

November 20, 2020

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

RE: 447 Henry Street—William B. Ralston garage

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 447 Henry Street (known as William B. Ralston garage). The building is currently vacant and will be rehabilitated into leasable commercial space as well as residential tenant amenities for 6 residential buildings on the block. The exterior rehabilitation plan for 447 Henry includes brick and stone repairs, installation of new storefront system on the north façade, installation of new windows, the addition of door openings, façade lighting, signage, new roofing, and the addition of rooftop equipment. The following is a detailed description of each exterior feature proposed to be rehabilitated.

Built between 1922-23, 447 Henry is a one-story commercial building located directly adjacent to 439 Henry (Bretton Hall) and 459 Henry (The Claridge Apartments). Bretton Hall and 447 Henry are directly adjacent for one bay and then 439 Henry pulls in creating a nine-foot grassy alley on the east side of 447 Henry. The Claridge Apartments and 447 Henry are separated by a narrow grassy alley for their full length. The building is divided into three bays along Henry Street while the east and west façade are punctuated with several large openings that have been boarded over. The south façade has a large metal coiling door in the center of the façade and two pedestrian doors on either side along with a series of individual glass block openings in the upper wall area. There is evidence of several infilled openings on the south façade where variegated brick has been laid that does not match the original brick in color.

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 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 entry 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 brick which is in fair condition in most areas with some step cracking, mortar loss, puncture holes, and some staining on the stone base. The brick is brown except for on the south façade where it is clad in reddish common brick. Portions of brick on the south elevation have been painted black. The primary façade (Henry Street) features a fair share of decorative brick work. The area directly above the storefronts feature decorative bond patterns: bricks laid perpendicular on the horizontal plane and bricks laid in a stack bond on the vertical plane frame an English Cross bond pattern in the center. Overall, the brick is in fair-to-good condition. Light stone accent blocks near the parapet accentuate the brickwork. The same light stone is found below the storefront windows at grade. Four stone globe finials are found at the top of each brick pier on the north façade. The two globe finials at the ends of the façade are largely deteriorated/missing with pieces missing and the stone base is in fair to poor condition. The remaining stone accents appear to be in fair to good condition.

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 masonry work to allow matching of mortar color. The 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, such as the deteriorated globe finials, they will be created to match the existing in size, profile, color, and finish.

Entrance and Doors

The three storefront bays on the north façade have been largely painted black. The eastern-most bay has one entrance door which has been boarded over and the western-most bay has a set of double doors blocked by an iron security gate. The central storefront bay has been boarded over but originally contained a large storefront window. The east and west facades currently have no means of egress. The south façade contains the central metal coiling door as well as two pedestrian doors with iron security gates covering them. All are painted black.

A new aluminum storefront system will be installed in the existing storefront openings. The storefronts will be painted a historically appropriate color. The current design depicts the eastern-most bay as maintaining its current configuration but with the possibility of adding or relocating door openings once a tenant is secured. The western-most bay will be reconfigured to include two sets of double doors. All three bays will restore the glazed transoms.

Two new doors will be added on the eastern façade to provide access to the alley which runs along the building between 447 Henry and 439 Henry. The alley will be paved and provide additional lawn furniture to serve residents and patrons.

The central metal coiling door on the south façade will be replaced with a new insulated overhead door to match the existing in size and appearance. The two pedestrian doors on the south façade will be replaced with solid hollow metal doors and frames.

Windows

The east and west facades are punctuated by several large openings which have been boarded up and not available for close inspection. The existing windows will be replaced with new aluminum clad wood fixed windows.

Façade Lighting



Exterior building lighting will be provided and designed to highlight building features. Lighting locations may include up lights in the east alley courtyard and wall mounted fixtures on the front facade. 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. It is proposed that future signage will be reinstated on the building within the storefront transom band (for tenants). Once this general area is approved, final signage drawings (including size, color and design) will be submitted for staff approval before installation.

Roof

The building currently has a gambrel membrane roof. It is in fair to poor condition and will be removed and replaced with a new EPDM roof single ply roofing system. Rooftop condensers surrounded by an approximately 5' tall metal screen will be located on the gambrel roof toward the rear of the building so as to not be visible from the sidewalk. The metal screen will be a "Dove Grey" color. Please see attached sightline study for additional information.

The items listed above provide a synopsis of the proposed scope of work for the rehabilitation of 447 Henry (William B. Ralston Garage). 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

