

TRADESHOW TRANSPORTATION: COPING WITH SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES

# ExhibitCity

Jan/Feb/Mar 2022 • VOL. 28 • ISSUE 1

NEWS

## DETROIT'S HUNTINGTON PLACE NAME DEBUTS



2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

HIGHMARK'S PANDEMIC PIVOT

FOCUS CITY: DETROIT

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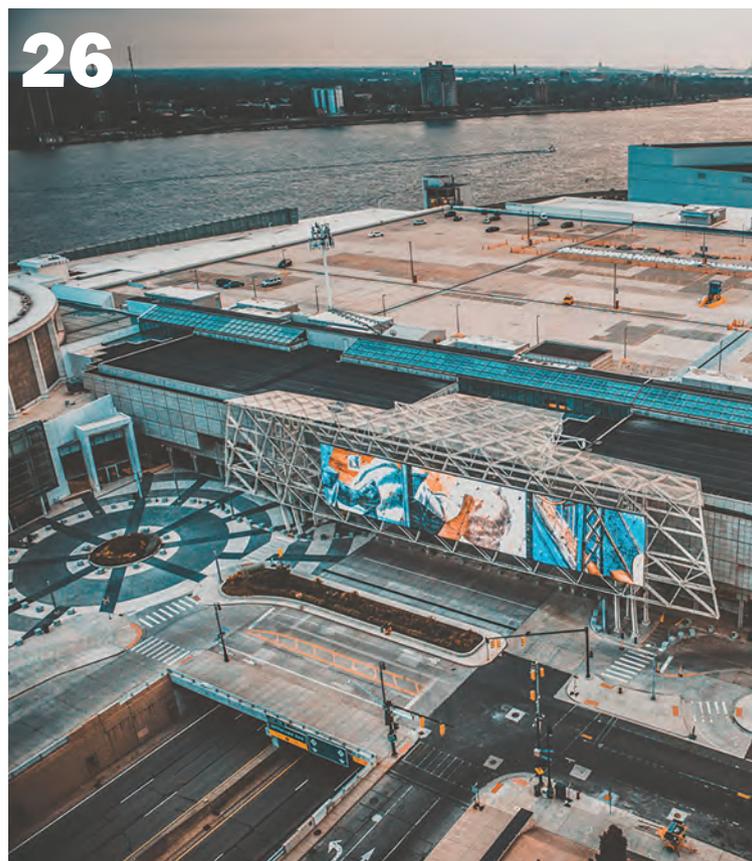
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◀ **On our cover:** The dedicated, motivated and united teams of Visit Detroit and Huntington Place. L-R, front row: Claude Molinari, Greg Brannan, Karen Totaro, Sheila Neal, Greg DeSandy, Yolanda Cason and David Austin; back row: Jennifer Berkemeier, Susan Richardson, Andrea Cadotto, Jennifer Neal-Miller and Constance Wilson. For titles and bios, visit pages 28-29.



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# Huntington Place

**Location:** One Washington Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226

**Date Opened:** August 15, 1960

**Square Footage:** With 723,000 sq.ft. of exhibit space, Huntington Place boasts one of the largest contiguous exhibit floor spaces in North America and is the 16th largest U.S. convention center. The 40,000 sq.ft. Grand Riverview Ballroom has a stage lift and 100+ meeting and banquet rooms comprising 225,000 sq.ft. meeting space.

**Parking:** There are 2,596 parking spaces attached: 1,250 at the Roof Deck, 406 in the TCF Center Congress St. garage, 640 in Washington Blvd. garage and 350 at the Atwater Street garage.

**Hotels:** 6,000 hotel rooms in downtown Detroit—the 1,328-room Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center is the largest, with The Foundation Hotel, the Siren, the Shinola, the Element at the Metropolitan and the 367-room Crowne Plaza Detroit Downtown Riverfront nearby.

**PLUS!**  
Where to eat, sleep & play near Huntington Place p. 54

**Airport Info:** The Metro Airport is located approximately 22 miles from the venue. In addition to Uber, Lyft, taxis and shuttle buses, FAST Powered by SMART is a high-frequency bus service that connects the city and suburbs. FAST Michigan runs from the airport to downtown daily.

**Wi-Fi:** The venue was recognized as the first for facility-wide, free, high-speed Wi-Fi coverage.

**Transportation:** A Detroit People Mover station is located inside Huntington Place on the fourth floor near Congress Street. And the Detroit Q-Line Rail, which connects the downtown area with Midtown, is close by.

**Website:** [huntingtonplacedetroit.com](http://huntingtonplacedetroit.com) 



# Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport

**IATA airport code:** DTW

**Location:** 11050 Rogell Drive #602, Detroit, MI 48242

**Date Opened:** First plane landed on Feb. 22, 1930; dedication was Sept. 4, 1930

**Size:** The airport covers 4,850 acres with four main runways and two crosswind runways. It has 129 gates split between two terminals: McNamara with three concourses and North Terminal with one.

**Transportation:** For \$2 travelers can take the 261, aka FAST Michigan, a limited-stop service that connects both the McNamara and North Terminals to the Rosa Parks Transit Center in downtown Detroit and points in between. The route is operated by The Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation, or SMART, and travels twice per hour. Ride-shares and limo services are available.

**Fun Facts:** The airport serves 140+ destinations and was named the best large U.S. airport in customer satisfaction by J.D. Power & Associates in 2010 and 2019.

At nearly a mile long, Concourse A in McNamara Terminal is the longest in the U.S. and the world's second-longest. The ExpressTram, a people mover that transports passengers between each end of Concourse A in about three minutes, is located there.

The Light Tunnel, an elaborate multi-colored light show behind sculpted glass panels, extends the length of the walkway connecting the B & C concourses to the main terminal. The light patterns are synchronized to an original musical score, and go nearly 30 minutes before repeating.

**Website:** [www.metroairport.com](http://www.metroairport.com) ®



## DETROIT'S CONVENTION CENTER DEBUTS NEW NAME

by Mary Klida, Huntington Place senior marketing & communications manager

The Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority (DRCFA) is pleased to announce Huntington Place as the new name of Detroit's world-class convention center. As the 16th largest convention center in America, the new name signifies an important moment in the transformation of Detroit's gathering place for conventions, meetings and special events.

