

STAFF REPORT: 4/10/2024 MEETING (**REVISED 4/10/2024**)

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC#2024-00131

ADDRESS: ~~839~~ 836 BATES AND CADILLAC SQUARE PARK, BETWEEN WOODWARD AVE AND RANDOLPH STREET

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WATER BOARD BUILDING & DETROIT FINANCIAL/JOHN J. BAGLEY FOUNTAIN (ADJACENT)

APPLICANT: JAMES HANNIG/CITY OF DETROIT, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 3/25/2024

DATE OF STAFF VISIT: 3/26/2024

SCOPE OF WORK: REHABILITATE SIDEWALKS, INSTALL NEW LANDSCAPED MEDIAN IN RANDOLPH STREET, REMOVE EASTBOUND TRAFFIC LANES AT 100 BLOCK OF CADILLAC SQUARE, AND EXTEND CADILLAC SQUARE PARK SOUTHWARD

EXISTING CONDITIONS

839 836 Bates – Water Board Historic District

The Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB) describes the Water Board Building, erected in 1927-1928 and designed by Louis Kamper, per the below:

The Water Board Building is a twenty-three-story steel frame and concrete skyscraper designed in a distinguished Art Deco style influenced by its architect's earlier preference for the more Baroque manner of Beaux Arts Classicism. Arranged with a five-story base, a fifteen-story shaft, and a three story penthouse, the slender triangular tower with setbacks and clipped corners is the only structure on its small triangular block. Part of Detroit's last surge of tall-building construction before the Great Depression, it provides an interesting contrast to the trio of virtually contemporary Smith, Hinchman, & Grylls-designed tall buildings: The Guardian Building, the Buhl Building, and the last segment of the Penobscot Building. None of those are in the simplified-classical variant of the Art Deco, and the Water Board Building may be Detroit's premier example of a commercial building in that style.

All elevations are clad in a polished pink and grey granite water table at the base, and Bedford Limestone up to the twentieth floor. Parapet walls crown the twentieth-story as well as the three-story penthouse of painted terracotta. The building's five-story base fills the entire triangular lot. Above, the three facades of the tower all end at right-angle corners, in order to avoid hard-to-use sharply angled corners within. This creates a recess at each corner. Although at first glance the facades are all the same, in fact the three facades all differ, as do the treatments of the three corners. The primary facade is that on Randolph, characterized by the main entrance centered on the ground floor. The facade is defined by outer bays with tall pilasters at either side and culminating in a simplified segmentally arched pediment, and containing paired windows at each floor. These outer bays run down to ground level, visually isolating the corner bays of the base, which contain a single window at first and second floor levels. The five inner bays of facade alternate paired and single windows, a device made possible by manipulating the width of the limestone curtain wall between window openings; in this way, the spacing of the recessed main entrance and its flanking single windows is carried up into the upper stories. String courses or secondary cornices interrupt the vertical flow above the second, fifth, and fifteenth and nineteenth floors, while the double windows in the outer bays on the sixth floor have horizontal pediments. On the seventeenth through the nineteenth floors, windows are vertically separated with decorative metal spandrels; on the twentieth floor, these are used only in the outer bays, to continue a vertical emphasis within the pilasters that define those bays. Above the twentieth floor the shaft of the tower culminates with the rounded pediments of the outer bays, with an arcaded railing between them. Some of the ornament on the pilaster of the outer bays at the sixteenth floor level and again at the nineteenth and twentieth floors, is reminiscent of classical/prairie ornament common twenty years earlier.

The window arrangement of the first two floors of the Randolph Street elevation is asymmetrical. North of the entrance are two-two-story openings, with Chicago-style triple windows on each floor separated by the typical spandrel. To the south, a recess in the stonework matches the two-story openings to the north, but is filled with a single window flanked with stone on the first floor, and the three-section Chicago-style window on the second floor above. The third through fifth floors have double window openings in the pilaster-defined bays next to the corner bays. In the central bays, fenestration follows the pattern above; the windows are separated vertically by plain stone spandrels, creating a three-story-tall recess divided, where there are two windows to a floor, by a narrow pilaster three stories tall.

