



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*Planning Division*

**m e m o r a n d u m**

**TO:** The Urbana Historic Preservation Commission

**FROM:** Rebecca Bird, Historic Preservation Planner

**DATE:** April 30, 2008

**SUBJECT:** 209 South Broadway Avenue (Urbana-Lincoln Hotel): Public hearing for a historic landmark application, Case No. HP2008-L-01

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## **Introduction & Background**

Historic Preservation Case No. HP2008-L-01 is an application by Brian Adams to designate the property at 209 South Broadway Avenue (referred to as the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel) as a local historic landmark. Published taxpayer and parcel information indicate Jay Bhaghavan as the property owner. However, the hotel was recently purchased by Global Hotel Management of Normal, Illinois, from foreclosure by Marine Bank Springfield.

At the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on April 2, 2008, the Commission made a preliminary determination to consider designation of this property as a landmark, finding that the property qualified for designation under the following criteria (Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance):

- a) *Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community;*
- b) *Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history;*
- c) *Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity;*
- d) *Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area; and*
- e) *Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.*

The Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that the Commission hold a public hearing within 45 days

of the preliminary determination. According to the ordinance, if an application is submitted by someone other than the property owner and the owner has submitted a Registered Preference against the nomination, the Historic Preservation Commission shall make a recommendation to approve or deny said application to the Urbana City Council by a majority of the Commissioners then holding office. The property owner filed a Registered Preference against the nomination on April 30, 2008. (Copy attached.) The City Council will consider this case at their May 19, 2008 meeting.

Should the application for designation as a local landmark be approved, the owners would be required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission for future exterior changes to the property, including any demolition.

For background information and analysis on this case, please see the attached application and March 27, 2008 memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission.

## **Discussion**

At the April 2, 2008 Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the Commission's task was to determine whether or not the property *qualifies* for designation as a local historic landmark. At the May 7, 2008 meeting, the Historic Preservation Commission must make a recommendation to the Urbana City Council as to whether or not the property *should* be designated. The Historic Preservation Ordinance does not provide criteria for making this decision other than to consider the evidence provided at the public hearing.

Based on the application and the March 27, 2008 City staff memo, the Historic Preservation Commission on April 2, 2008 made the following determinations based on the criteria for designation provided in Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

First, the property is significant in terms of history. The hotel has significant value as part of the community's heritage. Since its opening in 1924, the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel has been a prominent role in the Urbana's commercial history and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The property is associated with people important in Urbana's history. The building's architect, Joseph W. Royer, was one of Urbana's most prominent and prolific early architects. Local buildings designed by Royer include the Champaign County Courthouse, the Urbana High School, the Urbana Free Library, and the Urbana Post Office. The City of Urbana recently created the Joseph W. Royer Arts and Architecture District to commemorate Royer's historic and architectural heritage. Also the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel has a commemorative association with Abraham Lincoln who for more than twenty years worked in Urbana as a visiting attorney and who sometimes stayed at a hotel originally on the site of the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel.

Second, the property is significant in terms of architecture. The Tudor Revival architectural style is one of the period revival styles popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The building is valuable for the study of a period, style, and craftsmanship. Despite exterior additions being made since its construction, the building retains a sufficient integrity to convey its historic character. The building is also an identifiable and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its physical characteristics and its unique location in the heart of downtown Urbana.

Again, the Historic Preservation Commission's task is now to recommend to the City Council whether or not the property *should* be designated as a local historic landmark. In doing so, the Historic Preservation should take into consideration factors beyond whether or not the property qualifies.

One issue for consideration is any effect designation might have on the financial viability of the property. Given that historic buildings must have a viable use in order to be maintained, being financially successful is necessary for the building's long-term survival. The current property owner, Global Hotel Management of Normal, Illinois, purchased the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel in March 2008 from Marine Bank Springfield which had recently foreclosed on the property. The City received the landmark application just before the property was purchased by the current property owner and has taken care to make all interested parties aware of the historic landmark application. Following purchase, Global Hotel Management began seeking affiliation with a hotel brand. They state that brand affiliation is crucial in today's hotel market for several reasons, including being part of a national reservation system as well as having a national and international marketing presence. Global Hotel Management has since shared with City staff an issue they have encountered in seeking affiliation with several hotel brands. Their experience has been that none of the hotels they have approached wish to be affiliated if the property would be designated as a local historic landmark. They state that in order for the property to be financially successful, the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel must be affiliated with a major hotel brand. Furthermore, Global Hotel Management has shared a financial baseline they must achieve in terms of occupancy which will be necessary for their hotel to succeed, and having a brand affiliation is necessary to reach this baseline. From the new owner's perspective, designation as a local landmark will hinder the hotel's financial viability.

In addition to needing hotel brand affiliation for reservations and marketing, the new owner indicates that brand affiliation is necessary to get local banks to finance renovations. According to the attached letter from Devang Patel, Global Hotel Management, dated April 30, 2008:

“An additional obstacle to surmount is that local lenders are not interested in financing the hotel project unless it has national brand affiliation. It is a principle of the company to finance each project with local lenders that give ‘hometown service’ instead of with large national lenders that treat the project as a ‘small fish.’ ”

For these reasons, the property owner has submitted a registered preference form opposing designation as a local landmark and asks the Historic Preservation Commission to deny the nomination.

The above information has bearing on the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel's economic role for Urbana's downtown. In 2002, the City of Urbana adopted the Downtown Strategic Plan with the goal of making Urbana's downtown successful. Revitalizing Lincoln Square Mall and the attached Urbana-Lincoln Hotel are identified as important to this success. In 2004, the Urbana City Council adopted an amendment to Downtown Tax Increment Finance District No. 1 in which revitalization of the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel was specifically identified as a project for private development assistance. If designating the property as a local landmark would prohibit the new property owners from obtaining private financing through brand affiliation, then designation could be viewed as countering existing City policies for downtown revitalization.

Several financial incentives for preservation are in fact available for designated historic properties, and City staff has discussed these with the new property owner. For instance, being listed in the National Register of Historic Places makes the Historic Lincoln Hotel eligible for a 20% Federal tax credit on the cost of rehabilitation. This incentive is currently available, regardless of any local landmark designation. Additionally, the City of Urbana will waive fees for building, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical permits for local historic landmarks. For commercial properties undergoing renovation, this could amount to thousands of dollars in savings. Other than incentives specifically for historic properties, the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is located within a TIF District and should be able to take advantage of TIF-eligible expenses under a development agreement with the City of Urbana. It is assumed, however, that these financial incentives will not be useful if the hotel cannot achieve private financing and brand affiliation.

