mall (including the Stouffer's Inn), and H. Fred Campbell, whose firm focused on industrial and commercial buildings, including the Great Lakes Insurance Company Building in Detroit, Burton Abstract and Title Company in Bloomfield Hills, and General Tire and Rubber Company's office and warehouse in Southfield.³¹ For the Professional Plaza, Campbell would serve as the general contractor and engineer, while Arden would be the rental and management entity.

Crane and Gorwic, Architects and Planners

Gerald Ernest Crane was a native of England, born in London on December 3, 1926. He studied at Southwest Essex School of Art and University College, London. In the early 1950s, he worked for the prominent Scottish architect Alastair MacDonald (son of Britain's first Labour Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald); Crane later claimed credit for the design of Dekelia New Town in Cyprus and Worsley Bridge County Primary School in Beckenham, England, while working

³¹ Arden-Campbell Company, "Announce \$25-Million Project for New Medical Center," (Press Release) in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: "Medical Center, 1955-65."

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for MacDonald.³² In the mid-1950s, Crane was awarded a prestigious Fulbright scholarship to study at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Following his graduation, Crane planned to return to England, but in 1955 the head of Detroit's City Plan Commission, Charles Blessing, convinced him to move to Detroit.³³ As Crane later noted, "Mr. Blessing's enthusiasm pulled me in...he had a remarkable view of Detroit's potential."³⁴ Crane was immediately retained to develop and implement the plans for the Detroit Medical Center urban renewal project.

Crane's partner, Norbert Gorwic, followed a longer and more dangerous path to Detroit. Born in Warsaw, Poland, on February 2, 1911, Gorwic studied architecture and city planning at the Warsaw Technical University.³⁵ Following the outbreak of World War II, Gorwic, who was Jewish, was trapped in Nazi-occupied territory. He was saved through the actions of Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul-general in Kaunas, Lithuania. Against explicit orders by his commanders, Sugihara and his wife spent 18 to 20 hours a day for four weeks handwriting Japanese visas for Jewish people from Lithuania, Poland, and other European countries; they continued to write visas even as they were ordered to leave the country, reportedly throwing blank visas from their train car as it pulled away. Gorwic's name appears in a database of over 2,000 visas issued, but historians estimate that Sugihara's actions could have saved upwards of 6,000 to 10,000 Jews. Sugihara was the only Japanese to be honored as a "Righteous Gentile" by Israel.³⁶

Gorwic used his visa to make his way to Japan, where, in another instance of good timing, he sailed from Yokohama to Seattle, Washington, on the *Heian Maru* in May of 1941.³⁷ He eventually made his way from there to Britain, where he served as a wireless mechanic in the Polish Air Force for the rest of the war.³⁸ Following the war, Gorwic remained in London, where he lectured in the Department of City Planning of the Polish University College in London.

³² The Worsley Bridge school is still extant as Worsley Bridge Junior School. Ferry, *Buildings of Detroit*, 366; Crane and Gorwic, "Planning, Urban Design, Architecture," (monograph, ca. 1961), 45; Susan MacDonald "Obituary: Alister MacDonald," *The Independent* (UK), downloaded December 17, 2014 from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-alister-macdonald-1500189.html>.

³³ How Crane and Blessing had become acquainted is not documented, but Blessing traveled and lectured extensively and kept up a voluminous correspondence with others in the planning field.

³⁴ Ferry, *Buildings of Detroit*, 366.

³⁵ Ferry in *Buildings of Detroit* (366) also noted that Gorwic studied at Liverpool University, but it is not clear if that was before or after World War II.

³⁶ Ancestry.com. *Lithuania, Jews Saved by Passports From the Japanese Diplomat Chiune Sugihara, 1940* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013; "Sugihara Database," (website) <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Lithuania/Sugihara.htm>. The discrepancy in numbers is due to the fact that not all of the visas were recorded, particularly towards the end; that heads of households could use the visas to bring family members as well; and that some people who held visas were unable to make their way out of Nazi-occupied territory.

³⁷ National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, D.C.; *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at Seattle, Washington*; ARC Number: 4449160; Record Group Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004*; Record Group Number: 85; Series Number: M1383; Roll Number: 262. Gorwic was listed as a single student.

³⁸ "Personel Polskich Sil Powietrznych w Wielkiej Brytanii 1940-1947 (database of Polish personnel of the Polish Air Force in Great Britain during World War 2 - website); <http://listakrzystka.pl/en/?p=77880>, downloaded December 17, 2014. Gorwic's rank was corporal.