All of the windows in the shaft of the building were replaced in 1977 with single panes somewhat shorter than the opening, in frames of bronze-color aluminum with flat filler panels in the same material above. The windows of the base were replaced later, also with bronze colored aluminum frames, but set within the original openings and spandrels so as to change the fenestration very little. The penthouse is set back from the parapet of the shaft, and creates a decorative culmination for the building as a whole. Lower two floors of the penthouse are alike; the twenty-third floor is set back again, with its blunted corners expressed as two-story central facades in the corner recesses. The twenty-first and twenty-second floors have main facades of three bays each, with strongly expressed pilasters emphasizing verticality. Secondary pilasters centered in each bay separate single windows on each floor, and the twenty-second floor is topped by an arcaded parapet between the pilasters dividing the bays. The twenty-third floor is generally not seen, except from a great distance; but the corner walls form a continuous surface with those of the floors below in the corner recesses, creating verticality at the top of the building. The top story is also surmounted by an arcaded decorative parapet. The corner recesses of the penthouse feature niches with shell-shape half-domes and an array of classically-inspired ornament such as the cartouches centered at the top center of each recess.

The current Randolph Street Streetscape project proposes to undertake work within Randolph Street and the sidewalk directly to the east of the Water Board Building. Non-historic lampposts, signage, electrical cabinets, trash receptacles, and a bicycle rack are located at the concrete sidewalk area which is adjacent to the building. The streets that are adjacent to the building, within the district's boundaries, are concrete.



836 Bates, current appearance. Facing southwest, Randolph Street in foreground. Photo taken by HDC staff on 3/26/2024



Sidewalk area and Randolph Street, to the east of the Water Board Building. Facing south. Photo taken by HDC staff on 3/26/2024. Note that the district’s eastern boundary, identified by the yellow line, added by staff, extends into the middle of Randolph Street. The area within the public right of way to the right of the yellow line, to include the western half of Randolph Street and the sidewalk, is within the district’s boundaries

Cadillac Square Park, between Woodward Avenue and Randolph – Detroit Financial Historic District and John J. Bagely Fountain

The proposed Randolph Street Streetscape project also includes a rehabilitation of the eastern portion of the Cadillac Square Park, which is *adjacent to* the Detroit Financial and John J. Bagely Fountain Historic Districts. Note that the Cadillac Square Park was re-established at its current location in 2006/2007 and none of the elements of the original/historic park remains. Cadillac Square Park is located within the middle of Cadillac Square between Woodward Avenue and Randolph Street. Bates Street bisects Cadillac Square, creating two distinct zones/segments of the park.



Detroit Financial HD (outlined in red), Bagely Fountain HD (outlined in black) and Cadillac Square Park (outlined in green). Note that the project proposes to rehabilitate the portion of the park to the east of Bates Street/adjacent to the historic districts. The project area does not include the portion of the park to the west of Bates. North is p in this image

The western segment of the park is located within the Detroit Financial Historic District. Masonry pavers dominate, while small mulched beds which feature trees, shrubs and flowers line the park's edges. Non-historic light poles, street furniture, and electrical cabinets are located throughout. The John J. Bagley Fountain Historic District marks the east edge of this portion of the park. The fountain, which was designed by renowned architect Henry Hobson Richardson and originally erected at the at the corner of Woodward Avenue and Fort Street in 1887, is granite and stands 21 feet high with a basin 7 feet across. The fountain was moved to its current location in 2007 when the park underwent an extensive rehabilitation. Per the Detroit HDAB, "the fountain is the last surviving example in Detroit of the work of architect Henry Hobson Richardson who is considered to be a "giant on the horizon of American architecture in the 1870's and 1880's."

The eastern portion of the Cadillac Square Park, which is *adjacent to* both the Detroit Financial and John J. Bagley Fountain Historic District presents a more passive, pastoral appearance when compared to its western half as it features turf with a single, tree-lined crushed rock path.