The convention center opened in 1960 and was originally named in honor of former Detroit Mayor Albert Cobo. In 2019, Detroit-based Chemical Bank, which merged with TCF Financial Corp. in 2020, bought the naming rights in a 22-year deal for \$1.5 million annually. The naming rights agreement, which was a priority for the DRCFA, began with TCF Bank and continues with Huntington Bank in strengthening the Center's financial future. As of Dec.

9, the name has become Huntington Place after Huntington merged with TCF Financial Corp. in June 2021, creating a top 10 regional bank.

According to Huntington Place GM Karen Totaro, "Huntington Bank is a remarkable partner and both of our organizations have a deep commitment to the communities we serve. We are dedicated not only to being a contributor to our region's economic vitality, but also to creating jobs and enhancing the attraction of our destination to visitors," adding that "Detroit's convention center drives economic growth and development in the region, and we are so pleased to see it renamed Huntington Place."

Projections for 2022 book of business at Huntington Place are strong and they include new initiatives in the national and international markets.

Prior to 2020, the world-class center attracted nearly 1.5 million visitors annually. ASM Global has been managing the day-to-day operations for the venue since 2010, establishing it as a top convention center both nationally and internationally, including a \$279 million transformation in 2015.

During the pandemic, the convention center became a civic center for the Detroit region serving as:

- » a field hospital
- » a day center for homeless services
- » a food distribution center for Food Rescue U.S.
- » Detroit's largest vaccination site with a drive-through facility

The venue has reopened with a strong event schedule, discovering that show managers want to partner with an organization that values the community they serve.

Founded in 1866, The Huntington National Bank and its affiliates provide consumers, small and middle-market businesses, corporations, municipalities and other organizations with a comprehensive suite of banking products and services. Just a week after the merger, Huntington unveiled a \$40 billion Strategic Community Plan to improve financial opportunities for the customers, businesses and communities it serves, with a focus on affordable housing, small business and increased capital to historically disadvantaged and low-to-moderate income communities.

Since its creation in 2009, the DRCFA has worked diligently to meet its obligation to the legislative act and fulfill its responsibility to taxpayers in making the current convention center a financially self-sustaining facility by 2024. Through effective management, they are ahead of schedule and have saved the state's taxpayers an estimated \$74.7 million since 2009. The City of Detroit and individual municipalities across the state also benefit from this financial structure, saving millions of dollars.

Visit Detroit President and CEO Claude Molinari said in 2019, "The taxpayers of Michigan will receive significant benefit in sponsorship revenue to offset the cost of operating this amazing convention center and a great partner in a trusted Michigan-based banking institution. It speaks so very well of the rebirth of this facility, this city, and this region that the most valuable naming rights deal for a convention center ever was executed in Detroit, Michigan."

## VISIT DETROIT FORMS PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL BUSINESS

The mission of Visit Detroit is to market and sell the Detroit metropolitan region to business and leisure visitors in order to maximize economic impact. Its purpose is to champion the continuous improvement of the region as a dynamic and memorable tourism destination.

Claude Molinari became president and CEO of Visit Detroit in January 2021, and has focused on bringing meetings and conventions, leisure and business visitors to metropolitan Detroit to accelerate economic growth. One main focus is on group tour and meetings business from abroad, including the U.K., Germany and Canada.

In June 2021, he announced a partnership with New York-based MAD Event Management LLC and Messe Düsseldorf North America for the purpose of launching and incubating global events in Detroit. According to MAD Event Management Founder & President Martha Donato, "The credit for the concept lies in a multi-year development plan between MAD and Claude Molinari, whose vision of Detroit as a city well positioned to capitalize on the future of live events in North America is unwavering. Detroit is keen to focus its resources to launch business-to-business and business-to-consumer events. MDNA is an organizer with a global view of the events industry and was the perfect

partner with whom to execute the ambitious plan."

"Martha and Claude's vision and passion was a primary reason we were interested in partnering, using our extensive operating resources to support their entrepreneurial goals," says Tom Mitchell, president, MDNA. "We all believe that sustainable commerce in tradeshows, conferences and consumer events in Detroit will contribute to the city's long-running renaissance story, and we are excited to be part of it. Once we get a better handle on protocols in a post-COVID world, we will announce our dates and initial conference and show schedule."

The first in-person, large-scale event to be held in Detroit since January 2020 will be the 2022 North America Herbalife Nutrition Extravaganza, July 15-17. "Our community will roll out the red carpet to welcome the best-in-class company that will contribute approximately \$11 million in direct spending to our region," says Molinari. "We are pleased they are bringing their vast network of independent distributors to experience Detroit." The event will take place at Ford Field, and more than 25,000 Herbalife Nutrition independent distributors

are expected to attend, occupying an estimated 13,600 hotel rooms.

In addition to the Herbalife Extravaganza, Visit Detroit has signed the Injection Molding and Design Expo for a three-year commitment; the Silicone Expo for a three-year commitment and a new conference series, Side Hustles & Opportunities Conference (SHO-Con), launched by Sherwood Enterprises, as a result of the partnership with MAD Events and MDNA. Other groups are expected to announce in the coming weeks.

Connect is preparing to welcome back a pre-pandemic number of event professionals—about 4,000 decision-making planners and suppliers—to its signature Summertime Marketplace event, Aug. 8-10 at Huntington Place.

Connect, formerly known as Collinson Media & Events, is a leader in the meetings, events, travel and tourism industry. Specializing in destination marketing, they introduced the popular marketplace format to the meetings industry.

Home to Fortune 500 companies, many state and national associations and recognized as one of the country's premier sports towns, Detroit is uniquely

qualified to host Connect. At the annual August conference, Connect will draw attendees from four main tracks: corporate, association, specialty and sports. Connect's sister company, BizBash, will also co-locate in Detroit.

"We're very excited to be coming to Detroit next year," says Connect President Chris Collinson. "Not only is Detroit known as the Motor City, but it's also a place where business gets done. We can't wait to help connect the right planners with suppliers. And by partnering with Visit Detroit, we know this will be a show that nobody forgets."

The event will feature Connect's largest traditional tradeshow to date along with celebrity keynotes. Look for many creative activations on the show floor and for off-site activities spotlighting all Detroit has to offer.

