

November 20, 2020

City of Detroit
Ms. Jennifer Ross
Historic District Commission
2 Woodward Ave., Suite 800
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: 439 Henry Street—Bretton Hall

Dear Ms. Ross,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC (KDG) is writing on behalf of Cass Village Apartments, LLC to the Historic District Commission regarding the building located at 439 Henry Street (known as Bretton Hall). The building is currently occupied, and the current rehabilitation plan includes retaining all existing tenants if they should choose to stay. The exterior rehabilitation plan for 439 Henry includes brick and stone repairs, repairs to the entrance and new exterior doors, installation of new windows, repairs and the addition of storm doors to the Juliet balcony doors, repairs to the cornice, new roofing, the addition of a porch lift, façade lighting, signage, and the addition of rooftop equipment. The following is a detailed description of each exterior feature proposed to be rehabilitated.

Built between 1916-1918, the building at 439 Henry Street is a four-story brick building that faces north onto Henry Street with an alley located to the east and the William B. Ralston garage (447 Henry adjacent to the west). The building is one of three 'sister' buildings on the block with the nearly identical Claridge (459 Henry) and Berwin Apartments (489 Henry) just down the street to the west. The building is relatively rectangular in plan stretching almost the full length of the block from Henry Street to W Fisher Service Drive. The building is slightly elevated above grade and is faced in brown brick with pale stone accents. The north elevation (facing Henry Street) consists of five bays with the entrance located in the central bay at the first floor. The entrance is flanked by two paired window openings on each side and a single double hung window beyond that on each side. The door surround consists of two engaged columns which support a simple classical entablature. "BRETTON HALL" is incised onto the frieze in simple block lettering. Because the first floor is slightly elevated, the basement is accessed by two doors located just below grade on either side of the main entrance. Stairs lead down to these two entrances. The center bay of the upper floors on the north elevation contain Juliet balconies with double doors with glazed panels and decorative iron railings. Above the fourth floor is a heavy denticulated pressed tin cornice with large brackets which wraps the north elevation to the first bay of the east façade.

Overall Site Plan

The district will be rehabilitated as a whole to create a unified, cohesive design. The local district comprises nearly the entire city block at the southwest corner of Cass Avenue and Henry Street with the western-most parking lot and the areas directly south of all buildings not included in the district. That being said, although the areas south of the buildings are not included in the district, because work is being proposed in two such areas—on the grassy area south of 2447 Cass and on an area directly south of 439 Henry—both areas will be discussed. The district consists of seven buildings situated along Cass Avenue and Henry Street.

The streetscape on Henry Street will be re-designed to eliminate most of the curb cuts as access to the parking lot between 489 Henry and 459 Henry will be accessed from the alley not from Henry Street. Further, that parking lot will be re-designed with a wide landscape buffer to shield the occupants of 489 Henry and 459 Henry from noise and headlight glare. A tot lot will be added to the area directly adjacent to the parking lot and 459 Henry. The sidewalk along the southern side of Henry Street will be retained, a wide greenbelt will be planted, and a decorative hardscape and patterned concrete will be used directly in front of 447 Henry for the anticipated retail/dining tenant. A forecourt will be created in front of each residential building by construction of a 12" concrete planter curb with ornamental plantings found within the forecourt. For the buildings along Cass Avenue – 2447 and 2467 Cass - an 18" aluminum garden fence will be placed in front of each building as well. The landscaping in front of each building will have a slightly different arrangement of landscaping and trees to provide greenery and visual interest to the buildings.

There is currently an alley running north to south between 439 and 427 Henry. This alley will be recreated into additional outdoor gathering spaces as well as parking for residents. The northern end of the alley will become a



seating area with a granite chip surface—it will be surrounded by plantings and accessed through an aluminum fence and gate set back from Henry Street. The southern end of where alley currently runs will become a surface parking lot with 15 parking spaces. The drive aisle will be accessed from the W. Fisher Service Drive. New concrete paving will be installed along the parking lot and provide access to 2447 Cass, 2467 Cass, 427 Henry, and 439 Henry. The concrete paving will also extend in between 427 Henry and 2467 Cass. This area will have lawn furniture and will also be accessible via an aluminum fence and gate facing Henry Street. The alley that runs east to west, just south of the 439 Henry, 447 Henry, 459 Henry, and 489 Henry will be re-paved with asphalt and will remain accessible to vehicular traffic and barrier free access to 439 Henry. A consolidated site refuse enclosure will be located along this alley and will be screened from the W. Fisher Service Drive with both plantings and a masonry screen wall. Along the service drive a staggered 6' tall ornamental aluminum fence will be built just south of 2447 Cass Avenue and the open green space south of 427 Henry to provide privacy from the I-75 service drive. In between 2467 and 2447 Cass, a public/private gathering space will be created with ornamental plantings and lawn furniture located closer to Cass Avenue, while a larger outdoor park for residents will be nestled further into the site, between the buildings, and will be accessed by an aluminum fence and gate off Cass Avenue.