Another issue for consideration is whether or not this historic building is threatened. Global Hotel Management, which has purchased and rehabilitated a number of hotels, say they have no plans to demolish the building, and that they want to "...return this wonderful hotel to its once prominent standing by modernizing the interior and remodeling the exterior with an attention to the original English Tudor motif and modern hotel design elements." In terms of exterior changes, a company representative has indicated they plan to carry out maintenance and repairs, such as replacing the roof and a missing porte-cochere, and have an interest in better coordinating the exterior's Tudor Revival and German Bavarian design themes. City staff does not find that these proposed changes would threaten this historic resource.

## **Summary of Findings**

The recommended statement of findings based on the application and Staff analysis are as follows:

1. Article XII. of the *Urbana Zoning Ordinance* provides the City of Urbana the authority to designate local landmarks and historic districts with the stated purpose to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the community.
2. The City of Urbana on February 22, 2008 received a complete application to designate the property located at 209 South Broadway Avenue as a local landmark.
3. The property located at 209 South Broadway Avenue and known as the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel was constructed in 1923 in the Tudor Revival architectural style.
4. The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel has significant value as part of the architectural, civic, cultural, economic, political, and social heritage of the community. The hotel has been a downtown landmark since its opening in 1924. Additionally, the building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places based on its architectural and commercial significance. Being such a prominent building in the heart of the City, it has been considered architecturally significant throughout its history.
5. The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is associated with important people in national, state, and local history.

The hotel was designed by Joseph W. Royer, prominent local architect. The hotel is also a symbolic link to Abraham Lincoln's tenure as a lawyer in Urbana.

6. The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of the Tudor Revival architectural style inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, and method of construction and retains sufficient integrity to well convey a sense of time and place. The Tudor Revival architectural style is one of the period revival styles popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Later changes have not appreciably inhibited the public's ability to perceive the property's historic character, and the property retains a sufficient degree of integrity.
7. The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is a notable work of a master architect whose individual genius has influenced an area. The hotel was designed by Joseph William Royer, Urbana's most prominent architect. Local buildings designed by Royer include the Champaign County Courthouse, the Urbana High School, the Urbana Free Library, and the Urbana Post Office. The City of Urbana recently created the Joseph W. Royer Arts and Architecture District to commemorate Royer's historic and architectural heritage. Moreover, two of the City's historic landmarks are Royer buildings and the City has a Royer Historic District.
8. The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is an identifiable and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its physical characteristics and its unique location in the heart of downtown Urbana.
9. The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is not a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure.
10. The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is not known to be located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

## **Options**

In making a recommendation to City Council in Case No. HP 2008-L-01, the Historic Preservation Commission may:

- 1) Recommend that the application be approved; or
- 2) Recommend that the application be denied.

The Commission's recommendation shall be forwarded, along with a report summarizing the evidence presented at the hearing and setting forth findings, to the City Council. The City Council is expected to consider the Commission's recommendation at their May 19, 2008 meeting.

## **Staff Recommendation**

The Historic Preservation Commission determined on April 2, 2008 that the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel qualifies for designation as a local landmark based on criteria a, b, c, d, and e of Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. Staff concurs with this determination. Based on the attached memorandum dated March 27, 2008, as well as the application and the findings provided in this memorandum, staff continues to support landmark designation of the hotel on a technical basis. However, evidence submitted by the current owner indicates that designation now as a local landmark will substantially hinder its potential for revitalization as a fully functional tourist hotel in downtown Urbana. Given the importance of the property to the vitality of downtown and the economic development of the City as a whole, staff recommends that the landmark designation be denied until such time as loss of this historic resource is immediately threatened and/or designation no longer hinders the economic viability of the property.

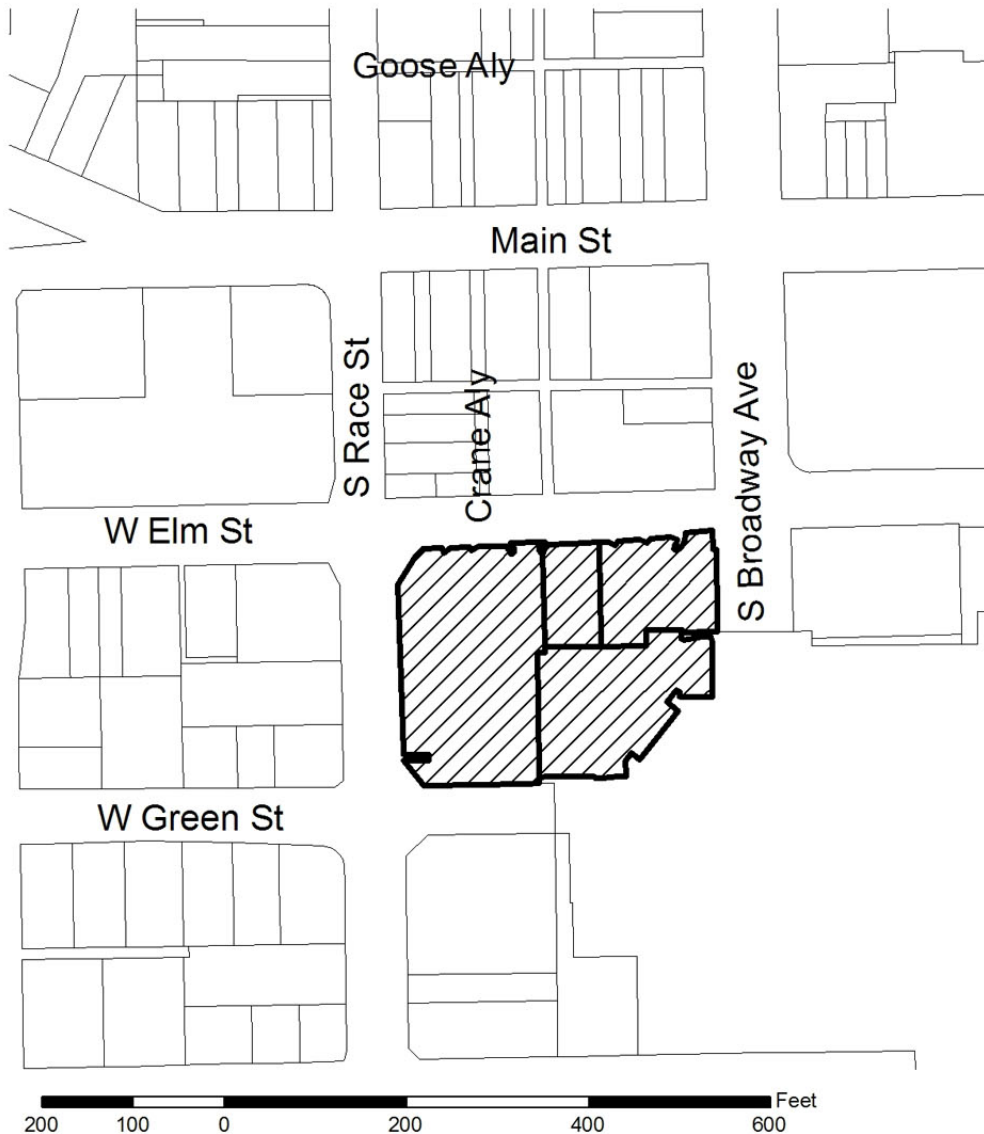
cc: Nick Stokes, Senior Vice President, Marine Bank Springfield  
Mike Gillespie, Marine Bank Springfield  
Fred Rotermund, Vice President, Global Hotel Management  
Devang Patel, President, Global Hotel Management  
Jay Bhaghavan, owner of record  
Brian Adams, applicant