Eastern portion of Cadillac Square Park, facing northeast. Not in an historic district. Photo taken by HDC staff on 3/26/2024



Eastern portion of Cadillac Square Park, facing northwest from Randolph. This area is outside of the district. Photo taken by HDC staff on 3/26/2024



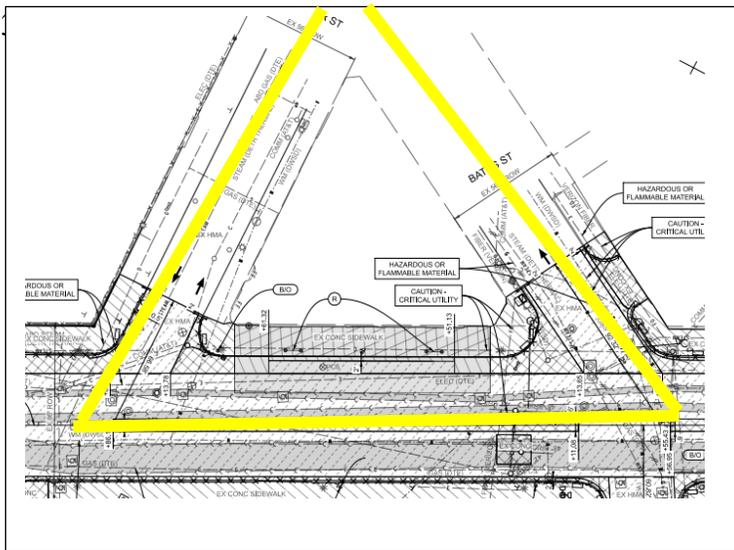
Western portion of Cadillac Square Park, facing northwest. This view shows areas within the Detroit Financial Historic District and the masonry Bagley Fountain. Photo taken by HDC staff on 3/26/2024

PROPOSAL

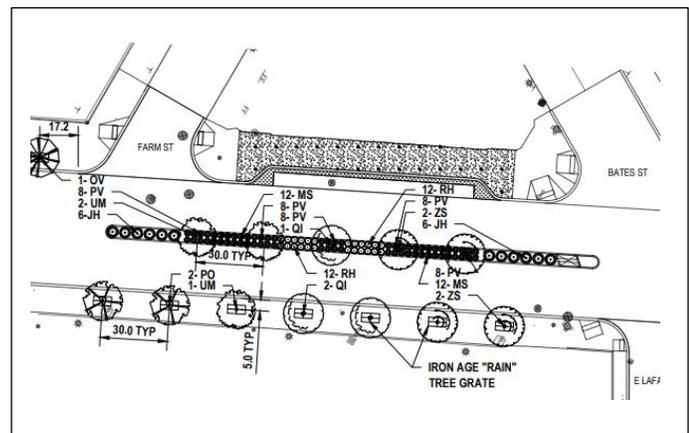
Per the submitted drawings, the Department of Public Works (DPW) is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for the following work items which are proposed to be undertaken within the boundaries of the Water Board Building Historic District, as part of a comprehensive scope of work extending from Jefferson to Gratiot, mostly outside of the district:

- Replace sidewalk to the east of the Water Board Building with a new concrete sidewalk. Install new traffic lights and signage per drawings.
- Within Randolph Street, to the east of the Water Board Building, replace street bed per the submitted drawings to include a new landscaped median, pavement markings, and signage

The DPW is also seeking the HDC's advisory comment regarding any effects that the above listed work items might have on the Water Board Building Historic District as it is a City funded physical development which is being undertaken within the public right of way.