Brick and stone

The building is clad in brown brick which is in fair condition in most areas with some step cracking, mortar loss, puncture holes, and some efflorescence beneath the stone sills. The first floor of the south elevation (facing W Fisher Service Drive) has been painted brown. Overall, the brick is in fair-to-good condition. On the north elevation, simple stone bands frame the second and third floor window and door openings and there are a series of stone water table bands at each floor. The front entrance surround is painted stone. The remaining elevations are relatively devoid of decoration and have stone sills beneath each window opening. Most of the stone is in fair to good condition with some discoloration and cracking visible.

All brick and stone are to be inspected for damage. The paint will be removed from any painted masonry and then all masonry will be cleaned with a light duty detergent and low-pressure water rinse prior to any masonry work to allow matching of the existing mortar color. Brick and stone will be repointed, and loose or displaced units will be reset. Re-pointed mortar will match the color, texture, compressive strength, joint width and joint profile of the existing historic mortar. Damaged brick and stone will be repaired as necessary and loose or displaced units to be reset. If any units are too badly deteriorated to repair, they will be replaced—any salvaged brick will be reused where replacements are needed before new units are used. If new units are necessary, they will be selected to match the existing in size, profile, color, and finish. The stone surround at the main entry will be cleaned to remove all paint and return to bare stone.

Entrance and Doors

The main entrance contains its original glazed double doors, transom, and sidelights. The transom is leaded glass with an arts and crafts design. The entrance door will be replaced with a new door to match the existing historic door with new hardware. The two exterior basement doors on the north façade do not match in style or material. The westernmost basement access door is a metal door with a small diamond shaped lite in the center. It has a glazed transom that has been boarded over. The eastern-most basement access door is wood with four rectangular lites at the top of the door and a chute built into the door structure. The exterior basement doors will be replaced with new doors to match the appearance of the eastern door without the chute.

Above the main entrance, on the second, third, and fourth floor, there are original wood double doors with glazed panels at the balconettes. These doors will be inspected for damage and condition and repaired as necessary. If the doors are found to be deteriorated beyond repair, new doors will be installed which match the existing. Aluminum storm doors will be added in front of the balconette double doors on the second through fourth floors of the north elevation to protect the original doors. The storm doors will be compatible with the historic nature of the building without appearing falsely historic and will not obstruct vision to the original double doors. The metal guardrails at these doors will be reconstructed to match the original in style, profile, material, and color. On the south elevation there is a steel door at the ground floor level and furniture loading doors at the second, third, and fourth floors. The furniture loading doors contain glazed panels and transoms above. The ground floor steel door and the furniture loading doors will be inspected for damage and repaired as necessary. The metal guardrails at the furniture loading doors will be replaced with a new metal guardrail system.



A new porch lift to provide accessible access to the first floor will be added on the west façade of the building. This porch lift will be in the small alley between 439 Henry and 447 Henry due to the building east and south facades built to zero lot lines at the public right of ways, and the front façade flanking basement entry stairs not allowing placement of barrier free access without severely impacting the historic façade. This entry will be accessed from the repaved east-west alley south of the building.

Cornice

The pressed tin cornice is at the top of the north façade and also wraps to the first bay of the east elevation. The cornice is currently painted brown. There is noticeable corrosion and damage to the cornice, with some pieces missing. The cornice will be cleaned and repaired where it can. Where pieces are damaged beyond repair or missing, a new piece made of compatible metal will be installed to match the existing. The cornice paint will be investigated to determine what the original historic color was.

Windows

The windows are non-historic vinyl single-hung units. There are no known photos depicting the historic window configuration. The windows will be replaced with aluminum clad wood single-hung windows which will be compatible with the historic nature of the building without appearing falsely historic. The window frame color will be selected to be compatible with the period of the building construction.

Façade Lighting

Exterior building lighting will be provided and designed to highlight building features. Lighting locations may include up lights on the east facade and flanking the front entrance. Final lighting cut sheets are not yet available and will be provided to staff for review once ready.

Signage

Currently there is no signage on the building beyond the stone-inscribed "BRETTON HALL" over the main entry door. It is proposed that future signage will be reinstated on the building at that location. Final signage drawings (including size, color and design) will be submitted for staff approval before installation.

Roof

The building currently has a flat membrane roof. It is in fair to poor condition and will be removed and replaced with a new EPDM roof. A small condenser farm located to the rear center of the roof will be screened with an approximately 5' tall metal roof screen. The metal screen will be a "Dove Grey" color. This location was selected so that the units will not be visible from the street within a one block radius—please see attached sightline study.

The items listed above provide a synopsis of the proposed scope of work for the rehabilitation of 439 Henry (Bretton Hall). Further detail is provided in the attached drawings, renderings, reports, and photos. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC



Brian Rebain, RA, NCARB
Principal