Attachments:

March 27, 2008 Staff Memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission  
Application  
Minutes of April 2, 2008 HPC Meeting  
Property Owner Registered Preference Form, including April 30, 2008 letter from Davang Patel, Global Hotel Management, Normal, IL

# Location Map

# EXHIBIT "A"

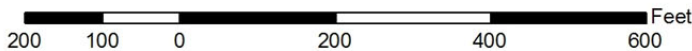
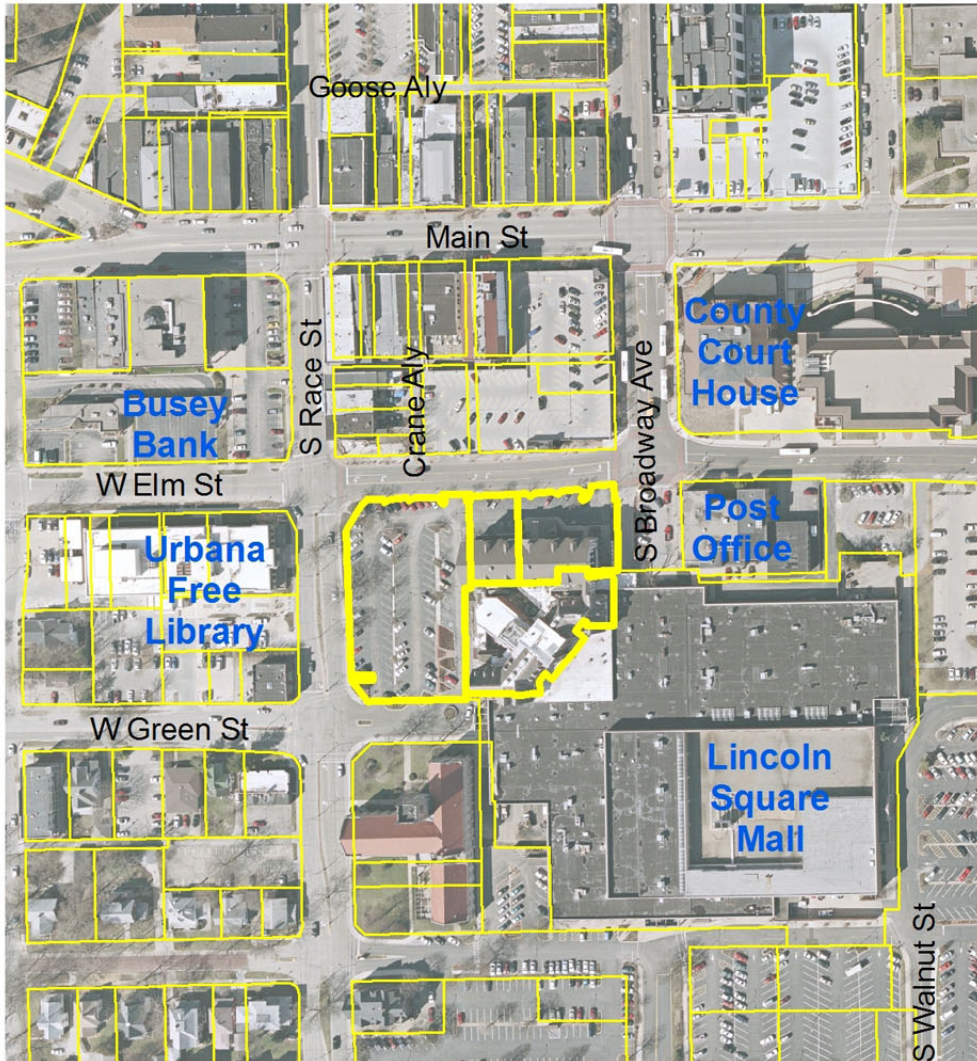


**HPC Case:** HP-2008-L-01  
**Subject:** Historic Lincoln Hotel,  
Local Landmark Designation Application  
**Location:** 209 S. Broadway  
**Zoning District:** B-4  
**Petitioner:** Brian Adams

 Subject Properties

# Aerial Map

# EXHIBIT "B"



**HPC Case:** HP-2008-L-01  
**Subject:** Historic Lincoln Hotel,  
Local Landmark Designation Application  
**Location:** 209 S. Broadway  
**Zoning District:** B-4  
**Petitioner:** Brian Adams