"We couldn't be more thrilled that Connect is heading to Detroit," says Molinari. "Connect will put thousands of decision makers in our city, which is a huge opportunity for us to ensure Detroit is on their radar for future meetings and sports events," adding that "Detroit is a revitalized, vibrant and friendly destination, and seasoned when it comes to hosting successful meetings and events. Our hospitality industry is committed to using all of our resources to create an unforgettable experience for Connect attendees."



Claude Molinari

# INTRODUCING THE HUNTINGTON PLACE & VISIT DETROIT TEAMS

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP MOTOR CITY HUMMING!

The Visit Detroit and Huntington Place teams have spent the last two years feeling like they were “in the pit” but they are ready to get the motor in Motor City humming and back on the track! Introducing the people behind the scenes working to bring conventions, meetings, conferences and live events back to Detroit:



**Karen Totaro**  
General Manager

Karen Totaro is the general manager of Huntington Place and is responsible for the overall management, promotion and operation of the facilities, leading the team of dedicated professionals in the venue, building on the key industry partnerships in the community, and supporting the overall mission of the Huntington Place and the DRCFA.

Totaro comes to Huntington Place from the San Diego Convention Center where she served as chief operating officer. Prior to San Diego, she served as general manager of the Atlantic City Convention Center, assistant general manager of the Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati and the assistant executive director at the

Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

Having received a BS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Totaro is also a certified venue executive through the International Association of Venue Managers as well as a graduate from their Academy of Venue Safety and Security.



**Greg DeSandy**  
Dir. of Sales & Event Services

Greg DeSandy is the director of sales and event services for Huntington Place and responsible for maximizing the rental and promoting the use of Huntington Place meetings and events. He directs the sales team, sales strategy, business development and sales analysis while overseeing all aspects of event service delivery.

DeSandy comes to Huntington Place from the Marriott at the convention center in Augusta, Georgia, where he served as director of sales and marketing from 2004-2014. With extensive experience in the event and hospitality industry directing various Radisson and Marriott properties across the country, he received his BA from Michigan State University.



**David Austin**  
Senior Sales Manager

David Austin has been with the sales team since 2003, and is responsible for lead generation, qualification and solicitation of specific meetings and events. He prepares event contracts and proposals with clients to finalize booking arrangements.

Austin has a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Ind., and a master's in sports management from the U.S. Sports Academy in Daphne, Ala. He is a member of the Michigan Society of Association Executives, the Meeting Professionals International and MPI Michigan Chapter, the International Association for Exhibition and Events, the American Society of Association Executives and the Association for Convention Marketing Executives.



**Jennifer Berkemeier**  
Event Sales Manager

Jennifer Berkemeier is an event sales manager for Hun-

tington Place. She actively solicits new business to promote the venue while facilitating proper execution of the events, and she collaborates with industry organizations producing proposals, contracts, event orders and billing related correspondence. She has a Bachelor of Arts from Michigan State University and has 15 years experience in the event industry.



**Constance Wilson**  
Sales Manager

Constance Wilson has been with the convention center for 12 years and worked for the City of Detroit prior to that. She is responsible for national and local Michigan markets lead generation, qualification and solicitation of business. She prepares event contracts and proposals with clients to finalize booking arrangements. She has a Bachelor of Arts in management and organizational development from Spring Arbor University in Michigan.

To contact the team, email [info@huntingtonplacedetroit.com](mailto:info@huntingtonplacedetroit.com) or call (313) 877-8777.



**Claude Molinari**  
President & CEO

Claude Molinari became president and CEO of Visit Detroit in January 2021. His history at Huntington Place began as assistant general manager from 2011-2016 with oversight of operations, security, events and production services and union labor services. He was named general manager in March 2016 by SMG/ASM Global until he left in 2021 for Visit Detroit. Molinari also oversees the direction of the Detroit Sports Commission (a Visit Detroit subsidiary), which is responsible for securing amateur sports for the region. His prior experience was at the David Lawrence Convention Center/SMG in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 2005-2010. He attended State University of New York College at Buffalo and studied public administration at Point Park University.



**Greg Brannan**  
Sales Manager

Greg Brannan has been with Visit Detroit for six years, starting off as a sales coordinator and now a sales manager responsible for corporate, government and union market opportunities coast to coast, and the Michi-

gan association market. He is a member of MPI, Society of Government Meeting Planners and the Michigan Society of Association Executives. He received his BBA in marketing from Adrian College in 2013, where he also played on the football team.



**Sheila Neal**  
Associate Director, Sales

Sheila Neal, CASE (certified association sales executive), has been with Visit Detroit in Sales since 2000 beginning as their account executive for the multi-cultural market coast to coast and now as their associate director, sales. She is an active member of the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals, ASAE, PCMA, MPI, NYSAE, Association of Meeting Professionals' and Women in Lodging. She serves on a variety of boards and committees and always looks for ways to empower, elevate and serve within the hospitality community. She's a native Detroit and she and her husband have two children.



**Yolanda Empson-Cason**  
Sales Coordinator, Visit Detroit

Yolanda Empson-Cason has been with Visit Detroit

for 22 years. Throughout these years, she has served as the receptionist, worked in purchasing, membership, services, sports and sales. She has been in her current role in sales since 2014 and is currently responsible for supporting the entire sales team in their efforts in bringing meetings, conferences and conventions to metro Detroit.



**Susan Richardson**  
Vice Pres., Group and Conv. Sales

Susan Richardson joined Visit Detroit in 2019, bringing more than 25 years of sales experience in both convention center and hotel sales. Her previous experience was in New York City where she was director of sales and marketing solutions at the Jacob Javits Convention Center, director of sales and marketing for the Park Terrace Hotel, complex director of sales and marketing for The Renwick and Gregory Hotels, director of sales for The Roosevelt Hotel and Paramount Hotel, and associate director of sales for The Waldorf Astoria. She has served on many boards and committees including PCMA Corporate Task Force, PCMA Annual Program Committee and as chapter president for Canada East chapter of PCMA. She's a native of Toronto, Canada, and graduated from Seneca College.



**Andrea Cadotto**  
Associate Director, Sales

Andrea Cadotto joined Visit Detroit in 2012 as national sales manager and, in 2018, became the associate director, sales. Previously she was a sales manager/sales account executive at The Henry-Autograph Collection, the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Detroit Dearborn, the Radisson Hotel Lansing and Winegardner & Hammons. She's an experienced sales professional with 20+ years in the hospitality industry, including work with CVBs, hotel sales management and marketing. She has a B.S. in business administration/marketing and communications from Central Michigan University.