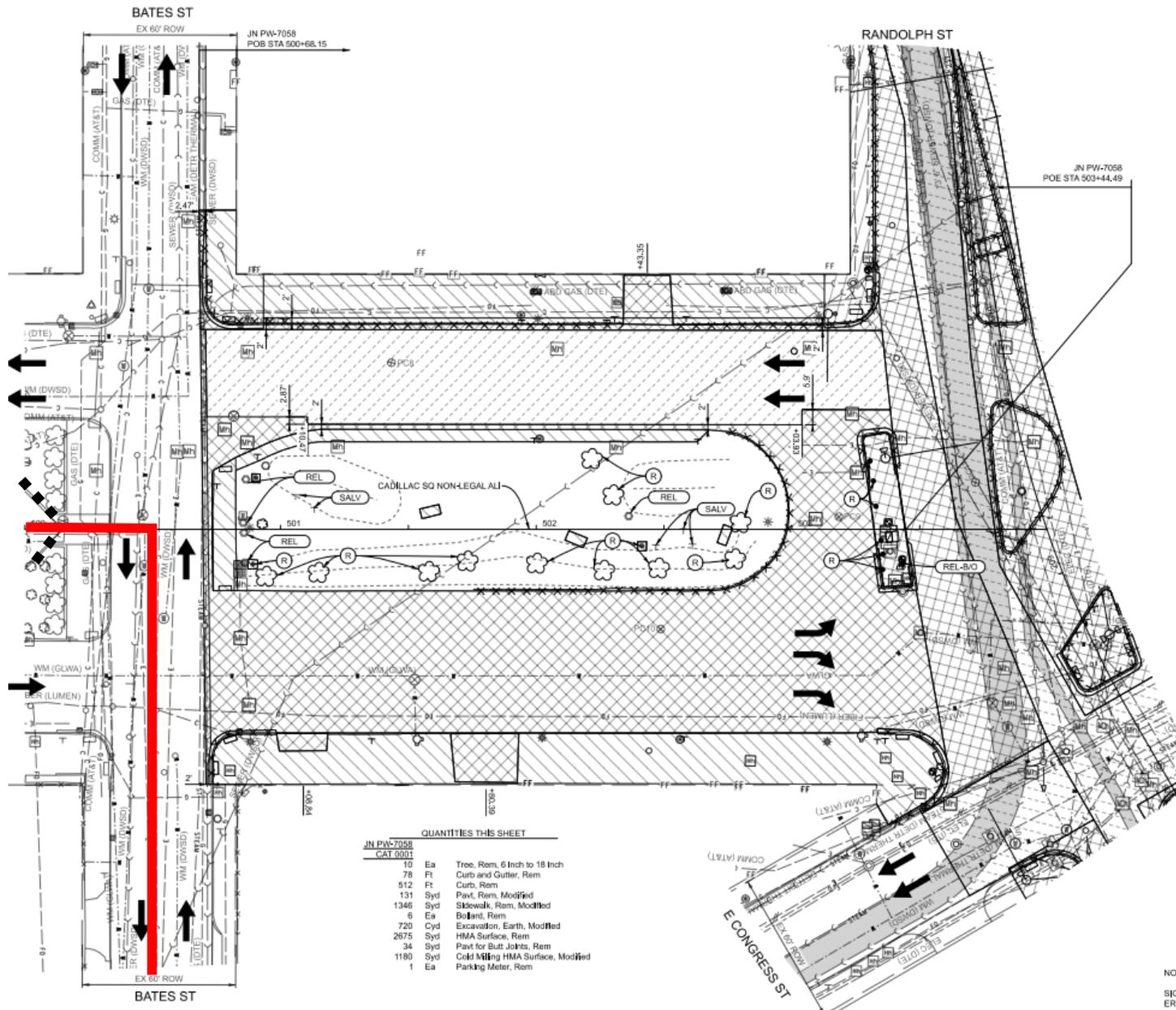


Current conditions, showing areas proposed for demo and district boundaries in yellow

