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Detroit Sound Conservancy Reconnaissance Survey

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This study has been prepared to explore specific resources and advise on whether these resources merit further consideration as a potential addition as an affiliated area of the National Park Service. Publication and transmittal of this report should not be considered an endorsement or a commitment by the National Park Service to seek or support legislative authorization for the project or its implementation. This report was prepared by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interior Regions 3, 4, 5. For more information, contact:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2018, US Representative Brenda Lawrence requested that the National Park Service (NPS) conduct a reconnaissance survey of the Detroit Sound Conservancy (DSC) to determine the possibility of designating the organization as an affiliated area of the NPS. The Detroit Sound Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that honors, preserves, and educates the public about Detroit's rich musical heritage. Given that the National Park Service is a place-based agency and affiliated areas are physical places and resources, this study cannot consider the Detroit Sound Conservancy as an organization in itself. In order to fulfill the request from Representative Lawrence, this reconnaissance survey will provide a preliminary evaluation of two sites associated with the DSC, the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios (United Sound), to determine whether they might qualify for affiliated area status.

The Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios are pieces of the Detroit musical legacy with stories that are celebrated and preserved by the DSC. The Blue Bird Inn was one of the most popular jazz clubs in Detroit from the 1940s through the 1960s. United Sound was one of the city's first major independent recording studios, recording nationally known musicians from the late 1940s through the 1980s. The Blue Bird Inn has never been assessed for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or nominated as a National Historic Landmark. The Blue Bird Inn and its stage are owned by the DSC. United Sound was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, though the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office's

determination did not indicate whether it would be eligible at the local, state, or national level. The building is owned by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), but has been included in this reconnaissance survey due to the level of assistance and support that the DSC has provided United Sound with over the years and MDOT's intent to sell the property following its relocation to accommodate highway improvements.

Since there is a unit of the national park system (New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park) dedicated to the origins and evolution of jazz, and several National Historic Landmarks that are significant for their contributions to popular music history that are preserved and interpreted for public enjoyment, the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound are unlikely to be found suitable for inclusion as affiliated areas of NPS. There does not appear to be a need for the special recognition or technical assistance beyond existing NPS programs that affiliated area status would provide to the Blue Bird Inn or United Sound at this time.

The DSC was initially established in 2012 and is still forming relationships and partnerships to support its mission. Given the lack of documentation for the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios, no further study considering affiliated area status or any other NPS designation is recommended at this time. The DSC is encouraged to continue building partnerships for the revitalization of these structures and work with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office to nominate them for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In November 2018, US Representative Brenda Lawrence of Michigan's 14th District sent a letter to acting National Park Service (NPS) director P. Daniel Smith requesting that the NPS conduct a reconnaissance survey to determine the possibility and appropriateness of designating the Detroit Sound Conservancy in Detroit, Michigan, as an affiliated area of the NPS (appendix A).

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF STUDY

Reconnaissance surveys are preliminary resource assessments that evaluate the national significance of historic resources as well as the suitability and feasibility of including those resources in the national park system, in this case, as an affiliated area. Evaluations are based on congressionally established criteria for inclusion outlined in *NPS Management Policies 2006* (appendix B). Conclusions provided in reconnaissance surveys are not considered final or definitive, they assist in determining whether further study for potential inclusion is warranted.

The National Park Service is a place-based federal agency whose mission is to preserve natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of the public. The Detroit Sound Conservancy (DSC) is a nonprofit organization that honors, preserves, and educates the public about Detroit's rich musical heritage. The National Park Service cannot study an organization itself for NPS affiliated area status – studies must be of physical study areas and their resources. In order to fulfill the request from Rep. Lawrence, the National Park Service will examine two sites associated with the DSC— the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios— to determine the possibility of designating those sites as affiliated areas of the national park system.

The Blue Bird Inn was one of the most popular jazz clubs in Detroit from the 1940s through the 1960s. It is owned by the DSC and is not open to the public at this time. United Sound was one of the city's first major independent recording studios, recording nationally known musicians from the late 1940s through the 1980s. The DSC is an advocate for its preservation and was recently a lessee. It is now owned by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and is not open to the public or in use as a studio at this time.

ABOUT AFFILIATED AREAS

Affiliated areas are owned and operated by nonfederal organizations that maintain a formal relationship with the National Park Service. Through this partnership, affiliates gain access to technical resources, historic preservation expertise, and branded graphics from the National Park Service. By designating an area an affiliate the area's importance to the nation is recognized without requiring or implying management by the National Park Service.

In order to be eligible for affiliated area status, a resource must:

- meet the standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the national park system;
- require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs;
- be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and
- be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the National Park Service and the nonfederal management entity (appendix B).

Nonfederal entities who manage affiliated areas are required to maintain a cooperative

relationship with the National Park Service. Through their partnership, affiliates have an opportunity to receive technical and financial assistance from the National Park Service. Affiliated areas allow a nationally significant site to be properly recognized without requiring full National Park Service management.

Sites considered for affiliated area status are evaluated by applying the national significance and suitability criteria for inclusion used to evaluate potential national park units found in *NPS Management Policies 2006* (appendix B).

In order to be considered eligible for inclusion as an affiliated area, a site must meet the criteria for national significance. According to *NPS Management Policies 2006*, national

significance for cultural resources is evaluated by applying the criteria for National Historic Landmarks (appendix D).