**Jennifer Neal-Miller**  
Manager, Events

Jennifer Neal-Miller, DES (digital event strategist), has worked in the hospitality industry since 1985 and joined the Visit Detroit team in 1999. As the manager of events, she has worked with various departments over the years on marquee events like the ASAE annual meeting's closing celebration, Super Bowl XL, Ryder Cup, Final Fours and the Frozen Four. She previously worked as sales and convention services manager at the Pontchartrain Hotel Detroit and the Omni Hotel Detroit.

# VALUING LABOR UNIONS

by Jeanne Brei & Mary Klida

**K**aren Totaro, GM of Huntington Place/ASM Global, came to the venue in April 2021 with extensive experience in venue operations and labor relations. She gives us her thoughts on how important the labor unions are to the convention center business in any city:

“Labor unions are the backbone of our industry and it is important when we sell our venue that we sell the skilled labor within,” says Totaro. “In venues in particular, a majority of event-based union members have been doing the job for 10 years or more, most have been in that same venue so they’ve learned all the ins and outs, what works and what doesn’t and that can save a client time and money.”

Totaro has learned from her years as a certified venue executive and working as the COO for the San Diego CC Corp., GM of the Atlantic City CC, assistant GM of the Duke Energy CC in Cincinnati and the assistant executive director at the Oregon CC. She led the teams in Portland and San Diego in achieving the highest industry honor, the coveted “Venue Excellence Award” awarded by the International Association of Venue Managers. She believes that because union and team



members have built relationships over the years, they can talk in shorthand with each other, again leading to speed and consistency of work results. In her experience, “even different unions end up synchronized. For instance, electricians may be laying floor power and right behind them may be carpenters laying carpet. Since they have done this for so long, they know the exhibit hall floors better than anyone and they know what saves time and energy, and thus cost savings follow.”

Totaro continues, “Here at Huntington Place we value our long-term relationships with our unions. We have had recent success with creating a quarterly meeting with our senior event-based department heads and the event-based union business agents and stewards. We come with a pre-determined agenda that everyone has had the opportunity to add items they want to discuss. It has been a great way for me as the new GM to start building trust and open the lines of communication. We share changes coming to the venue like a capital project or new equipment. Our sales director talks about the business

forecast and what months are looking strong and what type of shows are close to signing. Our head of events reviews the current calendar and makes sure everyone has the info they need to succeed in working the upcoming events. Operations reminds all about things like closing roll-up doors and not driving carts in the public spaces. We are working toward a review of the current ‘Efficiency Memorandum’ that outlines the jurisdictions, not to change anything but to help work towards clarification around a few instances where there is vague language. We have a great group of folks involved and I know we can resolve anything working together for the good of our community.”

Labor wants business in the city and the venue, as much

“I very much want their expertise and skill set... I want the team that is trained and certified ...”

as the CVB or the venue itself as it leads to jobs. Totaro says, “I have worked with some exceptional business agents and stewards over my career and they can make all the difference when working with an irate client. We are all in the customer service business and that does not mean the customer is always right; it simply means the customer is the customer and we certainly want to help them succeed so they will want to return. Equally as important we want the customer to share their experience with their industry peers who may be looking to host an event.”

Labor can be protective of their jurisdictions but, Totaro believes, “that is a good thing as it goes back to the training and the skill of our labor forces. I know I want to run a safe building, a safe operation. I want all our staff, our contractors and our attendees to leave at the end of the day as healthy as they came in that day so when one union is responsible for major electric installs I very much want their expertise and skill set; same for hanging heavy loads above the floor. I, for one, want the team that is trained and certified to hang heavy loads.”

It takes a village to put on a tradeshow or conference and labor basically builds a city for the most important day of each event’s life and then they dismantle it and build another city, over and over for the next events. As Totaro explains, “It takes skill, patience and a sense of humor to succeed in this business and, in my experience, labor brings that to the table each and every day.”



Keeping the bee hives on the green roof at Huntington Place

# LEADING IN SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

by Mary Klida

**A** new story is being written in Detroit. It’s about people and place. It is about the character of community and the places they gather.

The recent event industry slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic has not stopped Huntington Place from continuing to make strides in continually improving environmental safety of the venue and Green Event Services to customers. In 2020, Huntington Place was awarded the 2020 USGBC Leadership Award for Energy and Environmental Design, the only convention center in the world to receive this award in its history. According to LEED representatives, “The 2020 recipients represent leaders who are driving the adoption of LEED across business portfolios, higher education and green affordable housing, as well as helping to advance Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance, resilience planning and innovative waste management solutions.”

Huntington Place was awarded the Community Safe Haven award at Michigan Energy Summit at the 2021 Michigan Energy Summit. It has been a program of the U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan since 2014. The center was recognized with this award for providing several essential community services in downtown Detroit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To align itself with the current global efforts in sustainability, Huntington Place has adapted its program with the ongoing sustainability efforts in Metro Detroit, the international event industry and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to support the green efforts and align day-to-day operations to meet all stakeholder goals.

The well-orchestrated effort of the Green Committee and its local agency network has paid off. A whopping 280 tons of waste was diverted from the waste stream pre-pandemic, including 60 tons of post-

event donations that were up-cycled to local nonprofits. The total also included 112 tons of food and kitchen waste, which were redistributed as compost to local urban gardens by the venue’s composting partner. Energy consumption was reduced by 24 percent.

Each year, the center’s Green Committee makes great strides in expanding the venue’s program. The expansion of the living green roof now includes five honeybee hives and an organic herb garden that provides fresh produce to local farm-to-table restaurants. Lactation stations have been instituted at the center. They are especially equipped for nursing mothers on the staff or those who are visiting during events. Water stations are scattered throughout the facility to fill water bottles and reduce single-use plastic waste. In 2020, Huntington Place committed to eliminating the use of foam core and other non-biodegradable materials in the venue and continues to work with events to distribute reusable materials

to local nonprofit agencies that can upcycle or reuse them.

