

# OTHER VOICES: Connect the dots to restore city's old hotels

Detroit's media have been packed with stories of wrestling between the mayor and City Council. The proposed casino deal was spiked recently as the council rejected Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's proposal. While everybody struggles with the terms of the agreements, the casinos are scurrying around town grabbing land to accommodate their permanent gaming halls and the hotels that are to accompany them.

Meanwhile, over at the Downtown Development Authority, they're spending a half-million dollars to evaluate the structural soundness of the city-owned Book Cadillac Hotel. A Greater Downtown Partnership-issued request for proposals some time ago got few if any real proposals for the Statler. Investors announced plans for the Fort-Shelby over a year ago, but no activity is evident.

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Consider that each property has



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adjacent vacant land and/or structures that could be consolidated or adaptively reused to accommodate the unique needs of the casinos. Consider that each is within one or two blocks of more than one large, existing, city-financed parking

deck, which I am sure could use the evening revenue.

All are located in the former financial district on downtown's west side, which continues to unravel as even the Federal Reserve most recently announced plans to leave for a suburbanlike location

up the street (but that's a different story). Finally, all are immediately adjacent to People Mover stops for the convention-visiting gambler (if you believe there is a connection).

Let's save some city money! No more RFPs. No more analysis. The buildings are sound and were built to last forever. Deed the hotels to the casinos and tell them to make them work. They are the only ones with deep enough pockets to do the job. They've done it before with the former IRS building, the Wonder Bread factory and Trappers Alley.

If we're going to depend on the gaming industry to invigorate our downtown, let's spend some energy creating strategies that protect the urban and architectural fabric and allow for spin-off benefits. Restoring the hotels may provide incentives for other owners to invest in their properties for retail and lofts.

Just an idea.

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It's what we can do  
that makes the difference.

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