To be considered suitable, a site must contain a resource type that is not sufficiently represented in the national park system or adequately protected by other public or private entities. Potential for public enjoyment is also taken into consideration when evaluating the suitability of a site. The preferred forms of public enjoyment are found at sites that foster an understanding of and appreciation for historic resources, or sites that promote enjoyment through a direct relation, association, or interaction with historic resources.



HISTORIC CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREAS

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The vision of the Detroit Sound Conservancy, as stated on their website, is to “enhance Detroiters’ quality of life through preservation, education, performance, and placekeeping in The Detroit Sound Center at The Legendary Blue Bird Inn”.ⁱ The organization has several goals that are aimed at expanding the appreciation of and support for Detroit’s musical scene and history.

Music is an essential character in the history of Detroit. From bebop jazz, which enhanced the credibility of African American expressive culture, to techno, an innovative musical movement with roots in the city, Detroit has made substantial contributions to music history.ⁱⁱ

Rapid social and economic change has largely shaped the city’s musical outputs and in turn, the city’s music has helped effect socioeconomic change. With three of the largest US automakers headquartered in the city, much of Detroit’s early music was inspired by urbanization and industrialization. Neighborhoods were constantly rearranged to accommodate growth, and those who moved to the city brought with them a diverse array of musical backgrounds, making Detroit a hub for musical collaboration and experimentation.

Blue Bird Inn

Jazz noticeably emerged at the turn of the twentieth century in New Orleans, Louisiana. The genre is often regarded as a uniquely American style of music marked with innovation, experimentation, and controversy.ⁱⁱⁱ Stylistic variations and subgenres of jazz have emerged over the years due to its experimental nature and international popularity.

Jazz has a multitude of influences from African American folk styles such as blues and ragtime, to European ensemble bands.^{iv} Big band jazz, a style dating to the 1920s and 1930s which combined blues and ensemble traditions into a lively, danceable music form, was one of the first styles of jazz to thrive in Detroit.^v The unparalleled success of the automobile industry in the 1920s boosted the city’s economy and increased the demand for recreational facilities such as ballrooms. As a result, big band jazz groups gained popularity and became a vital part of Detroit’s musical scene.



Exterior of the Blue Bird Inn in 2019 (credit: Crain's Business Detroit)

Bebop was an outgrowth of big band jazz which emerged during the mid-1940s.^{vi} The style was more complex in rhythm, melody, and harmony than big band jazz and was more appealing to listeners than dancers. Bebop, like all forms of jazz, had place-based variations. The style first emerged in New York though cities like Chicago, Kansas City, and Detroit had large networks of bebop musicians who were influenced by a unique social context.

From the 1940s to the 1960s, the Blue Bird Inn was the center of bebop activity in Detroit.^{vii} The Blue Bird Inn first opened around 1938 as

an African American-owned neighborhood bar on the city's west side that featured live music.^{viii} As Detroit boomed during the 1940s, racial barriers began to break down. The big band venues of the 1920s and 1930s were usually segregated with black musicians playing for both black and white audiences, while the bebop clubs of the 1940s and 1950s often had integrated audiences.

While the Blue Bird Inn featured jazz acts throughout the 1940s, in 1948 the club's management decided to specialize in the presentation of bebop jazz. Charlie Parker, the originator of bebop, played at the Blue Bird Inn within a year of its transition.^{ix} Miles Davis, another popular jazz musician, performed there in the 1950s.^x



Jazz band performing at the Blue Bird Inn in 1948 (credit: Bob Douglas)

The Blue Bird Inn underwent a major renovation in 1957, which allowed the club to accommodate a larger audience.^{xi} After the renovation, more national jazz acts performed at the Blue Bird Inn including Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Jimmy Smith's trio, Horace Silver's quintet, and J. J. Johnson.^{xii}



Clarence Eddins in front of the Blue Bird Inn (credit: James Richardson)

The Blue Bird Inn started to decline in the 1970s when west side residents began moving to other parts of town and jazz became less popular. In the 1970s, the Blue Bird Inn stopped hosting live musical acts and operated solely as a neighborhood bar.^{xiii} The Blue Bird Inn was closed in the early 2000s and has since fallen into disrepair.^{xiv}

United Sound Systems Recording Studios

United Sound Systems Recording Studios, founded in 1933 by an Italian American violinist named James Siracuse, was one of the first independent recording studios in Detroit. United Sound was originally housed in Siracuse's home on Cass Avenue and relocated to its current location at 5840 Second Avenue around 1940.^{xv} The new location was a residential building that Siracuse and his brother redesigned to accommodate a recording studio.

Most of the initial recordings at United Sound were local advertisement jingles.^{xvi} It was not until the late-1940s that United Sound started to draw nationally-known artist to its studios. In 1947, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Duke Jordan,

Tommy Potter, and Max Roach recorded several songs at United Sound for Savoy Records.^{xvii} The following year, John Lee Hooker recorded his hit record, “Boogie Chilien,” at United Sound’s studios.^{xviii}



Exterior of United Sound Systems Recording Studios
(credit: Doug Coombe)

United Sound continued to attract national talent to its studios throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The founder of Motown Records, Berry Gordy Jr. began his musical career at United Sound. Though he was never employed there, Gordy often shadowed the studio’s operations. The first single for Motown Records, Marv Johnson’s “Come to Me,” was recorded at United Sound.^{xix} Gordy eventually established his own recording studio on West Grand Boulevard, the iconic, “Hitsville USA.”