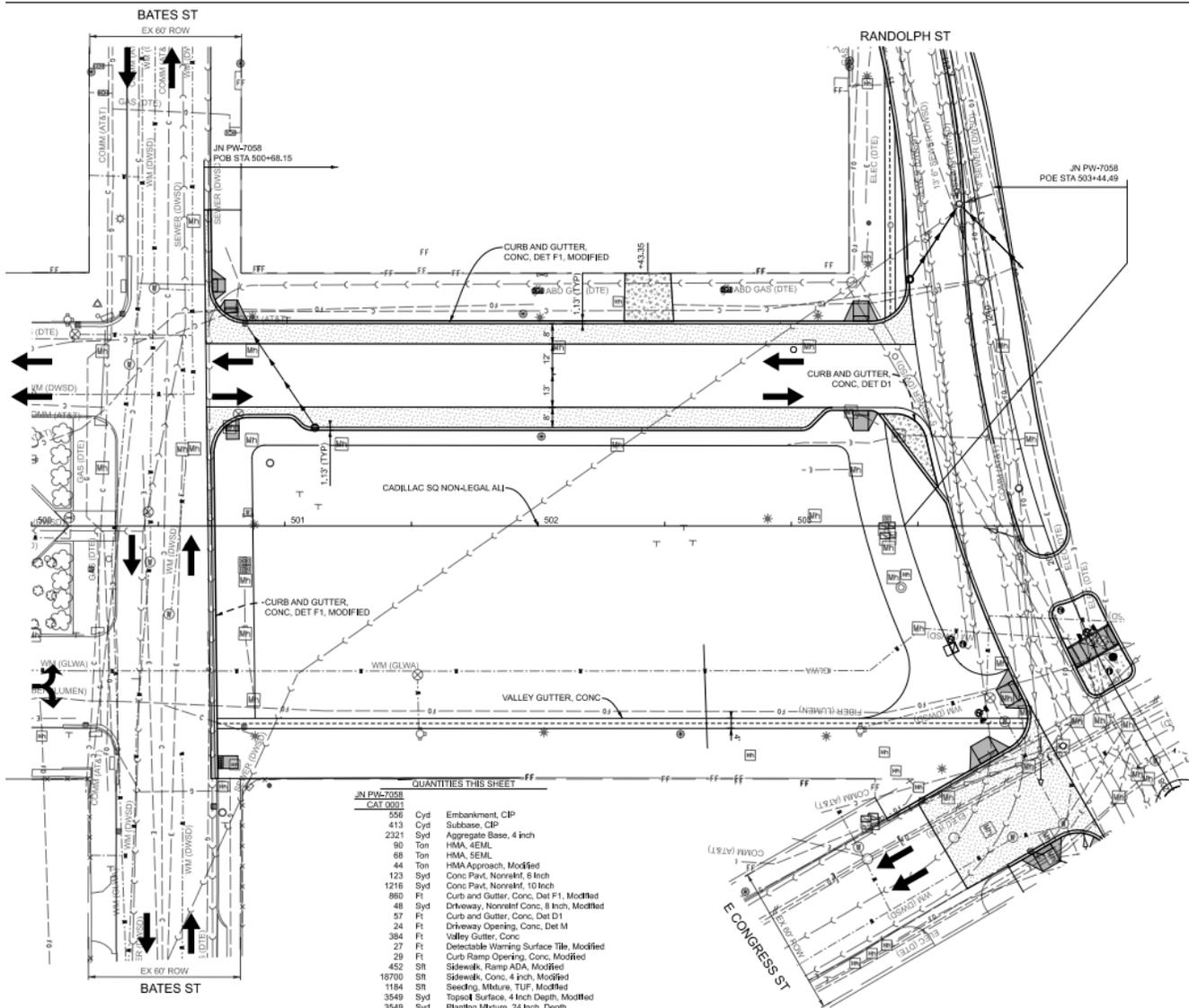


Proposed conditions

The Randolph Street Streetscape project also proposes to undertake a major expansion of the eastern portion of the Cadillac Square Park which is *adjacent to* the Detroit Financial and John J. Bagley Fountain Historic Districts as previously noted. Specifically, per the below, this project proposes to remove the three existing eastbound vehicle lanes of Cadillac Square and then expand the park southward so that it is adjacent to the sidewalk. The current westbound vehicle lanes to the north will be converted to a two lane street.



Current conditions, showing proposed areas of demolition, Detroit Financial HD boundaries in red and Bagley Fountain HD is outlined in black at the far left margin



Proposed alterations to park and streetscape

The DPW is also seeking the HDC’s advisory comment regarding any effects that the above listed scope items might have on the adjacent Detroit Financial and Bagley Fountain Historic Districts.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The John J. Bagley Fountain Historic District was established in 1974
- The Water Board Building Historic District was established in 2002
- The Detroit Financial Historic District was established in 2011
- The work proposed within the public right-of-way in the Water Board Building Historic District will not result in the removal of historic fabric, nor will it have an adverse effect the district’s historic appearance. Staff recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for this work.
- Research revealed the following about Cadillac Square’s development history:
 - Cadillac Square was originally known as Michigan Grand Avenue and was included in the Augustus Woodward Plan for rebuilding Detroit after the 1805 fire.
 - Detroit’s first City Hall was erected at the site in 1835. Note that the area was known as the Central Farmer’s Market at this time as a number of commercial sheds were located

to the rear of the City Hall building (see the below photo). The building was demolished in 1872.