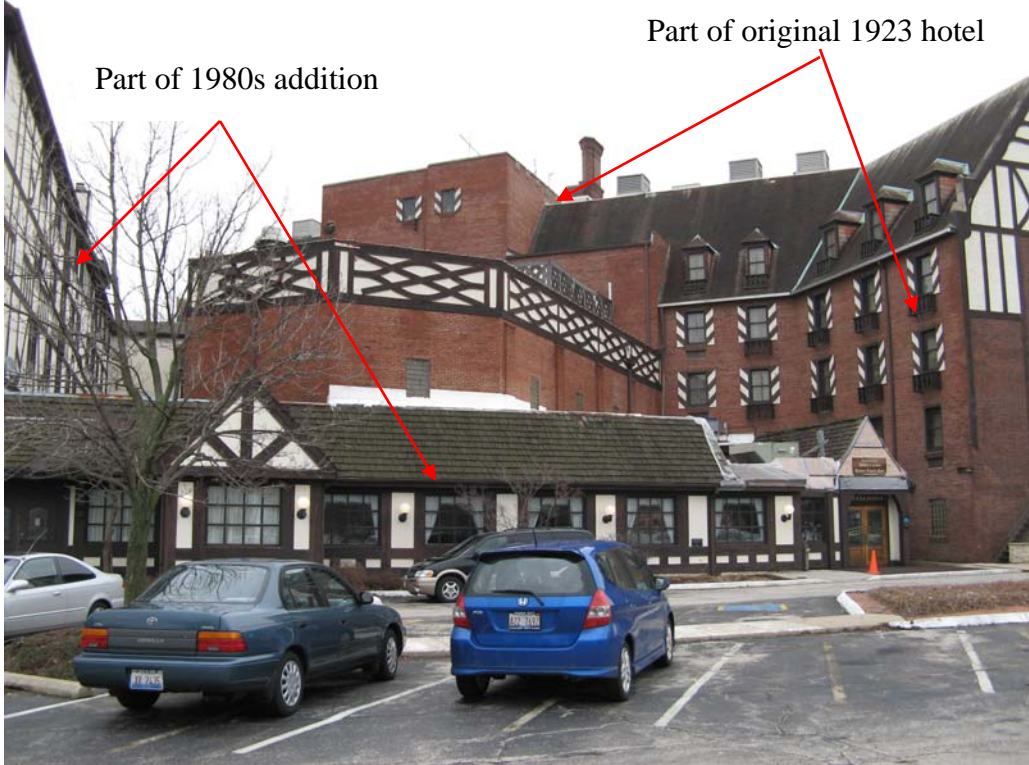
 Subject Properties

*Prepared 3/10/2008 by Community Development Services - pal*



Exhibit C: Photographs of the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel, 209 S. Broadway Ave

1. West Façade



Main entrance to the hotel.



Another view of west façade

## 2. North Façade



North façade, nearly entirely 1980s addition



Part of original 1923 hotel

Another view of north façade, with some of the 1923 building visible



### 3. East Façade



East façade, 1964 Lincoln Square Mall entrance with original 1923 hotel visible above



Close up of original 1923 building, east façade

#### 4. South Façade



Original main entrance to hotel below

South façade, 1923 hotel, visible above 1964 Lincoln Square Mall addition



Another view of south façade

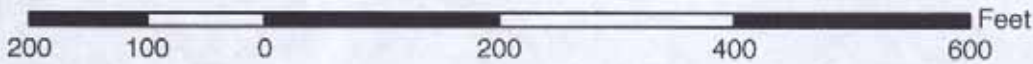
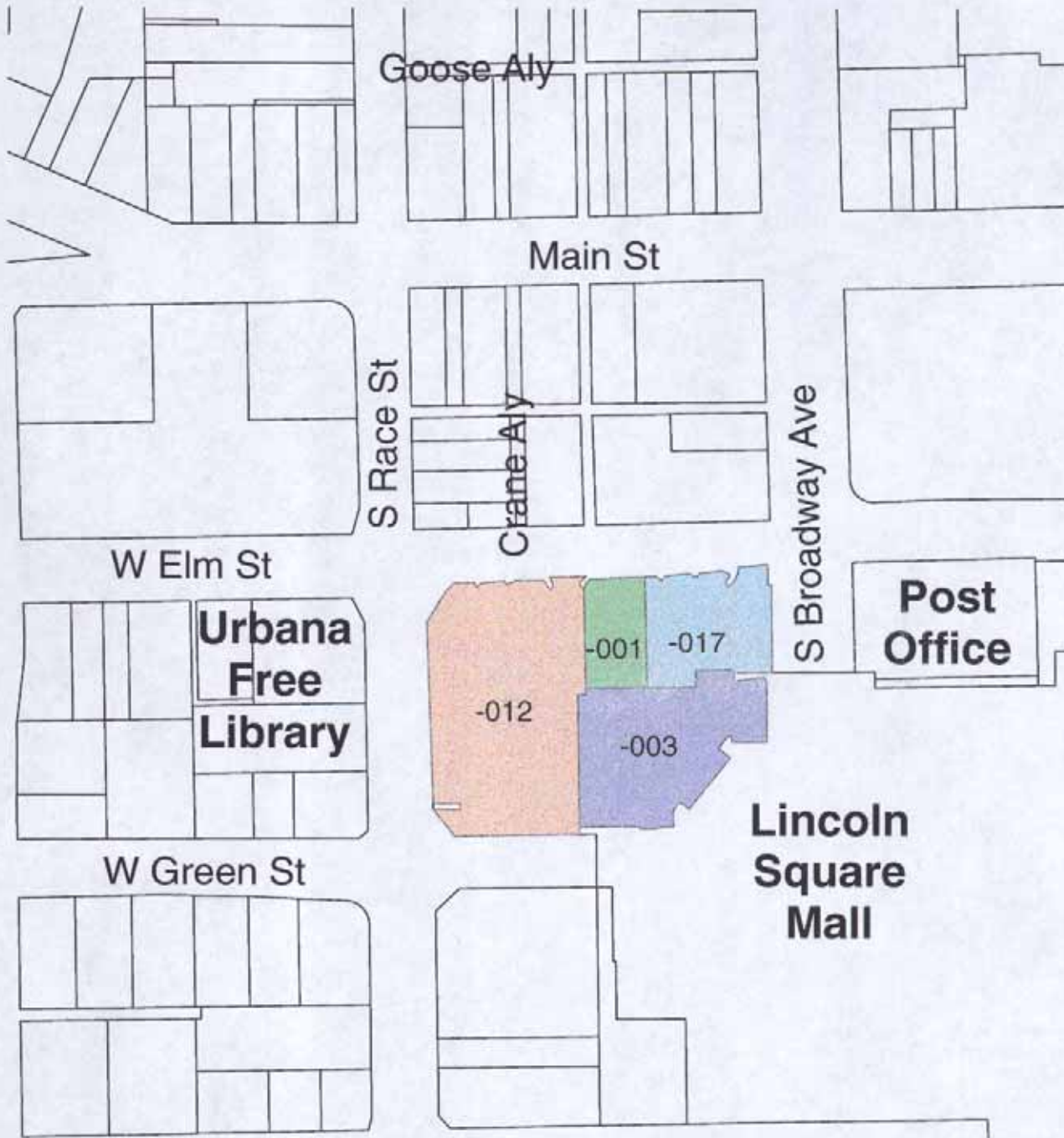