George Clinton with engineer Jim Vitti at United Sound Systems Recording Studios (credit: Detroit Free Press)

The lead producer at Motown Records during the golden era of the 1960s, Don Davis, purchased United Sound in 1971.^{xx} Davis modernized the building’s studio space and updated most of the equipment. The same year that Davis purchased United Sound, he founded the only black-owned and operated commercial bank in the state of Michigan, First Independence Bank. Well-known artists like Aretha Franklin and George Clinton recorded at United Sound during the 1970s and 1980s, but Davis eventually closed the studios’ doors in the 1990s as the banking business began taking up more of his time.

United Sound sat vacant for nearly a decade until 2004 when a local couple, Roger and Aretha Hood, purchased and reopened the building on a limited basis until 2008.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREAS

Blue Bird Inn

The Blue Bird Inn is located on Detroit's west side at 5021 Tireman Avenue in a small commercial district within a larger residential area. The one story commercial building is 3,615 square feet and situated on a parcel of approximately 0.2 acres. The original construction date and use of the Blue Bird Inn building is unknown. The structure likely dates to the 1920s and is of brick construction. Since the Blue Bird Inn's closing in the early 2000s, the interior has fallen into a state of disrepair.

An archeological group from Wayne State University's anthropology department surveyed the building in 2015. They discovered that the stage and its backdrop were in relatively good condition. The following year, the DSC was able to acquire, remove, and restore the stage, and showcase it in museums and exhibits around the world. The DSC purchased the Blue Bird Inn building in early 2019 and plans to restore it to a functioning club with museum-like exhibits, space for the organization, and archives of Detroit music history. The DSC plans to return the stage to the Blue Bird Inn in the future.

United Sound Systems Recording Studios

United Sound Systems Recording Studios is located at 5840 Second Avenue. The building is 7,013 square feet on a parcel of approximately 0.5 acres. The building is a residential structure that was redesigned to accommodate United Sound's recording studios. A large addition was added to the rear of the building in the 1950s. The property has undergone several renovations since it first opened though it has consistently been used as a recording studio.

The Detroit Sound Conservancy led the process to create a local historic district for the United Sound building and surrounding land, including the adjacent parking lot to the north, in 2015 and helped raise funds for a state historic marker in 2017. In 2015 and 2016, the DSC rented space for its first office, vault, and exhibit area on the first floor of United Sound.

In 2019, the United Sound building, adjacent parking lot to the north, and recording/engineering equipment was purchased by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). MDOT is currently working on a modernization project for Interstate 94 directly southeast of the United Sound building. MDOT will move the building to the adjacent parking lot as part of project mitigation for the Interstate 94 modernization project and sell the studio after relocation.^{xxi}

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION

Affiliated areas of the National Park Service are required to meet the same criteria for national significance that apply to units of the national park system. To be considered nationally significant, according to *NPS Management Policies* § 1.3 (appendix B), a study area should:

- be an outstanding example of a particular type of resource;
- possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage;
- have superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study; and
- retain a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

National significance for cultural resources is determined by applying the National Historic Landmark (NHL) criteria (appendix D). National Historic Landmarks are buildings, sites, districts, structures, or objects that are considered nationally significant under at least one of six criteria. NHLs must retain a high degree of integrity in location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. All NHLs are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), a similar program also administered by the National Park Service which recognizes historically significant properties at the local, state, and national level.

EVALUATION OF RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

The Blue Bird Inn

The Blue Bird Inn has never been assessed by National Park Service professionals or the

Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to determine whether it could meet NRHP or NHL criteria. The National Park Service is unable to speculate about the significance of the Blue Bird Inn at this time given the lack of existing documentation. The National Park Service recommends that the Detroit Sound Conservancy work with the SHPO to determine whether the Blue Bird Inn is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places so that the site may be considered for designation as an NHL or for inclusion as an NPS affiliated area.

While the national significance of the Blue Bird Inn has yet to be determined, it is evident that the structure's integrity has been compromised. The exterior of the building remains fairly intact: windows and doors have been modified, but the façade retains most of its historic character. Conversely, the interior of the building has fallen into a state of disrepair. The historic stage was recently removed and restored by the Detroit Sound Conservancy and has been featured at several exhibits outside of its original setting.



Interior of the Blue Bird Inn (credit: Detroit Sound Conservancy)

United Sound Systems Recording Studios

The SHPO has determined that United Sound Systems Recording Studios is eligible for the National Register for its, “association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history” (criterion A) and for its, “association with the lives of persons significant in our past” (criterion B).^{xxii} The determination provided by the SHPO does not define the site’s level of significance. The United Sound Systems Recording Studios property was designated a local historic district by the Detroit City Council in 2015, confirming the structure’s importance at the local level. A state historical marker was installed in front of the building in 2017, suggesting that the site is at least significant at the state level.^{xxiii} If it is not eligible for NRHP listing at the national level, United Sound is unlikely to meet the criteria for national significance as an NHL, and therefore not eligible for inclusion as an affiliated area of the National Park Service.