Huntington Place has a professional and experienced team that partners with the Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau and the regional hospitality community to fully support shows and conventions at the facility. As an economic engine for the Metro Detroit region and the state of Michigan, the venue’s team works together in cooperation with regional partners and is committed to providing outstanding experiences for guests and sustainable operations for Metro Detroit citizenry. Everyone is invited to join the green initiative efforts to make the world more sustainable for future generations.

Green Committee goals in 2022 included expansion of the food efficiency program, additional bottle refill stations, attainment of LEED platinum status and expansion of the venue’s corporate social responsibility program called Huntington Place Impact.



## “AMERICA’S COMEBACK CITY” IS READY TO RETURN TO BUSINESS

by Renee Monforton, VP, Marketing and Communications, Visit Detroit

**T**here’s what you hear about Detroit and there’s what we know to be true.

Detroit is a city of determination, tenacity, energy and vibrancy. It is the epicenter of innovation, often demonstrated by Ford, Fiat Chrysler and General Motors who are propelling their vehicles and technology well into the future. It is a city of collaborations that move the world—like the recent partnership between Apple and Michigan State University to launch the tech giant’s first

U.S.-based Developer Academy in Detroit and educate a new generation of tech leaders.

Detroit has an uncrushable spirit that rebounds even stronger when faced with a crisis, like it is doing right now. We have a compelling story for you to consider as you plan your upcoming meetings.

### Detroit ... There’s What We See

We see signature, one-of-a-kind attractions throughout our region, like the Henry Ford Mu-

seum and 200-acre Greenfield Village, showcasing important moments in America you can’t see anywhere else in the world.

We see a gorgeous five-mile Riverwalk adjacent to our convention center and just named the “Best Riverwalk in the Country” by *USA Today* readers.

We also see the second largest museum in the world that showcases and recounts black history, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American history.

From downtown, we see beautiful Canada, just across our riverfront. In fact, in our city, you can kayak between two countries. You can’t say that everywhere.

We see a melting pot of ethnicities and cultures, showcased in the food and attractions of many neighborhoods, such as Greektown, Dearborn’s Arab-American community, Mexicantown and the Polish enclave of Hamtramck.

The opportunities to combine business and fun in Detroit are endless.

### We work. We earn. We give.

Our partners do many things well, including knowing how to pivot when it’s neces-

“Detroit has an uncrushable spirit that rebounds even stronger when faced with a crisis, like it is doing right now ... It is the epicenter of innovation ...”

sary. Delta Airlines, a long-time partner of Visit Detroit, pivoted quickly during the pandemic and has now earned a reputation as an airline leader in safety readiness.

Delta’s new safety and cleanliness standards, implemented over the past year, are off the charts. They will inspire confidence in any traveler. Detroit’s busy Metro Airport is a Delta hub and a customer favorite. It is regularly rated one of the top airports for customer service by J.D. Power.

We know transportation connectivity is critical for meeting attendees. Our region is an easily accessible destination, only a 90-minute flight or a half day’s drive from 60 percent of the U.S. population.

### We dream. We achieve.

A few years ago, our 723,000-sq.ft. convention center had the foresight to create an in-house video production studio to enhance its offerings to meetings.

Today that studio is a huge asset as many meetings are now seeking virtual or hybrid elements. And Huntington Place offers complimentary wi-fi throughout its entire facility ... an amenity more important than ever in these times when the ability to communicate quickly and globally is vital. These enhancements are a bonus to the center that was completely revitalized and transformed five years ago.

Our 30,000-sq.ft. Suburban Collection Showcase is our other large convention center, offering meeting planners another outstanding option for meetings. It is conveniently located in the metro Detroit suburb of Novi, and is about 30 minutes from downtown.

### Before We Let You Go

Before the pandemic, De-

troit had earned the title of “America’s Comeback City.” It is still true today. Thanks to the uncrushable spirit of Detroiters, progress never stopped in 2020 and 2021. One great example is Ford’s reinvention of our historic train station into a hub for futuristic auto technology. Work on that project, which will employ Ford innovators in our historic Corktown neighborhood, kept moving forward in 2020 and in 2021. Progress never stopped on a stunning, new mixed-use development on the former site of J.L. Hudson’s flagship store in the heart of downtown.

Now, Detroit’s hotels continue to evolve. In addition to our large luxury hotels, the world’s first Shinola Hotel is Detroit’s new living room. Located in the heart of the city’s historic Wood-

ward shopping district, this 129-room boutique hotel offers a completely original hospitality experience and was built as a testament to the renowned, Detroit-based Shinola watch brand.

Other stunning boutique hotels downtown include the 100-room Foundation Hotel, which was originally the Detroit fire department headquarters, the 106-room Siren Hotel in the Wurlitzer Building, and the 110-room Element Detroit at the Metropolitan Building. The former Hotel Pontchartrain had a \$5 million renovation and is now Fort Pontchartrain Detroit, a Wyndham Hotel. Our newest additions include a new Cambria Hotel downtown and a luxury property, the Daxton Hotel, in Birmingham.

We look forward to seeing you in Detroit soon. 🌳





# Huntington Place *By Jeanne Brei & Mary Klida*

Located along a beautifully restored international riverfront in the heart of a vibrant downtown Detroit, the iconic venue is the 16th largest CC in the U.S. It opened in 1960 and was originally named in honor of former Detroit Mayor Albert Cobo, whose vision to build a CC was realized only after he died in office in 1957. In 2019, Detroit-based Chemical Bank, which merged with TCF Financial Corp. in 2020, bought the naming rights in a 22-year deal for \$1.5 million annually. And on Dec. 9, 2021, it became Huntington Place after Huntington merged with TCF Financial Corp. in June of 2021.

A \$279 million upgrade was completed in 2016 that transformed Huntington Place into a state-of-the-art facility including an 8,000 sq.ft. kitchen with a tasting room, a 40,000-sq.ft. ballroom (the largest ballroom in Michigan), a 30,000-sq.ft. three-story glass atrium; and 200,000 sq.ft. of flex space including exterior terraces. Huntington Place has free, ultra high-speed Wi-Fi available throughout the facility, two giant exterior video screens to promote events, programmable video displays outside every meeting room and hospitality services including an information and business service center, full service executive meeting, conference and banquet rooms. Food and beverage service is provided by Centerplate. Huntington Place is a LEED Gold and GBAC-certified facility that has received numerous industry awards for excellence, including

the 2020 USGBC Leadership Award for Building Performance, making it the only CC in the award's history.