Another view of south facade



# Lincoln Hotel Parcel Index Number Map

EXHIBIT " "



PIN	
	-001 92-21-17-212-001
	-003 92-21-17-212-003
	-012 92-21-17-212-012
	-017 92-21-17-212-017

Source:  
CCGIS Consortium base map  
County Assessors data



# Application for Historic Landmark Designation

## Historic Preservation Commission

### APPLICATION AND REVIEW FEE – NO CHARGE

Although there is no fee to file an application for Historic Landmark Designation, the Applicants are responsible for paying the cost of legal publication fees. The fees usually run from \$75.00 to \$125.00. The applicant will be billed separately by the News-Gazette.

FEB 22 2008

### DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE - FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Application Filed \_\_\_\_\_ Case No. \_\_\_\_\_

### PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

1. Location 209 South Broadway Avenue

2. PIN # of Location 92-21-17-212-003, -001, -012, -017

3. Name of Applicant/Petitioner(s) Brian Adams Phone 217-367-1339  
Address 412 West Elm Street, Urbana, IL 61801  
(street/city) (state) (zip)

4. Property interest of Applicant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\*5. Name of Owner(s) Bhughavan, Jay P Need better legal description from Ben Fisher  
Address 209 South Broadway Avenue  
(street/city)

### DESCRIPTION, USE, AND ZONING OF PROPERTY: Attach necessary

Legal Description Cunningham Twp. W 1/2 NE 1/4 Section 17, T.19N, R.9E. Zoned B-4 Central Business

Property has four tax I.D. #'s ; 92-21-17-212-003, 92-21-17-212-001, 92-21-17-212-012, 92-21-17-212-12  
Legal description at County Recorder's office is 14 pages long (Document # 2001R18213)

\*please see attached sheet

6. Date of Construction of Structure 1923
7. Attach a map showing the boundaries and location of the property proposed for nomination.
8. Attach photographs showing the important structures or features of the property or structure
9. Indicate which of the following criteria apply to the property or structure (check all that apply). Additionally, attach a statement that describes the proposed landmark and its historic significance; list reasons why it is eligible for nomination; and show how the proposed landmark conforms to the criteria for designation (see attached Suggested Format).
- Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political, or social heritage of the nation, state or community;
  - Associated with an important person or event in national state or local history;
  - Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity;
  - Notable work of a master builder, designers, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area;
  - Identifiable as an established and familiar visual location or physical characteristics;
  - Character is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations or other commercial structures with a high level of integrity or architectural significance;
  - Yields, or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory

WHEREFORE, petitioner prays that this petition be heard by the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission and the Application for Historic Landmark Designation be granted.

Respectfully submitted this 22 day of February, 2008.

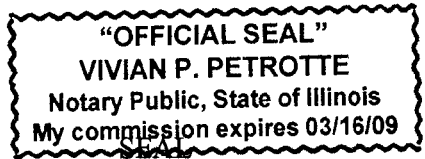
Brian Adams 2/27/08  
Brian Adams  
Signature of Applicant

STATE OF ILLINOIS }  
                                  }  
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY }

I, Vivian Petrotte being first duly sworn on oath, deposes and says, that Brian Adams is the same person named in and who subscribed the above and foregoing petition, that Brian Adams has read the same and knows the contents thereof, and that the matters and things therein set forth are true in substance and in fact as therein set forth.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 27 day of February, 2008

Vivian P. Petrotte  
Notary Public



Signature of Applicant Brian Adams

Petitioner's Attorney (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_



Current ownership of the subject property, the "Historic Lincoln Hotel" (PIN# 92-21-17-212-001, 92-21-17-212-003, 92-21-17-212-012, 92-21-17-212-017) at 209 South Broadway in Urbana, Illinois, was difficult to determine. While published taxpayer and parcel information indicate Jay Bhaghavan as owner, the property was taken by emergency possession by Marine Bank Springfield in September 2007. Their contact information is:

Marine Bank Springfield  
3050 West Wabash  
Springfield, Illinois 62704

Telephone: 217.726.0600



## Urbana-Lincoln Hotel

The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel, 209 South Broadway Avenue, is being nominated as an Urbana Landmark under the following criteria. It has significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political, or social heritage of the nation, state, or community; it is associated with an important person or event in national, state, or local history; it is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity; it is a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area; it is identifiable as an established and familiar visual location or physical characteristics; and its character is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations or other commercial structures with a high level of integrity or architectural significance.

In November 1921 a corporation was formed to construct a new hotel in Urbana, with Mrs. Mary E. Busey, noted Urbana philanthropist and wife of Samuel T. Busey, serving as chairman of the board of directors of the hotel company. Commencement of construction was delayed for several reasons, including problems surrounding the site of the proposed building. Stockholders suggested a location that was owned by several parties, including one lot that was owned by eight heirs, four of whom resided out of state, and one who could not be located. Title to the desired lots in some cases had to be cleared in court.

In the spring of 1922, it was finally announced that the hotel would be built at the northwest corner of Green and Market (now Broadway) streets, on two lots owned by E.S. Swigart ("the W.H. Larry and Thomas Ogden property"). The lots were purchased for \$25,000, and constituted an area of over a quarter city block (171 feet on Green Street, 138 feet on Market Street). Also in early 1922, it was announced that Urbana architect Joseph W. Royer would design the hotel. At this time, it was anticipated construction would begin on June 1, 1922.