Detroit's First City Hall, photo taken ca. 1870. The building sat in the location of the current day Cadillac Square



Cadillac Square, 1872 after the demolition of the original City Hall. Note that the Central Farmer's Market sheds remained

- A new City Hall was erected to replace the old City Hall in 1872. Per the below Sanborn Map, the building housed both municipal and commercial uses

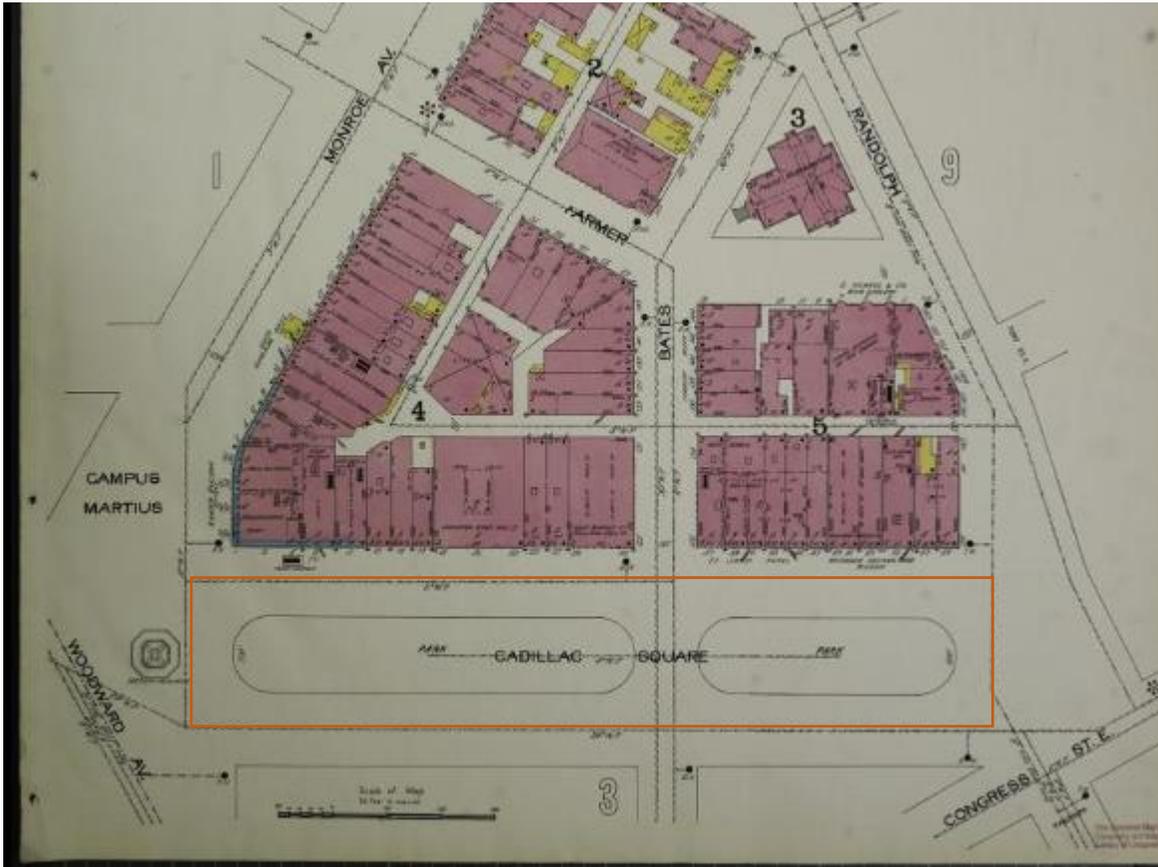


Cadillac Square, ca. 1884. Detroit's second City Hall, erected in 1872



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1884. Location of the current Cadillac Square Park outlined in brown

- By 1887, the second City Hall and market sheds were demolished and Cadillac Square Park had been established



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1887. Location of the current Cadillac Square Park outlined in brown