A Detroit People Mover station inside the CC makes 13 stops around downtown including Greektown, the Renaissance Center and Grand Circus Park, which can be used to quickly get to a Q-Line station. Nearly three miles of uni-directional elevated track, the People Mover has a top speed of 56 miles per hour, looping downtown in about 15-20 minutes for 75 cents.

ASM Global has been managing the day-to-day operations since 2010, establishing the venue as a top CC both nationally and internationally which, prior to 2020, attracted nearly 1.5 million visitors annually.

During the pandemic suspension of events in 2020, the center supported the greater Detroit community by distributing more than 3 million pounds of food to agencies that aid local residents, sterilizing PPE for local area hospitals, becoming a temporary overflow field hospital, serving as a 2020 election ballot counting center, operating a day center for homeless services and becoming a drive-through location for vaccines, which is an ongoing effort.

Detroit artist Hubert Massey was commissioned to create a large fresco at the venue. Dedicated in Sept. 2018, it's a signature piece in Detroit's collection of public art and depicts a panoramic view of Detroit's historical legacy dating back 300 years. ©

## EAT

Across the street from Huntington Place is the wonderful Apparatus Room run by Michelin-starred chef Thomas Lents inside the Foundation Hotel. The Town House (500 Woodward Ave.) remodeled during lockdown and reopened in Sept. with an updated and elevated menu—including a caviar-topped crispy potato dish and A5 wagyu. Prime + Proper is an upscale steakhouse in the Capitol Park Lofts (1145 Griswold St.) with an aging room and butcher counter.

## SLEEP

Downtown's renaissance saw several boutique hotels open, including the 100-room Foundation Hotel (May 2017) in the historic Detroit Fire Department headquarters, the 106-room hip Siren Hotel (Spring 2018) in the 1926 Wurlitzer Building; the 129-room posh Shinola Hotel (Jan. 2019) and the 110-room Element Detroit at the Metropolitan Building (Dec. 2018) which is the only extended stay property in downtown. Adjacent to the CC is Fort Pontchartrain Wyndham Hotel, a 367-room, 25-story high-rise hotel that opened in 1965 and completed a \$5 million renovation in 2013. It has an indoor pool and 10,000 sq.ft. of meeting space.

## PLAY

Cars, sports, Motown, casinos and beautiful Belle Isle park—there's something for everyone, starting with The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation, Greenfield Village, Ford Rouge Factory Tour, Edsel & Eleanor Ford House, Detroit Institute of Arts Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Motown Museum, Detroit Historical Museum, Dossin Great Lakes Museum, Little Caesars Arena, Comerica Park, Ford Field and the Detroit International RiverWalk and much more!



# Open up to the possibilities

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**DINING**

## Downtown Detroit Restaurants are Ready for Recovery

By Jeanne Brei

The last couple of years have been especially hard on downtown Detroit's restaurants—lockdowns caused the closures of several favorites—the Fort Street Galley's Food Hall, Brome Modern Eatery and Plum Market are among those that have closed permanently, while others, like Hearth 71 in The Highlands on the 71st floor of the Renaissance Center are promising to reopen again soon.

The Town House took the time during the second lockdown to remodel and just reopened last September, six

years after its original debut in 2015, with an updated menu offering more fine dining options. The total revamp saw the dark wood accents, polished concrete floors, leather upholstered chairs, metalwork and mason jar light fixtures, which reflected the industrial history of Motor City, replaced with a more airy space featuring a lighter design that uses marble, pink hues, string lights, washed oak hardwood floors, plush seating, natural accents and greenery. The new, opened-up interior was accomplished by removing separation walls, adding a display kitchen and a redesigned atrium with a retractable roof.

The revamp also saw a retooled menu, which has replaced the comfort food and sushi with more seafood and vegetable-forward plates, luxe ingredients like caviar and King crab, as well as an emphasis on wine selections with the addition of a new

temperature-controlled bottle cabinet system.

The restaurant is owned by Jeremy Sasson and his Heirloom Hospitality group, which also owns Detroit steakhouse Prime + Proper, and CASH ONLY, an "ultra-exclusive" invite-only bar in Prime + Proper's basement that prohibits cell phones.

Award-winning chefs are still working downtown including Michelin-starred chef Thomas Lents (Apparatus Room in Detroit Foundation Hotel), James Beard nominee Chef Garret Lipar and Chef Kate Williams (Siren Hotel in Wurlitzer Building); and Andrew Carmellini (Shinola Hotel), among others.

Last September, Chef Lents was promoted to culinary director of the Aparium Hotel Group. In his expanded role, Lents will remain executive chef at Apparatus Room at the Detroit Foundation Hotel and will also assist with develop-

ing new programming across the portfolio. He earned widespread acclaim including two Michelin stars, five-diamonds from AAA, five-stars from the Forbes Travel Guide, four-stars from the *Chicago Tribune*, and four-stars from *Chicago* magazine as executive chef at Sixteen at the Trump Tower in Chicago. His impressive culinary career began in Chicago at Everest before joining two Michelin-starred Thornton Restaurant inside Dublin, Ireland's Fitzwilliam Hotel. He returned to his home state after a battle with cancer and an offer to oversee food and beverage at the vintage Detroit Foundation Hotel. The Chef's Table above the Apparatus Room, limited to only 12 diners, offers a family-style multi-course dining experience that was recognized as the *Detroit Free Press'* Restaurant of the Year in 2018. And Lents was a James Beard semifinalist for Best Chef: Great Lakes in 2018 and 2015.

For more casual dining, Buddy's Pizza (Detroit style-pizza) has a downtown location near the ballparks. Buddy's got its start on Conant Street in Detroit and has 11 locations; the upcoming 200-seat location near the M@dison Building downtown will feature dine-in seating and a grab-and-go area with square pizza by-the-slice. There's a cool new American beer and rec hall by NoHo Hospitality Group called the Brakeman over near the Shinola Hotel; inside is Penny Red's, a fried chicken counter, with delicious food, open for dinner. 🍷

**ENTERTAINMENT**

## The District Detroit Puts Everything in Walking Distance

by Jeanne Brei

When you're the home of Motown, the palatial Art Deco Fox Theatre (built in 1928), the fabulous Fisher Theatre (also built in 1928) known for its Broadway touring shows, the Fillmore Detroit (built in 1925 as the State Theatre in Renaissance Revival style of architecture) and the Detroit Opera House (built in 1922 as the Capitol Theatre in the style of the Italian Renaissance, with soaring Corinthian columns and an even more ornate interior featuring several kinds of marble, Tiffany mosaics, sculpture and gilt) along with venues for every major sport and casinos—and they're all within walking distance of each other—the next step is to give the area a name. And so The District Detroit, Detroit's entertainment district, was christened.