In September 1922 it was announced that the A.W. Stoolman Company of Champaign had won the contract to build the new hotel. Seven companies submitted bids, which were opened and read in the office of architect Joseph W. Royer on September 15, 1922. Separate bids were submitted for electric, plumbing, and heating work. The plumbing and heating contract was awarded to the Onarga Plumbing and Heating Company, while the contract for electric wiring was won by the Ideal Electric Company of Champaign. Based on these contracts, the anticipated cost of the building was \$257,019. It was announced at this time that the hotel would have 100 rooms and that

*Architect Royer has not overlooked the needs of a university community and the new hotel will have a ballroom and dining hall suitable for accommodation of University social functions...*

The building permit for the hotel was issued on October 4, 1922. In November 1922 it was announced that the new hotel would be managed by Charles Renner of Mishawaka, Indiana, "...a Frenchman by birth". Renner was

*...an expert chef and will give special attention to setting a high standard of dining room service. A pastry shop will also be run in connection with the hotel on the ground floor...*

Chef Renner had been employed by the Biltmore Hotel in Kansas City and the Coronado Hotel in San Diego. He also was head steward and operated hotels for the Harvey restaurant chain along the Santa Fe line and in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Prior to his hiring in Urbana, Renner managed the Hotel Mishawaka in Mishawaka, Indiana. He planned to run a café, beauty parlor, barbershop, several shops, and delicatessen in the hotel, which was expected to open in September 1923.

By late January 1923, construction had reached the second floor, and it was anticipated that the roof would be finished by the end of February 1923. At this time, negotiations for the interior furnishings of the hotel were ready to begin. It was further announced at this time that...

*In design the hotel is of the English Inn type. The lower part of the building is of brick and will be topped with gable construction of half timber and stucco. The roof will be of slate. The hotel will have accommodations of 100 rooms, each with a bath. The ground floor plan calls for a large lobby, dining room and grill room with a ball room adjoining the lobby.*

In late June 1923 it was reported that completion of the hotel would be delayed due to labor problems, and would probably not open until late September of that year. By early summer 1923, work on the doors, windows, and interior decoration had begun.

In late August 1923, the *Urbana Daily Courier* presented a long article about naming the new hotel, and included a ballot for readers to complete and submit with suggestions. Several names had been suggested, and most agreed that the name should at least include "Urbana":

*It is the contention of those wanting "Urbana" included in the name that the hotel was built to advertise the town. It is a community enterprise and therefore a monument to Urbana's public spirit...The name "Lincoln" has many enthusiastic supporters, the point being that Abraham Lincoln, when practicing law in Urbana, stopped at the old inn on the site of the present hotel building. By linking the new building with Lincoln's life while in this vicinity, there would be an ever present local reminder that the martyred president was one time one of us. A compromise has been suggested between those who want the name "Urbana" included and those who wish the building to be a reminder of Lincoln by proposing the name "Urbana-Lincoln". The proposal has met with considerable favor.*

Other suggested names included "The Shakespeare", "The Illini", "Big Grove", "Principia Hotel", "Metropolitan", "Idelmoor", "The Grand", "Hotel Orlando", "Urbana Beatitude", "Busey Inn", "Hotel Urbanity", "The Monarch", "The Roosevelt", "Gray Gables", "The Palace", "Urbana Arms", "The Marquette", "The Harding", "Hotel Panama", "Urbana Bourgouois", "Elite", "A 'l Anglaise", "New Englander", "Hotel Jefferson", the "Ostrich", "Urbana-Stratford", "Superior", "Commercial or Inn", "Titanic", "Honey Dew", "Hotel Adelpia", "The Eleanor", "Belvidere", "Supreme", "The New American", "Home Lyke", "Uni-Urbana", "The Urbana Tavern", "Illinois Grand Hotel", and "The Atlantic Hotel" .

The most common names suggested for the hotel included "Lincoln" in the name (e.g. "Lincoln",

“The Lincoln”, “Lincoln Hotel”, “Lincoln Inn”, “Urbana-Lincoln”). Another popular suggestion was “The Illini”.

On October 14, 1923 it was announced that the new *Urbana-Lincoln Hotel* would be initiated on Homecoming Day, November 15, by Mrs. S.T. Busey. It was reported that 50 cots had been set up in a dormitory on the fourth floor for homecoming guests in order to accommodate 200 guests total. It was also reported that...

*The hotel is a four story, fireproof building built with reinforced steel construction. The style of architecture is Old English throughout. The Old English idea is carried out by the heavy beamed ceilings, the paneled walls, the interior and exterior electric fixtures, the furniture and the four large fireplaces on the first floor...The front entrance leads into a large lobby, with the ballroom directly in front, sun parlor to the left, and dining room to the right. A feature of the sun parlor is a large fireplace, extending across the entire north end of the room. Ninety people can be accommodated in the dining room and 80 more in the grill room, which adjoins the dining room to the right. The grill room has a large fireplace and a mezzanine floor...The ballroom, which is the largest in the Twin Cities, 45 by 70 feet, is decorated in the Old English style. The lower part of the walls are paneled, and the upper part is rough plastered. At the west end of the room is a large fireplace, with wall seats on both sides of it. The ceiling is beamed... The woodwork and furniture is old walnut throughout. The dining room furniture is walnut, and the chairs have red leather seats. Practically all the painting is a gray tan, in a parchment finish.*

The new hotel was formally presented to the Urbana association of commerce on January 30, 1924. A speech was made by A.T. Burrows, president of the hotel company, and Chancy L. Finrock, president of the Urbana association of commerce, accepted the building. A banquet was held in the hotel at 6:15, and at 9:30 a grand march of the ball was held. An open house was held for public inspection of the new hotel on this day.

Extensive interior modifications were made in 1937-1938, and the hotel was bought by the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel Company in 1944. At this time, rooms were enlarged and private baths were installed. Some rooms also received new plumbing and tile work. In 1948 a tea garden patio was made in front of the hotel. In 1954 the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel Company was dissolved, and in 1965 the hotel was sold to Carson, Pirie, Scott, and Company.