Cadillac Square Park, ca. 1900

- By 1951, the park had been removed and the area served as a public parking lot

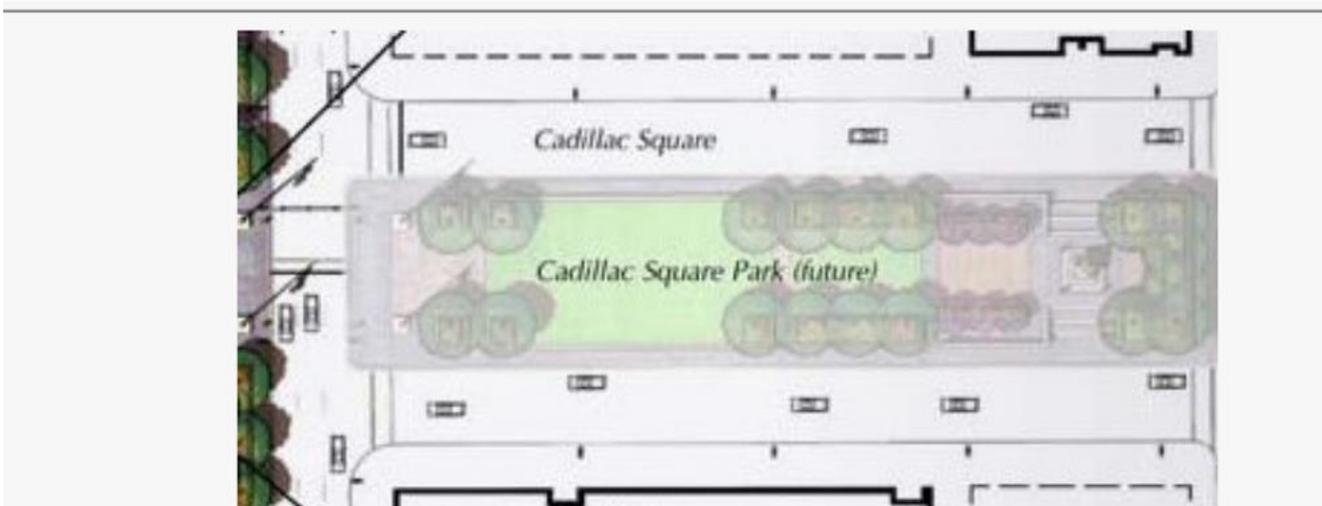


Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951. Location of the current Cadillac Square Park outlined in brown



Cadillac Square Park, 1960s. The integrity of the historic park has been completely lost at this point

- The site retained its use as a parking lot until ca. 2006/2007, when the park was re-established at its original location



Site plan from 2006, showing proposal to re-establish the western portion of the Cadillac Square Park

- While the current park does not retain any historic-age material, it does restore the original 1880s park's layout, form and relationship to the abutting public right-of-way (roadways and sidewalks). The new proposal to expand the eastern portion of the park will disrupt this relationship. However, it is staff's opinion that this alteration will have no adverse effect on the adjacent historic districts for the following reasons:
 - The portion of the park within the district has been heavily modified over time and the fountain was only recently moved to its current location
 - Bates Street serves as an effective buffer between the project area and the portion of the park within the district

ISSUES

None

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation #1 - Section 21-2-73, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA)

It is staff's opinion that the project is appropriate to the Water Board Historic District's historic character and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project with the condition that the any revisions/additions to the proposal be submitted to HDC staff for review and approval. If staff determines that the work does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and or does not meet the threshold for administrative review, staff shall forward the work to the Commission for review at a future regular meeting.

Recommendation # 2 - Section 21-2-5, EFFECTS OF PROJECTS ON DISTRICTS

Per Detroit City Code, Sec. 21-2-5, *Effects of Projects on Districts*, the Commission is required to provide advisory comment to the Mayor and City Council as to the "demonstrable effects" of any "City-financed, licensed, permitted, authorized or contracted physical development" within or adjacent to an historic district. To reiterate, the current Randolph Street Streetscape project proposes to undertake work within portions of Randolph Street and the adjacent sidewalk that are located within the Water Board Historic District. The project also proposes to alter the portion of the Cadillac Square Park that is adjacent to the Detroit Financial Historic District and John J. Bagley Fountain Historic District. As the park and street/sidewalk area are owned by the City of Detroit, the work shall be defined as a City authorized

physical development project in and adjacent to local historic districts is therefore subject to HDC comment regarding any effects it might have on the district. Please note that this comment is distinct from the permit review decision based on Section 21-2-78, above. Conditions under which adverse effects generally occur, as suggested by City Code Section 21-2-5:

- Destruction or alteration of all or part of a resource
- Isolation from or alteration of all or part of a resource
- Introduction of visual, audible or atmospheric elements that are out of character with the resource and its setting
- Transfer or sale of a City-owned resource without adequate conditions or restrictions regarding preservation, maintenance, or use; and
- Neglect of a resource resulting in its deterioration or destruction

As previously stated in the above *Research and Observations* section, staff recommends that the project will have no effect on the Water Board Historic District, Detroit Financial Historic District, or the John J. Bagley Fountain Historic District.