The District Detroit is a world-class sports and entertainment development—made up of 50 blocks, six theaters, five neighborhoods and four teams. Back in 2017, when Little Caesars Arena opened, they announced that The District Detroit would connect Downtown and Midtown into one contiguous, walkable area, where families, sports fans, entrepreneurs, entertainment lovers and others could enjoy a vibrant urban



setting with plenty of shows, sports and concerts.

They are still working on that ambitious project of connecting both neighborhoods but in the meantime, the District Detroit is a thriving art, music, sports and nightlife scene with Comerica Park, Little Caesars Arena and Ford Field featuring concerts when they aren't playing sports in their venues.

Faithful readers know how partial I am to historical Art Deco architecture, live music featuring the Great American Song Book and all things swanky. In downtown Detroit, nothing comes swankier than the Whitney mansion, one of the last standing of the many impressive homes on Woodward Avenue. The structure, completed in 1894, was designed for lumber baron David Whitney Jr. and described by one newspaper account at the time as "the most elaborate and substantial residence in this part of the country."

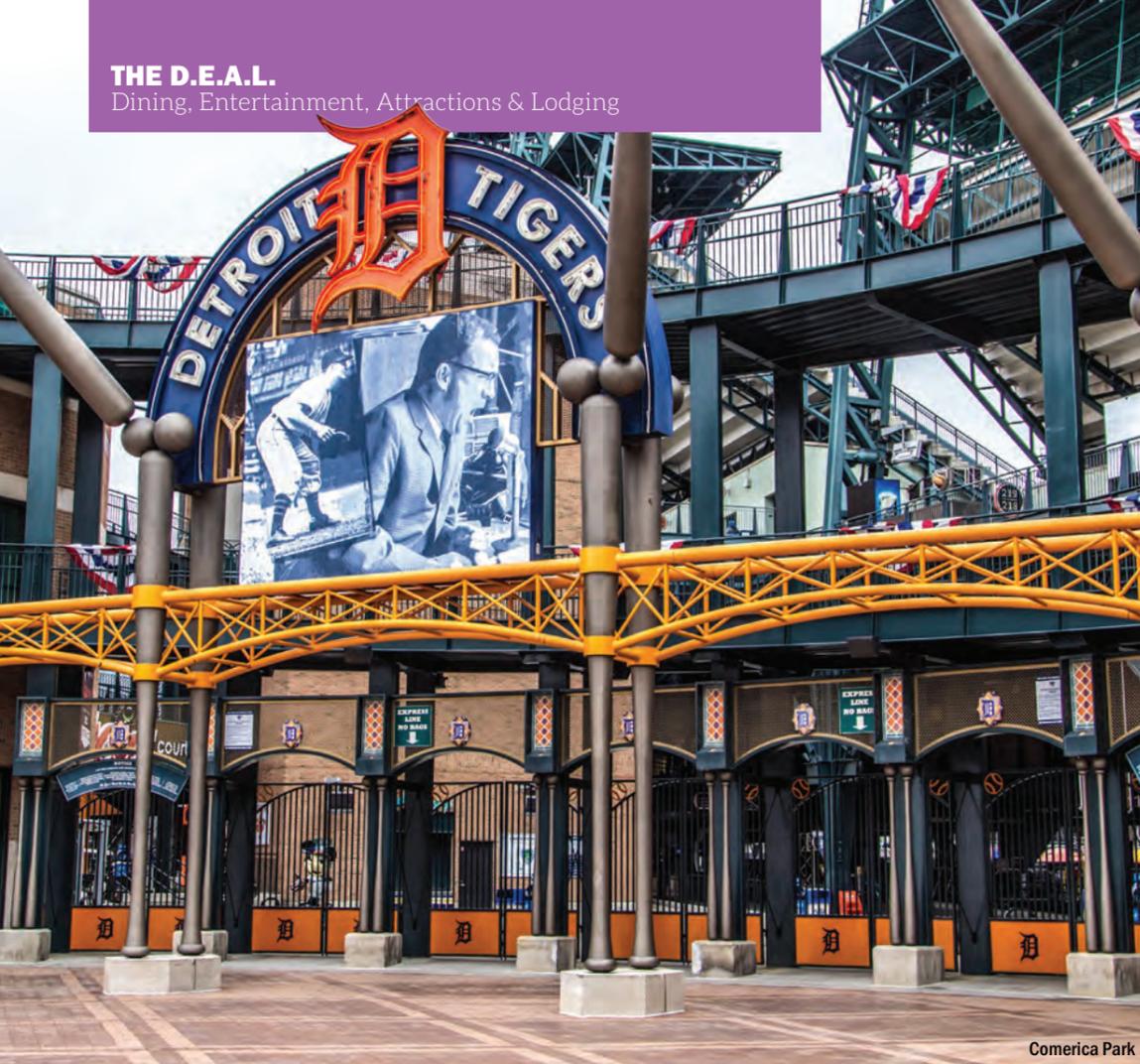
Built in a Romanesque style of South Dakota Jasper, a rare variety of pink granite that originally provided the outside of the house with a striking rose hue, the exterior features a multi-gabled roof and arched windows that add drama to the already luxurious facade. The 21,000 square foot home originally had 52 rooms, 10 bathrooms, 218 windows, 20 fireplaces, a secret vault in the original dining room and an elevator. Construction took four years at a cost of \$400,000.

With its gorgeous granite arches, crystal chandeliers and stained glass windows, the Whitney now has a new life full of grandeur as a fine dining restaurant and upscale lounge. Traditions of elegant tea parties and dinners, as well as sightings of David Whitney Jr.'s ghost, are alive and well. The third floor Ghostbar's eclectic spirits make any evening spent in the dining rooms or garden an

enchanted one—and possibly haunted one as well.