In 1976, the hotel was bought by James Jumer, president of Jumer’s Castle Lodge of West Peoria, from Carson, Pirie, Scott, and Company. Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company, then owners of the hotel, had previously held a “liquidation sale” that stripped the hotel of all its original interior fixtures, and had planned on several occasions to raze the building. The hotel was renovated and reopened by Jumer in 1977. In 1982 work commenced on a three million dollar expansion on the north side of the original hotel. This addition, which opened in the spring of 1983, included 69 guest rooms, a ballroom, an indoor swimming pool, saunas, a whirlpool, a game room, executive suites, junior suites, and informal conference rooms. On 8 September 2006 the Urbana Lincoln Hotel and adjacent Lincoln Square Mall were listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Currently, the main entrance is located on the west side of the hotel, on South Race Street. The original entrance, which faces southeast, is incorporated into Lincoln Square Village.

## Historical Significance

The City of Urbana was surveyed and platted in September 1833. It was situated at the south end of Big Grove, near the confluence of the Boneyard and Saline creeks. The original city plan consisted four north-south streets intersected by four east-west streets. Today this area constitutes the city's downtown. Population growth and economic development remained slow during the 1830's and 1840's due to poor transportation systems. Urbanization intensified when the railroad arrived in the 1850's. The Illinois Central Railroad connected the area with Chicago in 1854, resulting in an economic and population explosion in Champaign County. Between 1850 and 1860, population in the county increased from 2,645 to 14,629. Pioneer farmers were replaced by land speculators, merchants, intellectuals (lawyers, doctors, teachers), tradesmen of all types, and masses of laborers employed by the railroad and the numerous factories which had been established. The early population derived primarily from the south (e.g. Kentucky) was augmented by immigrants from the northeast (New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, etc). Foreign-born immigrants, primarily of Irish and German origin, also began to arrive, and with their presence the religious composition of the county changed. The former exclusive dominance of Protestant and Baptist denominations was balanced by the formation of Catholic and Jewish congregations. A variety of factories sprung up overnight, many of them associated with the burgeoning construction industry and agricultural production. These included brick and tile factories, sawmills, a sash and door factory, foundry and machine shop, plow and wagon factory, as well as a woolen factory and flouring mills, among others.

Between about 1850-60 the Main Street of the Original Town of Urbana became a hub of activity, lined with a variety of retail stores, saloons, law and real estate offices, banks, and other places of business and recreation. The City of Urbana was incorporated on February 14, 1855, and in 1867 was chosen as the site of for the Illinois Industrial University (University of Illinois) through the efforts of Clark Robinson Griggs. Also in 1867, the first railroad to actually pass through Urbana, the Danville-Urbana-Bloomington-Pekin Railroad (later the I.B. & W), was chartered, again by C.R. Griggs. Economic development slowed in the 1870's. Major developments in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century included: the large-scale draining of swampy prairies surrounding the city, resulting in the dominance of grain production at the expense of cattle breeding; the establishment of a gas lighting system; paving of streets; establishment of an electric rail line; construction of hospitals; and the continued expansion of retail businesses. In 1871, the same year as the infamous Chicago fire, the heart of Urbana was extensively damaged by fire. This resulted in a shift towards brick construction in downtown to reduce the impact of fires.

The first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a building boom in downtown Urbana. Notable structures dating to this period are the Champaign County Courthouse (1900-1901), the Stephens Building (1902-1903), the Sheriff's Residence and Jail (1905), the Flat Iron Building (1906), the Race Street (Royer) Post Office (1906), the Illinois Theatre (1907-1908), the Federal Building/Post Office (1914-1915), and the Samuel T. Busey Memorial Library (1917-1918). By the time the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel was constructed, Urbana was a well-established urban center and county seat in east-central Illinois, and the hotel was one of the last large commercial buildings to be constructed in downtown Urbana in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following the horrors of WW I, the period between about 1920 and 1930 was a time of satisfaction and prosperity in Urbana and the United States, and

the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel represents a monument to this period of optimism. While the Crash of 1929 resulted in widespread economic disaster and suffering throughout the country, Urbana benefited from the presence of the University of Illinois, secured through the dedicated work of Clark Robinson Griggs in the 1860s. While the citizens of Urbana undoubtedly suffered through the economic challenges of the Great Depression, the presence of the University of Illinois within the city certainly represented a source of spiritual, as well as economic, support. As discussed above, the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel, designed by Urbana architect Joseph W. Royer, represented a physical link with the university community during a period of economic hardship, and likely helped the community endure the hardships of the period. Further, the hotel was a source of civic pride ...“a community enterprise and therefore a monument to Urbana’s public spirit”.

In addition, the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is significant in its symbolic link to Abraham Lincoln’s tenure as a lawyer in Urbana. As discussed above, the hotel was originally named after Lincoln who...

*...stopped at the old inn on the site of the present hotel building. By linking the new building with Lincoln’s life while in this vicinity, there would be an ever present local reminder that the martyred president was one time one of us.*

The hotel was constructed on a lot formerly occupied by the Union Hotel, also known as “Kerr’s Tavern”, which is depicted on the 1858 Bowman Map of Urbana and was razed in April 1900. This was the “old inn” frequented by Lincoln and others conducting work at the nearby courthouse, located immediately north. In 1923, the Daily Illini reported that: “Social life in the early days centered about Kerr’s tavern, which 25 years ago (ca. 1898) stood on the site of the new Urbana hotel”. The Union Hotel was established by Archibald M. Kerr, and was also known as “Kerr’s Tavern” and “Baldy’s Tavern”. It was a low, 1 and ½ story frame structure with no porches, faced east, with a well and pump in the front yard and cistern and horse barn in the back yard. According to one of the Kerr descendants “...the Tavern was noted for its hospitality and excellent food...” and that “...Abraham Lincoln had a friendly intimacy...” with the entire Kerr family. Further, “...it is said that Lincoln never arrived at or left the Kerr tavern without saying good-bye to each member of the family, and in many other ways expressed the goodness in his heart for them”. There are several stories relating to Lincoln’s time spent at the Union Hotel and his interactions with the Kerr family. While Royer’s Urbana-Lincoln Hotel is not a direct, physical link with Abraham Lincoln’s presence in Urbana, its location, name and function preserves a less tangible yet evocative link with the former president’s tenure as a lawyer in Urbana during the 1850’s. Likewise, Lorado Taft’s sculpture of “Lincoln the Lawyer”, now in Carle Park, was originally placed in front of the hotel in 1927 to preserve this connection. Such links are especially significant now as the country prepares to celebrate Lincoln’s 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Given the lack of historic structures in Urbana directly associated with Abraham Lincoln, the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel represents one of the closest, if not only, tangible links between the city and the memory of Lincoln and his life here. To reiterate, the people of Urbana have historically recognized this connection, as the following examples indicate. The Urbana Daily Courier’s “contest” to name the new hotel indicated that “Lincoln” was a popular choice, and was a way of commemorating the former president’s presence in the city. Through a gift from Judge J.O. Cunningham, noted sculptor Lorado Taft was commissioned to produce a sculpture of “Lincoln the