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While there, Gorwic supervised a group of students in preparing a master plan for the City of London as part of the 1951 exhibition entitled “London – An Adventure in Town Planning”; Gorwic featured this in the firm’s 1961 monograph.³⁹ It was likely during this period that Gorwic first met Gerald Crane; at the time they were both “associated with” the planning division of the London County Council, although the details of their positions and associations are unclear.⁴⁰

In 1956, Gorwic emigrated from London to Detroit.⁴¹ His first commission in the city was the organization of the “Detroit Tomorrow” exhibition, sponsored by the J. L. Hudson Company to mark its 75th anniversary. The exhibition presented a proposed development plan for the seven major urban renewal districts in the city.⁴² Gorwic was later hired as a senior planner for the City of Detroit, working in the City Plan Commission offices with Charles Blessing. His projects there included the preliminary planning for what would become Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit (planned as the location for the Detroit-Windsor Freedom Festival, first held in 1959), a pilot industrial district project in the Milwaukee Junction area north of downtown, and a design framework for the Central Business District that expanded on the recommendations of the 1950 Detroit Master Plan.⁴³

Drawn together by their previous acquaintance in London, their connection through Charles Blessing, and a shared interest in urban planning, Crane and Gorwic formed their own firm in 1960.⁴⁴ Together, Crane and Gorwic continued their focus on urban renewal planning that each had developed separately in their early careers. Like their colleague Charles Blessing and other urban planners from the era, Crane and Gorwic believed in the potential of good urban planning to revitalize the city centers that were, at the time, suffering from suburbanization and the deterioration of their historic building stock. They turned their back on the traditional city street grid and the close intersection of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Instead, their plans utilized the concept of the superblock – the merging of smaller city blocks into new, larger parcels that permitted a more integrated and wide-ranging design. These superblocks often swept away the traditional city street grid, closing streets within the block and moving vehicle circulation to the perimeter. Roads within the superblock were confined to internal circulation and designed to maximize the separation of pedestrians and vehicles. They did not neglect to include green

³⁹ Crane and Gorwic, “Planning, Urban Design, Architecture,” 45. The Polish University College was established in 1947 by the Polish émigré community in London, and taught economics, architecture, and engineering.

⁴⁰ Arden-Campbell Company, “Announce \$25-Million Project for New Medical Center,” (Press Release) in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: “Medical Center, 1955-65.”

⁴¹ Ancestry.com. *New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

⁴² Crane and Gorwic, “Planning, Urban Design, Architecture,” 2. Arden-Campbell Company, “Announce \$25-Million Project for New Medical Center,” (Press Release) in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: “Medical Center, 1955-65.”

⁴³ Crane and Gorwic, “Planning, Urban Design, Architecture,”

⁴⁴ Arden-Campbell Company, “Announce \$25-Million Project for New Medical Center,” (Press Release) in Detroit City Plan Commission Archives, Box 4, Folder: “Medical Center, 1955-65.” Ferry in *Buildings of Detroit* (366) says the partnership formed in 1961. Crane and Gorwic were also both on the urban design faculty of Wayne State University.

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spaces, plazas within and between buildings, and varying building heights to provide visual interest and leverage density.

At the beginning of the partnership, Gorwic joined Crane in continuing Crane's work on the Detroit Medical Center. Although the general plan was complete (they would make periodic revisions and updates), the firm worked on developing individual projects within the complex. These included an epilepsy center and a housing complex for nurses. The former was a two-story building with public facilities and service areas grouped around a central landscaped court, and in-patient medical facilities on the second floor, while the latter combined two- and three-story low-rise dormitories around an eleven-story tower, with landscaped areas and parking around them. It appears that neither of these projects was realized.

Elsewhere, the firm was more successful in implementing its planning efforts. They created the plan for the city of Southfield's Civic Center, on 166 acres of land donated in 1958. The Civic Center, including a city hall, police headquarters, library, and parks and recreation building, opened in 1964.⁴⁵ Following the successful implementation of the Lafayette Park complex (designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig Hilberseimer, and Alfred Caldwell), the city of Detroit expanded the residential urban renewal district eastward, into what became known as Elmwood Park. The project was developed in three phases, but adhered to an overall master plan to achieve coherence in planning and architectural design. Crane and Gorwic were hired by the city for the Elmwood Park Phase 2 plan, which included housing for some of the 1700 families and individuals who had been displaced by the clearance for Elmwood Park as well as mid-to-upper income residents. This area today is roughly bounded by Lafayette Street on the north, Jefferson on the south, St. Aubin on the west, and Mt. Elliott on the east.

Although Crane and Gorwic left their imprint on the city of Detroit through their planning of urban renewal projects during the 1950s and 1960s, their actual completed architectural commissions were rare, perhaps because their first priority was in planning, not building design. The major exception is the Professional Plaza building. As noted above, Crane's plan for the Detroit Medical Center included a ring of supporting uses around the core medical center that were meant to provide office space, housing, and other auxiliary functions. Key to this was the inclusion of offices for medical professionals; providing such space so close to the medical center would draw those medical professionals back to the city due to its convenience. It was this building that Crane and Gorwic would be commissioned to design in the early 1960s.