From the painted glass windows done by Mr. Tiffany himself to the light fixtures created and signed by Thomas Edison, it truly is a historic masterpiece. They offer free guided tours of the mansion throughout the night to tell more about what went into making this home. There are several parlors with beautiful fireplaces and fabulous mantles. One of the parlors has a collection of tapestries of mischievous cherubs, and there's also a dramatic stairwell that harkens a *Hello Dolly* or *Gone with the Wind* moment.

Tucked in on the top floor next to the Ghost Bar, The Woodward Room is a hidden gem in the restaurant. A small room facing Woodward (hence the name), it offers an intimate spot to dine. And many online reviewers mention that the live pianist is one of the highlights of an evening spent at the mansion. 🎹



Comerica Park

**ATTRACTIONS**

## Detroit's Attractions Appeal to Everyone

By Jeanne Brei

Detroit is a dynamic urban destination with something for literally everyone. Sports fans are truly in luck because all four sports teams are within a five-minute walk of each other. The 41,782-seat Comerica Park (home of the Detroit Tigers), the 65,000-seat Ford Field (home of the Detroit Lions), and Little Caesars Arena (home of the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit

Pistons), which holds 19,515 for ice hockey and 20,491 for basketball, are also known to host concerts—with Billy Joel scheduled to play (after two pandemic postponements) in July 2022 at Comerica Park and Justin Bieber's Justice World Tour is slated for Little Caesars Arena in June 2022.

Outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy walking the Detroit Riverfront or taking a Riverboat tour, hopping on a MoGo bike, and checking out Robert C. Valade Park/Atwater Beach or the beautiful Belle Isle. Riverside Kayak Connection will get you on the water in no time. Thousands of bicyclists come to downtown Detroit to explore the city for the Monday night Slow Roll. You can

rent a bike from Wheelhouse Detroit, or pick up a bike from a MoGo stall. If you're bold, the Adventure Park at West Bloomfield is a five-acre aerial forest that features 10 trails, 13 zip lines, five difficulty levels and 130 challenges in their obstacle courses where you can literally swing from the trees!

Neighborhood aficionados should check out Greektown, Corktown, Midtown, West Village, Eastern Market and Hamtramck (PolishTown) while gamblers should head to the Greektown Casino, the Motor City Casino or the Vegas-style MGM.

Museum lovers will find a great variety of choices including the Motown Muse-

um, Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation, [Edsel & Eleanor's] Ford House, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, and Dossin Great Lakes Museum are all must-sees. We haven't even mentioned the Ford Rouge Factory Tour, the downtown parks, like Beacon Park, Campus Martius Park and Capitol Park, or a day trip to Windsor, Canada—which is just the other side of the river and is a 15-minute drive by bridge or tunnel. Shoppers will enjoy getting great deals with the exchange rate and duty free items in Canada or, if staying in the U.S., shopping on the revitalized Woodward Avenue, checking out Campus Martius square for food truck eats and treats, and partying at The Belt, a street art-lined alley with outdoor bars that draw lively crowds.

Campus Martius Park is located in the center of downtown. In the summer there are bands and orchestras performing and you can relax in a beach area and enjoy cocktails from the beach bar. In the winter it's transformed into a winter wonderland with an ice rink. And it's only a 10-minute walk to the convention center.

Belle Isle Park is also just a short bike ride or Uber ride from Huntington Place. The breathtaking 983-acre island park looks like a 1930s summer camp—pack a picnic lunch and enjoy some fishing and nature. You can visit the nature center, historic aquarium and gorgeous conservatory, play tennis or visit the beach area that is complete with a waterslide and playgrounds. 🏖️

**LODGING**

## Detroit's Boutique Hotels Restore Legendary Glamour

By Jeanne Brei

Hotel options in downtown Detroit range from contemporary casinos with 1,000-sq.-ft. corner suites to historic landmarks with lobbies and guest rooms restored to legendary glamour. In total, some 5,000 rooms are in Detroit's prime downtown real estate.

Directly across the street from Huntington Place is the stunning Detroit Foundation Hotel, which transformed Detroit's former Fire Department headquarters, built in 1929, into a 100-room luxury hotel with a gorgeous dining area (the Apparatus Room), a mini-museum of fire dept. hats and gear on the fourth floor, a reading room on the third floor and one of the finest staffs guests could ask for. From the front desk clerks to the valet to the concierges, every employee goes above and beyond to ensure that you have the best possible stay. They even provide a complimentary car and driver if you'd like a ride or pickup within a three-mile radius of the hotel.

Also adjacent to Huntington Place is Fort Pontchartrain, a Wyndham Hotel (formerly the Crowne Plaza). The 367-



The Foundation Hotel

room, 25-story high-rise hotel opened in 1965 and was built on the site of Fort Pontchartrain, Detroit's first permanent European settlement dating back to 1701. It later became known as Fort Detroit. The hotel was named for the fort and for an earlier Hotel Pontchartrain, which was located on Cadillac Square at Woodward Avenue, before it was demolished in 1920. Their accommodations offer complimentary Wi-Fi, an indoor pool and a 24-hour fitness center. They have 32,000 sq.ft. of meeting and event space, with on-site catering and banquet services. Urban Cellars, their full-service restaurant and bar, is open daily and serves modern, American cuisine. Each guest room and suite is

equipped with a Keurig Coffee Maker, a mini-refrigerator, and unmatched views of the city or Detroit River.

Just around the corner is the gorgeous Detroit Club, the city's oldest private social club. The architectural beauty was constructed by Wilson Eyre in 1891 and became listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. The Romanesque Revival-styled building has 21 contemporarily crafted rooms that have been opened to the public. Features include the Library, a full-service craft cocktail bar that offers light bites for late night snacks on the first floor, Bohemia, which serves dinner Wed.-Sat., on the third floor and the newly designed SOAK Spa, located

in the lower level of the club, where guests may indulge in a large hot-tub or sauna and be pampered with a diverse menu of spa services ranging from massages to facials.

The only Detroit hotel that hasn't reopened or made plans to reopen in the wake of the pandemic is The Inn on Ferry Street, located in the East Ferry Street Historic District of Midtown Detroit. The four restored Victorian homes and two carriage houses offered 40 elegant Victorian rooms dating back to 1886. The Inn was a member of Historic Hotels of America and won a National Trust Honor award in 2002 for its remarkably detailed restoration with \$12 million in neighborhood improvements. 🏡