State historical marker in front of United Sound Systems Recording Studios (credit: Detroit Sound Conservancy)

The integrity of the United Sound building is unclear. The building was recently purchased by MDOT with plans to move it to a nearby lot. The move will minimally impact the integrity of United Sound’s location while keeping it within its designated local historic district. The setting will be affected by the imminent highway modernization project which will widen an off-ramp for Interstate 94 to the current location of United Sound. Although there is evidence that the building has undergone several changes over the years, including extensive upgrades in the 1970s, there is not enough information available to determine the building’s historic conditions and the integrity of its design, materials, or workmanship. The feeling and association of the site retains a high level of integrity as it still contains functioning studio space.

NEED FOR FURTHER CONTEXT

National Historic Landmarks are typically identified through theme studies. Theme studies provide a comparative analysis of similar properties to assist in identifying sites that may be eligible for NHL nomination. In order to determine the national significance of multiple related properties, theme studies provide a detailed national historic context. Further research would be needed to identify other comparably properties in Detroit and nationally to support a conclusion of national significance.

In the Memorandum of Agreement for the Interstate 94 Modernization project, the SHPO agreed to develop a thematic study of music-related sites in Detroit. When complete, that study will provide much needed insight into the significance of the Blue Bird Inn, United Sound, and other sites in Detroit that may be of interest to the Detroit Sound Conservancy in the future.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION FOR RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

Since the Blue Bird Inn has not been documented as an NHL or for listing in the NRHP, further study would be required to determine whether the building may be considered nationally significant. The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office determined that United Sound is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP, but the level of significance was not evaluated.

The National Park Service recommends that the Detroit Sound Conservancy coordinate with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office to evaluate the potential for including the Blue Bird Inn in the NRHP and to document and evaluate the level of significance for United Sound Systems Recording Studios.

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF RESOURCE SUITABILITY

INTRODUCTION

A study area is determined to be suitable if it contains a natural or cultural resource type that is not adequately represented in the national park system or comparably protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or private entities. Adequacy of representation is determined by comparing the study area to similarly managed sites while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. Examining comparable sites provides insight into whether the study area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in areas that are already managed by NPS or others (appendix B).

DESCRIPTION OF COMPARABLE SITES

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park

New Orleans, Louisiana, is often considered the birthplace of jazz with many social and traditional practices associated with its origins still recognized in the city to this day. New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park was established in 1994 with a mission to preserve the history and legacy of jazz music and culture in the city where it originated.^{xxiv} Most of the park unit lies within Louis Armstrong Park, though the visitor center is approximately six blocks away. New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park is managed by the National Park Service. The park leases Perseverance Hall, a historic venue, for demonstrations and educational performances.

Mutual Musicians' Foundation Building

The Mutual Musicians' Foundation Building in Kansas City, Missouri, was essential to the development of the "Kansas City" style of jazz. The building was home to the American

Federation of Musicians Local 627 whose members, including Count Basie and Charlie Parker, helped create Kansas City jazz.

The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 for its association with significant events in American black, social, and performing arts history.^{xxv} The Mutual Musicians' Foundation Building was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1981. It is privately owned and is open to the public for jazz late Friday and Saturday nights.



Mutual Musicians Foundation Building (credit: Jason Troy Masters)



Ryman Auditorium (credit: US Department of State)

Ryman Auditorium

The Union Gospel Tabernacle, or Ryman Auditorium, in Nashville, Tennessee, was constructed in the 1890s for the purpose of holding large-scale revivals indoors. A stage was added in 1904 when the building transitioned into a non-religious auditorium. The Ryman

became home to the Grand Ole Opry in 1941, a musical institution which has played a critical role in the evolution of American Country music.

The Ryman Auditorium was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 for its association with religious and performing arts events that are significant in American history.^{xxvi} The building was later designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001 for its association with the Grand Ole Opry. It is privately owned and is open to the public for tours and performances.

Beale Street National Historic Landmark District

Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee, is an important location in the history of American Blues music. W. C. Handy was a musician whose work brought blues music to popular culture. Handy and his band moved to Memphis in 1909 and regularly performed at clubs on Beale Street. Beale Street was designated a National Historic Landmark district in 1966 and is recognized for its contributions to the national history of music. Many buildings along Beale Street remain in use as privately-owned buildings open to the public, offering musical performances.

Hitsville USA/Motown Museum

Hitsville USA is a recording studio that was created in 1959 to house Berry Gordy Jr.'s "Motown Records." The building currently serves as part of the Motown Museum: a museum dedicated to the history of Motown Records and its influence on Detroit and the world. The museum was established in 1972 by Esther Gordy Edwards, Berry Gordy Jr.'s sister, and remains in private ownership and open to the public for tours. The Motown Museum recently announced that it will construct a 50,000 square foot addition to the Hitsville USA site. The property has never been studied for

inclusion in the National Register or nominated as a National Historic Landmark.



Berry Gordy's "Hitsville USA" Recording Studios building
(credit: Ken Lund)

Sun Record Company Studio

A record producer named Sam Phillips opened a recording studio in 1950 at 706 Union Avenue in Memphis, Tennessee. Phillips would go on to create a record label, Sun Records, which launched the careers of artists like B. B. King, Joe Hill Louis, and Elvis Presley. The Sun Record Company is recognized for its contributions to the creation of Rock n Roll music.