Lawyer” which was originally placed in front of the hotel’s entrance. In 1925, the Urbana Association of Commerce, in cooperation with the University of Illinois, commissioned noted Chicago artist Elizabeth T. Holsman to produce a bronze tablet inscribed with Lincoln’s Gettysburg address which was unveiled at the hotel. These events, together with the role of Urbana philanthropist Mary E. Busey as chairman of the board of directors of the hotel company, illustrate the hotel is associated with important persons and events in national, state, and local history. As stated above, the hotel, together with Lincoln Square Mall, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in September 2006, acknowledging its historical significance on a national level. In a sense, Joseph W. Royer’s Urbana-Lincoln Hotel represents a shrine to the physical and spiritual presence of Abraham Lincoln’s tenure in Urbana.

### *Joseph Royer*

Joseph William Royer, Urbana’s most prominent architect, designed the Urbana Lincoln Hotel in 1922. Royer was born in Urbana in 1873, the son of John D. and Mary Royer. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1895 with a degree in civil engineering and worked as Urbana’s city engineer from 1898 to 1906 during which time he designed the 1901 Champaign County Courthouse; he also was responsible for the Sheriff’s Residence and County Jail, constructed in 1905. The firm of Royer and Brown was formed about 1905. At other times the firm was known as Royer and Smith; Royer, Danely, and Smith; and Royer and Davis. Well known local buildings designed by Royer include: Urbana High School (1914), Urbana Christian Church (1910), Urbana Free Library (1918), Alpha Rho Chi Chapter House (1927), Champaign Country Club (circa 1895), Urbana Flat Iron Building (1906), Urbana Country Club (1922), and the campus Baptist Church (1915).

Royer was a master of period revival architectural styles for both public and residential buildings. His own home (1905) was built in a Mission Style with Arts and Crafts influence, while his neighboring mother’s-in-law house was built (1923) in a picturesque rendition of the English Revival architectural style. The Urbana Lincoln Hotel is an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style, while his earlier (1901) Champaign County Courthouse was designed in the Romanesque Revival style. Tudor Revival was used for the Snyder House (1916) in Arcola, but a Mediterranean style was chosen for the Charles Bailey House (1926) in Champaign. The Unitarian Universalist Church (1913) in Urbana shows Royer’s mastery of the Gothic Revival style. The Freeman House (1902-1903) at 504 West Elm Street, is an excellent example of the Classical Revival style, and is the only residential building in this style in the City of Urbana. Royer also designed a number of local fraternities: Alpha Rho Chi (1928), Arts and Crafts and French Eclectic; Alpha Xi Delta (Busey House, 1914), Tudor Revival; Sigma Pi (1920), Georgian Revival; and Chi Psi (1921), French Revival.

### **Context**

The Urbana Lincoln Hotel is located in the heart of downtown Urbana, an area that has been the civic and commercial center of the city since its establishment. It is the only remaining hotel in downtown Urbana, and is the only commercial building in downtown built in the Tudor Revival style. It is one



of only a few commercial/civic structures dating to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century remaining south of Main Street. Many 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century structures in this area were razed to make way for Lincoln Square Mall in the 1960's, and the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel preserves a small portion of the southern edge of the historic late-19<sup>th</sup>/early-20<sup>th</sup> century business center of the city.

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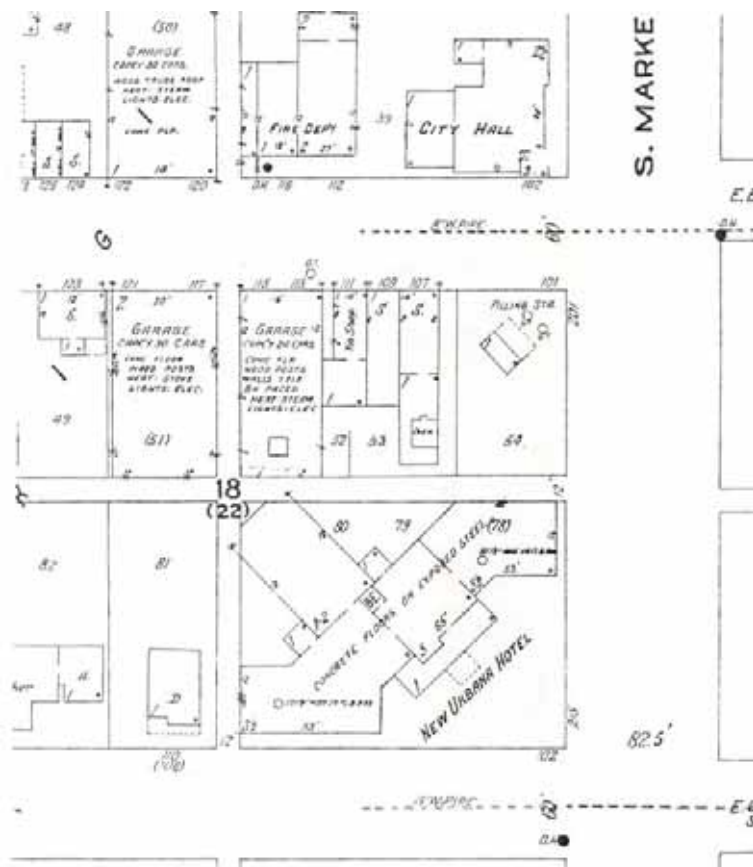
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Urbana-Lincoln Hotel as it appeared shortly after opening in the 1920's. Southeast façade.



1923 Sanborn Map showing plan view of the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel



Urbana Lincoln Hotel: Original entrance, southeast façade (now within Lincoln Square Village)



Urbana Lincoln Hotel: Southeast façade (detail)



Urbana Lincoln Hotel: South facade





Urbana Lincoln Hotel: Northwest facade



Urbana Lincoln Hotel: 1980's addition, west façade



Urbana Lincoln Hotel: Current west entrance



Urbana Lincoln Hotel: Current west entrance (detail)