The design for the Professional Plaza Tower reflected the practical approach of both the architects and the developers. It would be fair to say that the Professional Plaza Tower was not so much designed as planned. Although Crane and Gorwic were competent architects, they did not appear as interested in expressing a particular design philosophy or architectural style as they were in creating a functional, well-executed building that served the needs of its occupants. The two focused their energies on designing a layout that would attract and serve the medical

⁴⁵ For the project, Crane and Gorwic teamed with Pirscher and Jarratt as design architects. Crane and Gorwic, "Planning, Urban Design, Architecture," 45.

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professionals who were to occupy the building. In plan, the building was designed with a central service core surrounded by flexible office space. The central location of the core and the square shape of the building eliminated long corridors and interior columns, and provided outside exposure for all the offices. The elevators, stairs, telephones, restrooms, drinking fountains, and mail chutes were all concentrated in this core, leaving open space around the perimeter for the offices. The perimeter spaces were designed to maximize light in the offices but still provide climate control through the use of heat-reducing, insulated solar glass. A key principle of the design was flexibility in the tenant spaces. Tenants were given individual HVAC controls, sound resistant walls, and flexible plumbing. Outside of the central core and the short corridors to either side, tenants were free to create their own office layouts and to decorate them to their taste. Crane and Gorwic made no attempt to impose a design aesthetic on the interior; aside from a few decorative touches in the lobby, the common areas on the upper floors had basic vinyl tile floors, plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceilings. The developers created two model offices, one in a "contemporary" style and one in a "traditional" style, to emphasize the flexibility of the space.⁴⁶ The newsletter of the Professional Plaza noted, as the building was opening in 1966, that tenants were "designing their own spaces in a variety of styles and layouts."⁴⁷

Architecturally, the twelve-story building was solidly placed within the context of the International style then prevalent in the American design community, with its conscious expression of structure in the exterior columns, its glass and aluminum curtain wall, and its Miesian recessed and transparent first floor. It followed the precedents set in Detroit by previous high-rise buildings by more well-known architects. These included the 1958 Pavilion Tower and the 1963 Lafayette Towers, both in Lafayette Park and both designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, all of which utilized the recessed and transparent first floor and glass and aluminum curtain wall featuring rectangular fenestration. Another precedent was Minoru Yamasaki's 1962 Michigan Consolidated Gas Company Building at the foot of Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit, which used a curtain wall of precast concrete and a recessed first floor, and had a similar interior arrangement of central core with open perimeter space, although Yamasaki was not able to dispense with interior columns.

Although the building was certainly not Detroit's first to utilize a curtain wall, its developers claimed that it was "believed to be the first high-rise building in Detroit to make such extensive use of insulating glass."⁴⁸ The building made extensive use of precast concrete, which included the enclosure of the steel columns at the exterior walls and three-ton panels covering the mechanical penthouse. At the interior, materials were generally standard vinyl tile floors, drywalled walls, and acoustical tile ceilings at the core; the perimeter spaces (including the perimeter walls) were finished in a variety of styles and finishes as dictated by the tenant. As was

⁴⁶ The model offices were installed in the Doctors Building at 3919 John R., the temporary headquarters during construction, with furnishings provided by J. L. Hudson's. The Campbell Engineering Company provided tenants with layout and basic design services for the interior offices. "Suite Planning Service Moves to Plaza Office," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 2, No. 3, September 1965), 3.

⁴⁷ "Plaza Buildings Open, Add Glamour to Woodward," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 3, No. 1, February 1966), 2-3.

⁴⁸ "Plaza Buildings Reach Final Stages; Paving, Mall, Landscaping Started," *Professional Plaza Profiles* (Volume 2, No. 3, September 1965), 2. The glass is two quarter-inch panes with a half inch of air sealed between them.

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typical for the era, asbestos-containing materials were prevalent in the building, including the spray-on fireproofing on the beams and the floor and ceiling tiles.

The Professional Plaza Tower does not have the design prestige of Mies van der Rohe's towers in Lafayette Park or Minoru Yamasaki's Michigan Consolidated Gas Company Building, which are some of Detroit's more nationally known Modernist high rise buildings, but it does represent a major presence along Woodward Avenue in the Midtown Detroit area. It is one of the larger buildings on the streetscape along Woodward Avenue in that area, which retains a mixture of traditional late nineteenth century two- and three-story storefronts punctuated by taller buildings from the early to mid twentieth century, such as the five-story Garfield Building (1908, 4612 Woodward Avenue) and the fifteen-story Maccabees Building (1927, 5057 Woodward).