The Sun Record Company Studio was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2003. The building was found to be significant for its association with people and events that contributed to our national history.^{xxvii} It is privately owned and is open to the public for tours.



Sun Record Company Studio building (credit: David Jones)

Muscle Shoals Sound Studio and FAME Studio

In 1969, four musicians left Florence, Alabama Music Enterprises (FAME) Studio in Muscle Shoals, Alabama and created a new recording

space in Sheffield, Alabama at 3614 Jackson Highway. The new studio, Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, attracted artists like the Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, and Paul Simon. The recording studio was moved to a larger facility in 1979, and the Jackson Highway building has been restored.



Muscle Shoals Sound Studio building (credit: George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)



Fame Recording Studios (credit: NPS)

The Muscle Shoals Sound Studio building on Jackson Highway was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 at the national level for its contributions to American music history. FAME Studio was also listed in the National Register in 2016 at the national level for its contributions to music history and for its associations with important figures in our nation's past.^{xxviii} Both Muscle Shoals Sound Studio and FAME Studio are privately owned and open to the public for tours.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION FOR RESOURCE SUITABILITY

As described above, a determination of suitability is made by comparing similar resources comparably protected for public enjoyment by NPS, other federal agencies, or other entities. The preliminary inventory of comparable sites provides the basis for evaluation in this reconnaissance survey. There may be additional comparable sites that are not identified in this preliminary study.

The Blue Bird Inn can be compared to performance venues for jazz and other forms of popular music in the mid to late 20th century. Performance venues Perseverance Hall at New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park and the privately owned and operated Mutual Musicians' Foundation building and Ryman Auditorium offer visitors both historic interpretation and the opportunity to take in live performances. Venues along Beale Street also offer performances in a nationally recognized historic setting.

United Sound Systems Recording Studios can be compared to "Hitsville USA" in Detroit, the Sun Record Company Studio in Memphis, and Muscle Shoals and FAME studios in northwestern Alabama, privately-owned current and former recording studios that offer public tours. The Sun Record Company, Muscle Shoals, and FAME studios are recognized for their national importance.

Based on a preliminary evaluation of comparable sites, it is unlikely that the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios would be found suitable for inclusion as affiliated areas of the National Park Service at this time. Many comparable sites are

recognized as NHLs and are well-maintained by nonfederal management entities, and the National Park Service already protects resources related to the history and origins of jazz at New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

ASSESSING THE NEED FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Affiliated areas are nationally significant properties that meet the criteria for suitability and that require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs.

Since the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios have not been determined nationally significant, they are not currently eligible for assistance through many existing NPS programs. To strengthen eligibility to receive assistance from the National Park Service, the Detroit Sound Conservancy should work with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office to pursue listing of the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios in the National Register of Historic Places.

NPS technical assistance for historic preservation and collections management are available to affiliated areas, but a wealth of information is available to the public at large as well. The Technical Preservation Services branch of NPS provides technical assistance and guidance on the preservation of historic properties, publications which are the basis for responsible care of historic buildings and landscapes in the community of preservation practice. The NPS Museum Handbook is a publicly available resource that establishes standards and procedures of preservation as

well as documentation and accountability for museum collections. Neither the Blue Bird Inn nor United Sound are open to the public at the time of this study. Therefore, assistance that NPS provides to affiliated areas with interpretation or visitor services are not required at this time.

The Detroit Sound Conservancy currently works with local entities for the purpose of educational and interpretive programming. The organization has shown skill in identifying and spurring action at sites without the need for federal assistance. It does not appear that special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs is required for the Blue Bird Inn or United Sound at this time.

Given the preliminary nature of this reconnaissance survey and that national significance, suitability, and need for special recognition or technical assistance criteria are unlikely to be met at this time, no further evaluation was given to the two additional criteria for affiliated areas: that affiliated areas be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and that NPS be assured of sustained resource protection as documented in a formal agreement .

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

For resources and properties to be eligible for inclusion as an affiliated area of the National Park Service, they must be nationally significant, suitable, and require special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs. Current documentation does not allow for definitive conclusions to be made for these criteria.

The Blue Bird Inn

Significance: Without an evaluation confirming national significance, the Blue Bird Inn does not meet the criteria for inclusion as an affiliated area. The Detroit Sound Conservancy should work with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office to determine the Blue Bird Inn's eligibility for listing in the NRHP, and if eligible at the national level of significance, its eligibility as a NHL.

Suitability: It is unlikely that the Blue Bird Inn would meet the criteria for suitability as an important site in the evolution of jazz music. There is a national park unit dedicated to jazz, and several other sites significant to the history of popular music that are preserved and open to the public.

United Sound Systems Recording Studios

Significance: Though United Sound Systems Recording Studios has been determined eligible for listing in the NRHP, without a finding of national significance, United Sound would not meet the significance criteria for inclusion as an affiliated area.

Suitability: It is unlikely that the United Sound would meet the criteria for suitability. There are several recording studios that have made significant contributions to music history that are recognized as NHLs or listed in the NRHP as nationally significant that are open to the public and interpreted for public enjoyment. Most of

those properties are sufficiently managed and maintained by nonfederal management entities and without NPS-affiliated area status.

