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## Lansing builds case to board up Deluxe Inn

### Hotel known as site of drug deals and prostitution

By TOM LAMBERT

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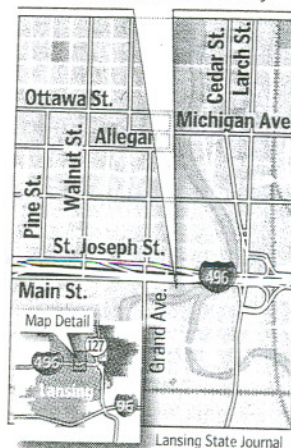
Nearly a dozen arrests in the past two months have given Lansing officials the justification they need to try to shut down the Deluxe Inn, a hotel known for its drug and prostitution activity.

During the past six years, Lansing police have responded to 1,642 calls at the troubled hotel, including two homicides. That doesn't include the 11 arrests — which range from assault to drug activity — made since late September.

"Enough is enough," said City Attorney Brigham Smith, who has been building a case for several months to close the Main

### Troubled hotel

Lansing officials are building a case under a city ordinance to shut down the Deluxe Inn, known for its criminal activity.



Street hotel. "When we issued the first warning last month, we suspected that more violations would be a matter of not if, but when."

A Lansing ordinance

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SPEEDREAD

# Hotel: Lawyer for Deluxe Inn's owner says city isn't being fair

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states the City Council can board up a building for up to a year if two police investigations within six months turn up drugs or drug paraphernalia.



Smith

It will be up to Smith to make his case to the eight-member council, a process the attorney said could come soon.

## Friday arrests

The most recent criminal activity came Friday at the 112 E. Main St. hotel. City police made arrests for prostitution, drug possession and an outstanding warrant for an undisclosed misdemeanor charge.

Pete Bhakta, the owner of Deluxe Inn, didn't return calls to his cell phone on Friday or Saturday seeking comment.

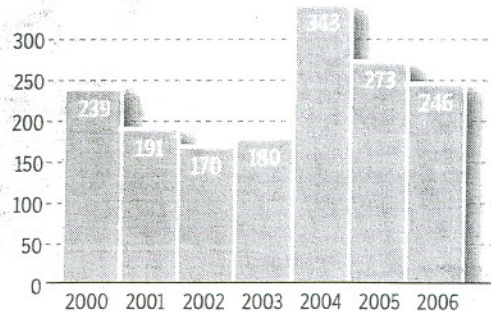
Robert McCarthy, the East Lansing attorney representing Bhakta, said the city wasn't being fair with his client.

McCarthy said he sent a letter last week asking Smith what Bhakta legally could do to screen hotel guests.

"How is a hotel owner supposed to be able to determine who they should and shouldn't

## Police calls to Deluxe Inn

The following are calls responded to by Lansing Police at the Deluxe Inn. The police responded to 1,642 calls at the hotel from 2000 to 2006, ranging from suspicious activity to narcotics calls.



Source: Lansing Police Department

Lansing State Journal

rent a room to?" McCarthy said. But Smith said there's no excuse for the rash of crime at the hotel.

"If property owners can't keep their properties safe, this law will," he said.

Lansing police Capt. Ray Hall, commander of the city's North Precinct, said that when his cops go undercover as johns, it's common for prostitutes to tell the officers to meet them at the Deluxe Inn.

"It's been an ongoing public safety concern because of the high level of drug activity and other vice crimes that are taking place on the premises," Hall said.

Hall said he was pleased the city was taking the legal steps to shut it down.

"It certainly couldn't get any

worse there," he said.

If the property is shut down or the current owner decides to sell, there is significant interest in developing it, city officials said.

## Tax incentives

Bob Trezise, the director of Lansing's Economic Development Corp., said the city has put tax incentives on the table to assist Bhakta.

That package would cover demolishing the hotel and preparing the site for a new building, Trezise said.

"We aren't interested in the hotel or the renovation of the hotel, our incentives are targeted toward new development," Trezise said.

"But if he chooses to sell the property, we are ready to offer

## Recent police activity at the Deluxe Inn

- ▶ **Dec. 1:** Three arrests: one for prostitution; one for an outstanding warrant on an undisclosed misdemeanor charge; one for drug possession
- ▶ **Nov. 21:** Three people arrested after police drug raid; cocaine and marijuana confiscated
- ▶ **Nov. 18:** Ongoing investigation involving robbery
- ▶ **Nov. 6:** One arrest for a drug deal in the hotel parking lot
- ▶ **Nov. 4:** One arrest for disorderly conduct
- ▶ **Oct. 7:** One arrest for assault
- ▶ **Oct. 3:** One arrest for possession of drug paraphernalia
- ▶ **Oct. 1:** Rape case investigated
- ▶ **Sept. 9:** One arrest for possession of drug paraphernalia

Source: Lansing Police Department

the same lucrative package to a new developer. There has been significant interest in it."

Mayor Virg Bernero said breathing new life into the corner the Deluxe Inn occupies is a top priority.

"This is the gateway to Reo Town, and we intend to clean it up," he said.

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