Following their design of the Professional Plaza, Crane and Gorwic continued to collaborate on planning projects through the mid to late 1960s. Their work was not confined to the Detroit Metropolitan area; as they became more well-known, they received commissions from communities across the United States. In 1965, they completed a master plan for the University of Kentucky. Their Modernist vision for the university was very much in line with their urban planning principles, featuring a high density of use and compact development, the creation of a network of plazas within a pedestrianized core, and limited vehicular access. As with so many master plans, this one was not entirely implemented, but several university buildings were constructed according to this plan.⁴⁹ Crane and Gorwic were also on the faculty of the Department of Urban Planning at Wayne State University in Detroit during this period, and Gorwic served as the project director for a master plan of the university which would enable the City of Detroit and the university to use a greater share of federal money for land acquisition associated with university development.⁵⁰

In 1966, Gerald Crane was hired by the city of Lawrence, Kansas, to consult on its "city beautification" effort; by that time, the local newspaper was able to report that Crane was "one of the outstanding city planning and design consultants in the country." Crane's advice to the city was to "plan the house" before attempting to address beautification, and he spoke out in favor of the city preserving its historic "buildings of character" rather than going to the extremes of tearing everything down or preserving everything. The article also noted that Crane was currently working with three other cities on downtown development plans.⁵¹

Gerald Crane and Norbert Gorwic naturalized as citizens of the United States within two months of each other, in May (Crane) and July (Gorwic) of 1965.⁵² They seem to have closed their private practice in the late 1960s, and by the 1970s they were both on the faculty in the

⁴⁹ Sasaki and Associates. "The University of Kentucky: Campus Master Plan," Lexington, Kentucky, November 2013, 17.

⁵⁰ Crane and Gorwic, "Planning, Urban Design, Architecture," 36, 45.

⁵¹ "Top Planner Looks at City," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, June 24, 1966.

⁵² National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; *Index Cards to Naturalization Petitions for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, Southern Division, Detroit, 1907-1995*; Microfilm Serial: M1917; Microfilm Roll: 91.

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University of Michigan Department of Urban Planning, where they presumably continued their close collaboration. Crane served for a time as the chair of the Urban Planning Department, before it was merged into the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning; he remained head of the program until August of 1976.⁵³ Norbert Gorwic died on November 12 of 1988; the UM urban planning department retains a scholarship in his name.⁵⁴ Gerald Crane passed away on September 8, 2006.⁵⁵

⁵³ Annual Report to the President, the University of Michigan, 1975-6, by Robert C. Metcalf, dean; and "New Deans will Head Architecture and Art," *Ann Arbor News*, July 1 1974, 3.

⁵⁴ Michigan Department of Vital and Health Records. Michigan, Deaths, 1971-1996 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1998. Original data: Michigan Department of Vital and Health Records. Michigan Death Index. Lansing, MI, USA.

⁵⁵ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2011.

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National Archives and Records Administration; Washington, D.C.; *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at Seattle, Washington*; ARC Number: 4449160; Record Group Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004*; Record Group Number: 85; Series Number: M1383; Roll Number: 262.

"New Deans will Head Architecture and Art." *Ann Arbor News*, July 1 1974.

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Pettet, Zellmer R., and Charles E. Hall, *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States, 1920-32*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Commerce, 1935.

Professional Plaza Profiles. Issues from June 1964 to Summer 1971.

Sanborn Map Company. *Detroit, Michigan: 1910-1951*.

Sasaki and Associates. "The University of Kentucky: Campus Master Plan," Lexington, Kentucky, November 2013.

Sharley, Jean, "Center Designed to Serve People." *Detroit Free Press*, January 27, 1963, 3A.

---. "Planner Puts Dream Into Medical Center." *Detroit Free Press*, January 27, 1963, 3A.

"Sugihara Database," (website) <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Lithuania/Sugihara.htm>.

"Top Planner Looks at City." *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, June 24, 1966.

Professional Plaza Tower
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan
County and State

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*.
New York: Random House, 2011.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Professional Plaza Tower
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.349531 | Longitude: -83.058711 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

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

Professional Plaza Tower
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan
County and State

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

Lot 1, Medical Center Urban Renewal Plat No. 1 Subdivision.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the entire lot historically selected for the Professional Plaza Tower in the original urban renewal plat as designated in the Medical Center Urban Renewal Plan and includes the entire footprint of the Professional Plaza Tower and its surrounding plinth.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ruth E. Mills, Architectural Historian

organization: Quinn Evans Architects

street & number: 219 ½ North Main Street

city or town: Ann Arbor state: Michigan zip code: 48104

e-mail rmills@quinnevens.com

telephone: 734-926-0433

date: November 11, 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Professional Plaza Tower
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan
County and State

Photographs

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

Photo Log

Name of Property: Professional Plaza Tower

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne

State: Michigan

Photographer: Quinn Evans Architects (unless otherwise noted)

Date Photographed: December 2014 (unless otherwise noted)

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Historic Photograph of Professional Plaza Tower, circa 1966, looking southeast, photographer unknown.
0001 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Northwest corner taken from Woodward Avenue, looking southeast.
0002 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: West façade looking east from Woodward Avenue.
0003 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Southeast corner looking northwest.
0004 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Northeast corner looking southwest.
0005 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Detail at recessed first floor/plinth, looking southeast.
0006 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: First floor, lobby and central core, looking north.
0007 of 0016.**