NEED FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

It is unclear that the Blue Bird Inn or United Sound require special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs at this time.

The Detroit Sound Conservancy was established in 2012 and is still forming relationships and partnerships to support its mission. The Conservancy has shown an ability to identify priorities and execute them without federal funding. For this reason, it is unclear how any partnership or designation with the National Park Service would help the organization meet its future goals.

If the Detroit Sound Conservancy continues to draw on support from its community, nonfederal entities, and existing NPS programs, the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound could be sufficiently managed without the need for affiliated area status, and could be listed in the NRHP or recognized as NHLs if more in-depth study finds that the sites are significant.

CONCLUSION

The Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios are pieces of the Detroit musical legacy. The Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios have not been adequately assessed for their potential national significance and are also unlikely to be found suitable for inclusion as affiliated areas of the National Park Service. This reconnaissance survey does not recommend further study for NPS-affiliated area status at this time.

For additional opportunities for protection and public enjoyment of these sites, the Detroit

Sound Conservancy should work with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office to determine whether the Blue Bird Inn and United Sound Systems Recording Studios could

be considered for inclusion in the NRHP at the national level of significance. Listing in the NRHP would make available additional technical assistance and funding opportunities.

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- National Register of Historic Places. Ryman Auditorium. Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee. National Register #71000819

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"The Blue Bird Inn." The History and Future of the Motor City.

<http://detroit1701.org/Blue%20Bird%20Inn.html#.XNXUPo5KiUn>.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Representative Lawrence Reconnaissance Survey Request Letter

BRENDA L. LAWRENCE
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
14TH DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

www.lawrence.house.gov

VICE CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS FOR
WOMEN'S ISSUES

SECRETARY, CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

SENIOR WHIP

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2214

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND
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RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

November 13, 2018

Mr. Paul Daniel Smith, Deputy Director
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Reconnaissance Study of the Detroit Sound Conservancy (DSC)

Dear Deputy Director Smith:

I respectfully write to request a reconnaissance survey of the Detroit Sound Conservancy (DSC), located in Detroit, Michigan, with the intent to determine the possibility of designating DSC as an affiliated area of the National Park Service. Since 2012, the Detroit Sound Conservancy has been a significant organization working to preserve Detroit's rich historic musical legacy.

Through partnerships and programs spanning outreach, preservation, education, storytelling, curation, and innovation, the DSC has established itself as a committed advocate for the preservation and advocacy of the city's sonic heritage. In 2012, DSC conducted a music tour for the Allied Media Conference and since then has gone on to archive an oral history of Detroit music online, making its legacy truly accessible. In 2015, DSC acquired the historic Graystone International Jazz Museum Collection. They also moved their operations into the United Systems Recording Studios, a locally designated historic district, home to numerous prominent musicians for decades and the birthplace of Berry Gordy's Motown Records. In 2016, DSC rebuilt the Blue Bird Inn Stage, a historical Detroit jazz venue. In 2017, they transported the stage to France for a major design exhibition and started the Detroit Sound Hall of Fame. Most recently in 2018, DSC purchased the Blue Bird Inn with the plans of redeveloping it as a creative community node on Detroit's West Side.

From jazz to techno, blues to hip-hop, the core of Motown and beyond, Detroit has been at the center of musical innovation since the early 20th century. I write today to ask that the National Park Service conduct a reconnaissance survey to see if a designation of the Detroit Sound Conservancy as an affiliate area of the National Park Service would be possible and appropriate.

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If you or your staff need any additional information regarding my support, please do not hesitate to call our office. We look forward to hearing from you and we thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

Appendix B: National Park Service *Management Policies 2006* § 1.3

1.3 Criteria for Inclusion

Congress declared the national park system General Authorities Act of 1970 that areas comprising the national park system are cumulative expressions of a single national heritage. Potential additions to the national park system should therefore contribute in their own special way to a system that fully represents the broad spectrum of natural and cultural resources that characterize our nation. The National Park Service is responsible for conducting professional studies of potential additions to the national park system when specifically authorized by an act of Congress, and for making recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and Congress. Several laws outline criteria for units of the national park system and for additions to the Natural Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the National Trails System.

To receive a favorable recommendation from the Service, a proposed addition to the national park system must:

- (1) Possess nationally significant or cultural resources, (2) be a suitable addition to the park system, (3) be a feasible addition to the system, and (4) require direct NPS management instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector. These criteria are designed to ensure that the national park system include only the most outstanding examples of the nation's natural and cultural resources. These criteria also recognize that there are other management alternatives for preserving the nation's outstanding resources.

1.3.1 National Significance

NPS professionals, in consultation with subject-matter experts, scholars, and scientists, will determine whether a resource is nationally significant. An area will be considered nationally significant if it meets all the following criteria:

- It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.

- It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.
- It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study.
- It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

National significance for cultural resources will be evaluated by applying the National Historic Landmarks criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65 (Code of Federal Regulations).

1.3.2 Suitability

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination or resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the national park system or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

1.3.3 Feasibility

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from

sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and (2) capable of efficient administration by the Service at a reasonable cost.