Professional Plaza Tower
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan
County and State

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Elevator core/lobby, looking east.
0008 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Second floor, looking northeast.
0009 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Fifth floor, looking east.
0010 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Seventh floor, looking north.
0011 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Eighth floor, typical elevator core, looking southwest.
0012 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Tenth floor, looking southeast.
0013 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Eleventh floor, typical elevator core, looking northwest.
0014 of 0016.**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Twelfth floor, looking northeast.
0015 of 0016.**

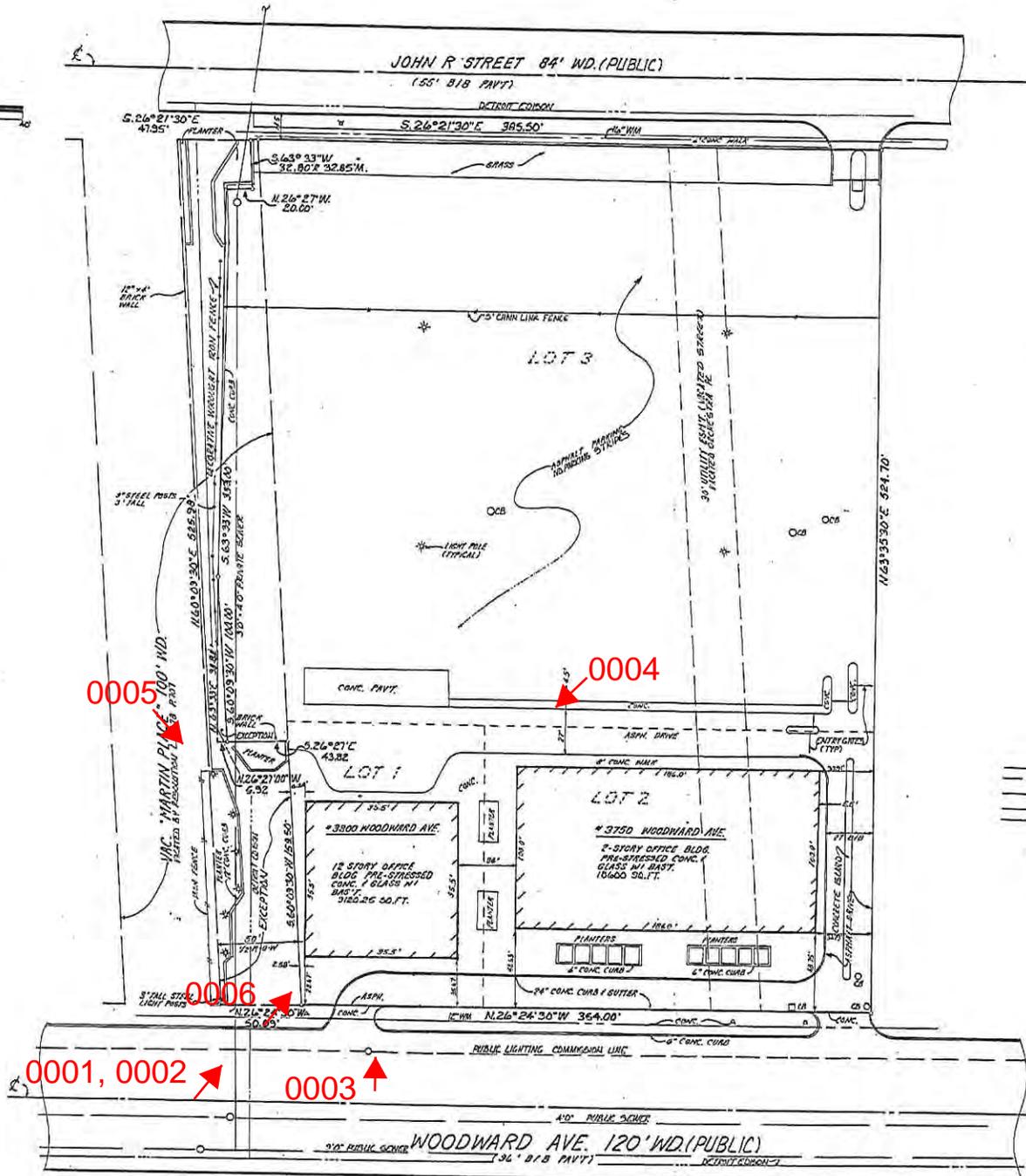
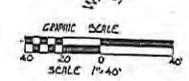
**Description of Photograph(s) and number: Twelfth floor, northwest corner looking east.
0016 of 0016.**

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Professional Plaza Tower, 3800 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Wayne, MI