In evaluating feasibility, the Service considers a variety of factors for a study area, such as the following:

- Size
- Boundary configurations
- Current and potential land use of the study area and surrounding lands
- Landownership patterns
- Public enjoyment potential
- Costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation
- Access
- Current and potential threats to the resource
- Existing degradation of resources
- Staffing requirements
- Local planning and zoning
- The level of local and general public support (including landowners)
- The economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system

The feasibility evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability of funding and personnel.

An overall evaluation of feasibility will be made after taking into account all of the above factors. However, evaluations may sometimes identify concerns or conditions, rather than simply reach a yes or no conclusion. For example, some new areas may be feasible additions to the national park system only if landowners are willing to sell, or the boundary encompasses specific areas necessary for visitor access, or state or local governments will provide appropriate assurances that adjacent land uses will remain compatible with the study area's resources and values.

1.3.4 Direct NPS Management

There are many excellent examples of the successful management of important natural and cultural resources by other public agencies, private conservation organizations, and individuals. The National Park Service applauds these accomplishments and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local, and private entities and by other federal agencies. Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the Service will recommend that one or more of these other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area will not receive national park system status.

Studies will evaluate an appropriate range of management alternatives and will identify which alternative or combination of alternatives would, in the professional judgement of the Director, be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing opportunities for appropriate public enjoyment. Alternatives for NPS management will not be developed for study areas that fail to meet any one of the four criteria for inclusion listed in section 1.3.

In cases where a study area's resources meet criteria for national significance but do not meet other criteria for inclusion in the national park system, the Service may instead recommend an alternative status, such as "affiliated area." To be eligible for affiliated status, the area's resources must (1) meet the same standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the national park system; (2) require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs; (3) be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the Service and the nonfederal management entity. Designation as a "heritage area" is another option that may be recommended. Heritage areas have a nationally important, distinctive assemblage of resources that is best managed for conservation, recreation, education, and continued use through partnerships among public and private entities at the local or regional level. Either of these two

alternatives (and others as well) would recognize an area's importance to the nation without

requiring or implying management by the National Park Service.

Appendix C: Excerpt from Report on Criteria for Affiliated Areas

National Park Service, February 1990

Summary

Public Law 100-336 directs the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a report on criteria for the elements of national significance and other factors necessary for an area to be considered appropriate as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

A study by the National Park Service found that there is no clear legislative basis for listing affiliated areas, the title has not been applied consistently in the past, and that no standards exist for National Park Service oversight of how affiliated areas are operated. Areas have been classified as affiliated because they did not fit the definition of a park system unit rather than because they did meet some clearly defined criteria.

The report recommends that the title of affiliated area be applied to a select group of nationally significant areas that have a formal cooperative relationship with the National Park Service.

Affiliated status should not be considered a stepping stone toward becoming a unit of the National Park System, and it should not be used simply as a mechanism to provide funds to these areas.

Areas would be defined as being affiliated with the National Park System if Congress or the Secretary has determined that they meet criteria for national significance, the resources can be most efficiently and effectively managed by a cooperative management arrangement with the National Park Service instead of direct operation as a unit of the National Park System, and NPS has some continuing responsibility for technical or financial assistance and oversight of the area's management.

A single set of criteria for national significance is proposed for potential NPS units and affiliated areas. As outlined in the 1988 NPS Management Policies, a resource is considered nationally significant if it: 1) is an outstanding example of a

particular type of resource; 2) possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our Nation's heritage; 3) offers superlative opportunities for recreation, public use and enjoyment or for scientific study; and 4) retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of the resource. The report provides examples of natural, cultural, and recreational resources that may be nationally significant.

Two additional criteria are recognized in evaluating potential new parks and affiliated areas: suitability/feasibility and management alternatives. Criteria for suitability and feasibility as an affiliated area differ somewhat from the criteria for a NPS unit because affiliated areas are not managed by the National Park Service. To be suitable and feasible as an affiliate, the area must need some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs, document that a cooperative arrangement with the National Park Service and contributions from other sources will be adequate to assure long-term protection of the resource, and be able to establish and continue a standard of maintenance, operations, public service, and financial accountability consistent with requirements applicable to National Park System units....

Recommendations

The title of affiliated area should be used for a select group of nationally significant areas that have a formal cooperative relationship with the National Park Service. The primary purpose of affiliated area "status" should be to recognize the significance of the resources and affirm that the area is being managed consistent with standards that apply to National Park System units.

Recognition or designation as an affiliated areas should not be considered to be a stepping stone toward status as a unit of the National Park System, nor should it be used to provide funding for such areas through the National Park System budget. Affiliated areas should be eligible for

technical and, in some cases, financial assistance but this assistance should be limited to the minimum necessary for carrying out a cooperative management arrangement. Affiliated status should not be conferred on areas primarily to supplement existing grant programs or provide special appropriations by Congress. Areas that receive special appropriations from Congress or technical assistance projects would not be considered affiliated areas if they were not nationally significant and did not involve a continuing cooperative relationship with the National Park Service.

Such a definition for affiliated areas would not diminish the importance of NPS providing technical or financial assistance to many other areas including national natural and historic

landmarks, rivers, trails, and other special projects. Under the National Historic Preservation Act and the Outdoor Recreation Act of 1963, NPS has general authority to provide technical assistance to public and private sites that are not necessarily of national significance. Congress is likely to continue providing special appropriations to a few areas through the National Park Service budget regardless of national significance and without specifying any operating relationship to the National Park Service. These areas would not be considered affiliates. The proposed definition would draw a distinction between the thousands of areas that NPS is associated with and a smaller set of areas that are affiliated through a more formal relationship with the National Park System....