Photo Key - Site/Exterior



LOTS 1, 2 AND 3, INCLUDING THE NORTH LINE OF LOTS 1 AND 2, WERE RECORDED IN LIBER 88 OF PLATS, 2 BY SURVEYOR'S AFFIDAVIT RECORDED

EXCEPTING: BEGINNING AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF PART OF PARK LOTS 20 TO 24, 7 COUNTY, MICHIGAN (AS RECORDED IN RECORDS) AND PROCEEDING THENCE NO ALONG THE EASTERLY LINE OF WOODWARD 09 MINUTES 36 SECONDS EAST 525.98 LING IN VACATED MARTIN PLACE; 2 47.95 FEET ALONG THE WESTERLY LINE DEGREES 31 MINUTES WEST 132.80 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 26 DEGREES 27 09 MINUTES 30 SECONDS WEST 159.5 PLACE TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.

ALSO EXCEPTING: BEGINNING AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF PART OF PARK LOTS 20 TO 24 AND COUNTY, MICHIGAN, AS RECORDED IN RECORDS, AND PROCEEDING THENCE NORTH SOUTHERLY LINE OF THE VACATED PARK PARCEL BEING DESCRIBED; THENCE NOW ALONG A LINE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF CITY OF DETROIT, RECORDED IN COUNTY RECORDS TO A POINT; THENCE 1 FEET TO A POINT; THENCE NORTH 25 D. POINT OF BEGINNING.

LEGEND

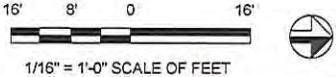
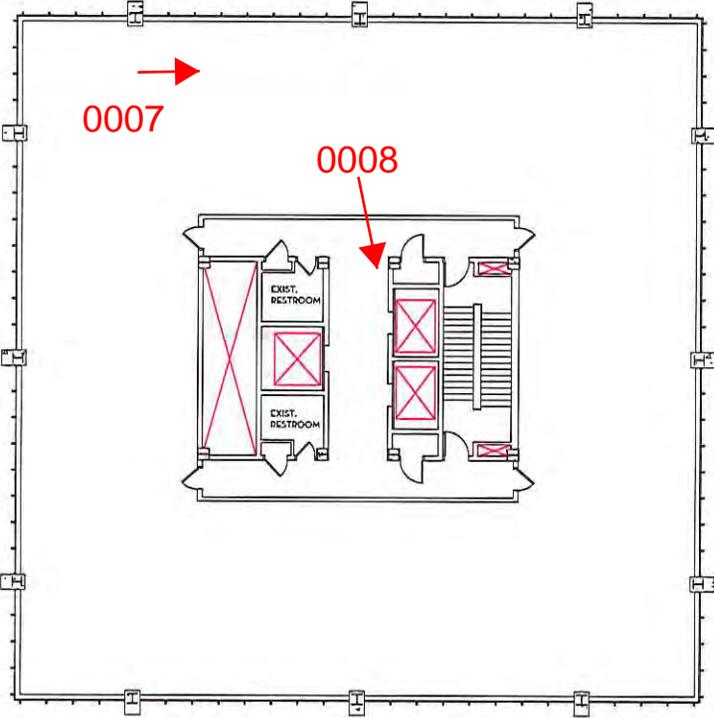
- MANHOLE
- ⊞ CATCH BASIN
- ⊞ INLET
- ⊞ GATEVALVE
- ⊞ HYDRANT
- ⊞ BLOW OFF
- ⊞ CLEAN OUT
- ⊞ END SECTION
- ⊞ UTILITY POLE
- ⊞ GUY ANCHOR
- ⊞ ROAD SIGN
- ⊞ LIGHT POLE
- SANITARY SEWER
- STORM SEWER
- WATERMAIN
- GAS MAIN
- ELECTRIC CABLE
- ⊞ SET CAPPED IRON
- ⊞ FOUND IRON BAR
- ⊞ FOUND MONUMENT
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Professional Plaza Tower, 3800 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Wayne, MI
Photo Key - First Floor



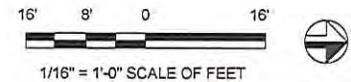
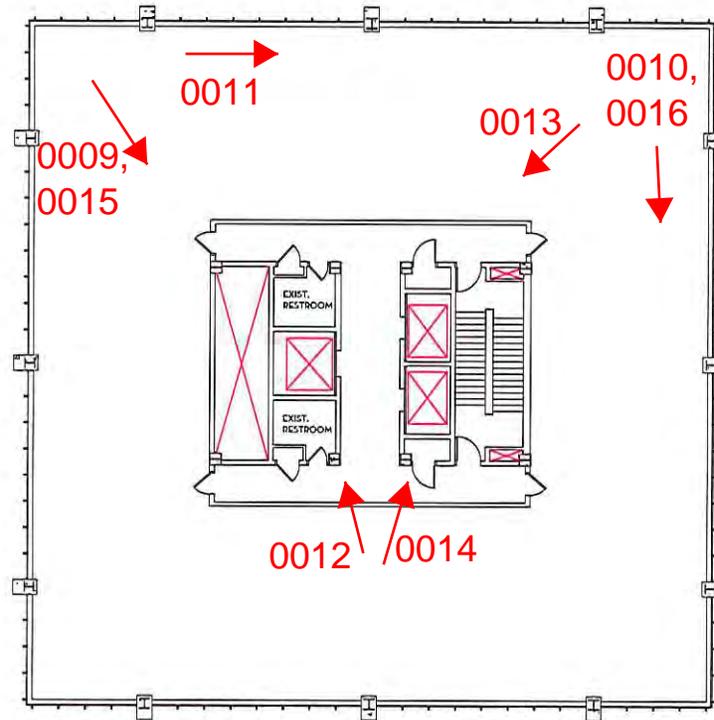
3800 WOODWARD

QEA #: 21000000

TYPICAL FLOOR
SCHEMATIC DESIGN
12/17/14



Professional Plaza Tower, 3800 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Wayne, MI
Photo Key - Second-Twelfth floors

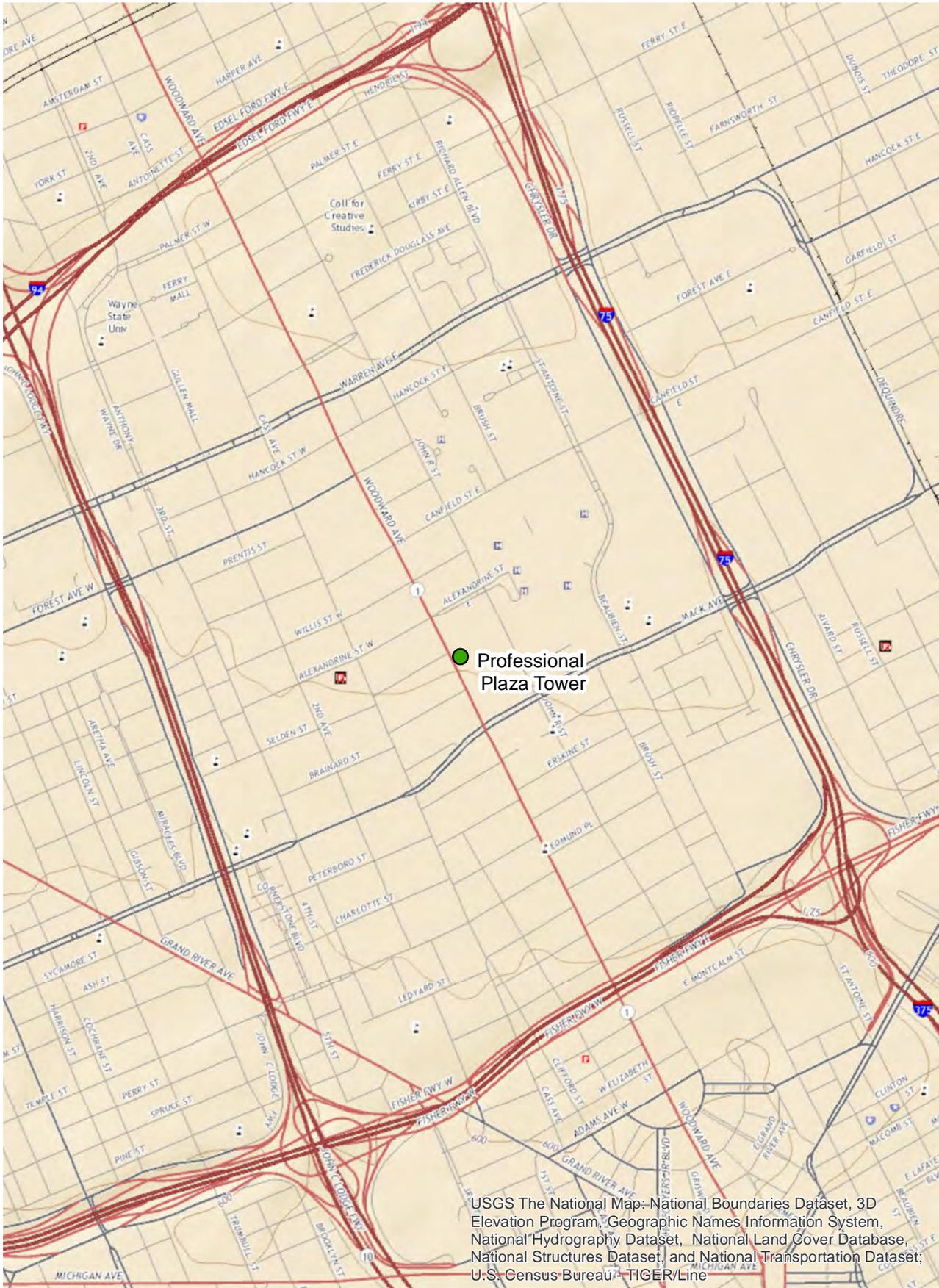


3800 WOODWARD

QEA #: 21000000

TYPICAL FLOOR
SCHEMATIC DESIGN
12/1/14

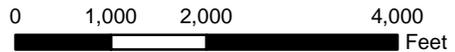




USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3D Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; U.S. Census Bureau - TIGER/Line