Appendix D: 36 CFR § 65.4: National Historic Landmark Criteria

The criteria applied to evaluate properties for possible designation as National Historic Landmarks or possible determination of eligibility for National Historic Landmark designation are listed below. These criteria shall be used by NPS in the preparation, review and evaluation of National Historic Landmark studies. They shall be used by the Advisory Board in reviewing National Historic Landmark studies and preparing recommendations to the Secretary. Properties shall be designated National Historic Landmarks only if they are nationally significant. Although assessments of national significance should reflect both public perceptions and professional judgments, the evaluations of properties being considered for landmark designation are undertaken by professionals, including historians, architectural historians, archeologists and anthropologists familiar with the broad range of the nation's resources and historical themes. The criteria applied by these specialists to potential landmarks do not define significance nor set a rigid standard for quality. Rather, the criteria establish the qualitative framework in which a comparative professional analysis of national significance can occur. The final decision on whether a property possesses national significance is made by the Secretary on the basis of documentation including the comments and recommendations of the public who participate in the designation process.

(a) Specific Criteria of National Significance: The quality of national significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

- (1) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an

- understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or
- (2) That are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
- (3) That represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
- (4) That embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for a study of a period, style or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) That are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or
- (6) That have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.

(b) Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not eligible for designation. Such properties, however, will qualify if they fall within the following categories:

- (1) A religious property deriving its primary national significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- (2) A building or structure removed from its original location but which is nationally significant primarily for its architectural merit, or for association with persons or events of

- transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or
- (3) A site of a building or structure no longer standing but the person or event associated with it is of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or
- (4) A birthplace, grave or burial if it is of a historical figure of transcendent national significance and no other appropriate site, building or structure directly associated with the productive life of that person exists; or
- (5) A cemetery that derives its primary national significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, or from an exceptionally distinctive design or from an exceptionally significant event; or
- (6) A reconstructed building or ensemble of buildings of extraordinary national significance when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other buildings or structures with the same association have survived; or
- (7) A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own national historical significance; or
- (8) A property achieving national significance within the past 50 years if it is of extraordinary national importance.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Detroit Sound Conservancy, “Vision, Mission, and Goals,” <http://detroitsound.org/mission/> (updated June 14, 2019)

ⁱⁱ Anthony Marcias, “‘Detroit was Heavy’: Modern Jazz, Bebop, and African American Expressive Culture,” *The Journal of African American History* 95, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 66.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Park Service, Foundation Document: New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, New Orleans, LA, May 2015.

^{iv} Lars Bjorn and Jim Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 10.

^v Bjorn, 205.

^{vi} Bjorn, 206.

^{vii} Anthony Marcias, 49.

^{viii} “Blue Bird Inn.” *Detroit Tribune*, May 14, 1938.

^{ix} “The Blue Bird Inn,” The History and Future of the Motor City, <http://detroit1701.org/Blue%20Bird%20Inn.html#.XNXUPo5KiUn>.

^x “The Blue Bird Inn.”

^{xi} Bjorn, 116.

^{xii} Bjorn, 117.

^{xiii} Lorin Brace, “Archeology at the Blue Bird,” last modified November 7, 2015, <http://detroitsoundconservancy.org/archaeology-at-the-blue-bird/>.

^{xiv} Brace.

^{xv} Michigan Department of Transportation, “Final Section 4(f) Evaluations for the Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District, I-94/M-10 Interchange, Square D/Detroit Fuse & Manufacturing Building, and the United Sound Systems Recording Studios,” I-94 Rehabilitation Project: Final Environmental Impact Statement, December 2004.

^{xvi} City of Detroit City Council, “Proposed United Sound System Recording Studios Historic District Final Report,” Historic Designation Advisory Board, 2014.

^{xvii} Jazz Discography Project, “Charlie Parker Discography,” Jazzdisco.org, Jazz Discography Project, 1947, <https://www.jazzdisco.org/charlie-parker/discography/#471221>.

^{xviii} City of Detroit City Council, 4.

^{xix} City of Detroit City Council, 4.

^{xx} City of Detroit City Council, 5.

^{xxi} Ann Arbor’s 107 One, “United Sound Systems Recording Studio Will Be Preserved,” January 11, 2019. <http://www.annarbors107one.com/2019/01/11/united-sound-systems-recording-studio-will-be-preserved/> (accessed November 6, 2019)

^{xxii} Michigan Department of Transportation.

^{xxiii} The *Governor John B. Swainson Michigan Historical Markers Act* states that sites that are eligible to receive a state historical marker must have historic significance to the state.

^{xxiv} National Park Service. *Foundation Document: New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park*. New Orleans, LA. May 2015.

^{xxv} National Register of Historic Places. Mutual Musician's Foundation Building. Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. National Register #79001372

^{xxvi} National Register of Historic Places. Ryman Auditorium. Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee. National Register #71000819

^{xxvii} National Register of Historic Places. Sun Record Company. Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee. National Register #03001031

^{xxviii} National Register of Historic Places. Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. Sheffield, Colbert County, Alabama. National Register #06000437