Professional Plaza Tower
 3800 Woodward
 Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

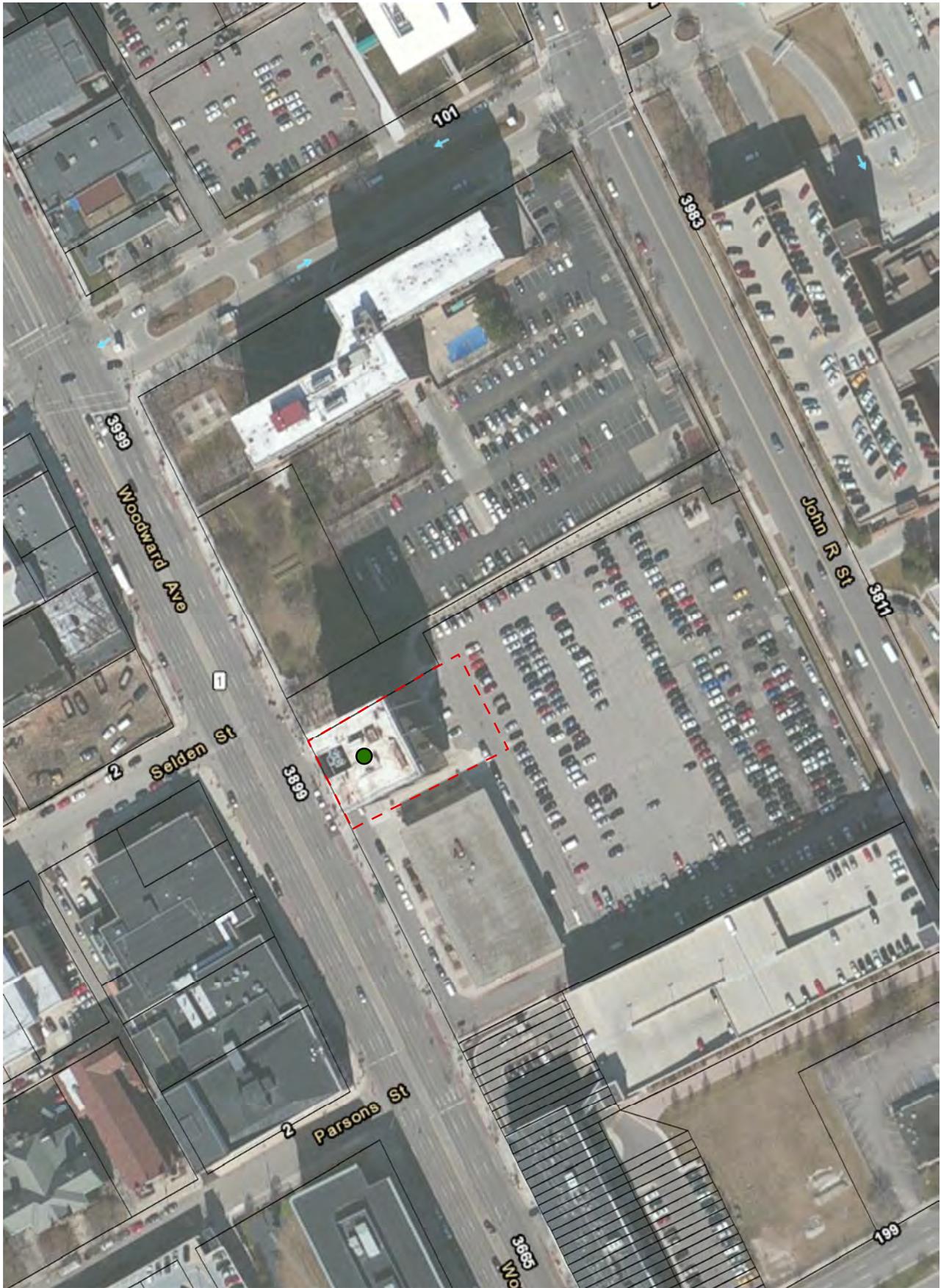
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 Longitude: -83.058854



1 inch = 2,000 feet

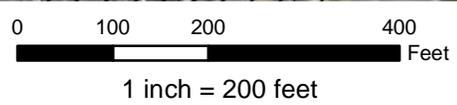
USGS 7.5-minute map scale





Professional Plaza Tower
3800 Woodward
Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Latitude: 42.349397
Longitude: -83.058854
- - - NR Boundary









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