

November 20, 2020

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

RE: 459 Henry Street—The Claridge Apartments

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 459 Henry Street (known as The Claridge Apartments.) The building is currently vacant, and this project will rehabilitate the building for new residential occupancy. The exterior rehabilitation plan for 459 Henry includes brick and stone repairs, repairs to the entrance and new exterior doors, installation of new windows, installation of new double doors at the Juliet balconies, installation of a new reconstructed cornice, 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 in approximately 1916, the building at 459 Henry Street is a four-story brick building that faces north onto Henry Street with a surface parking lot located to the west and the William B. Ralston garage (447 Henry) adjacent to the east. The building is one of three 'sister' buildings on the block with the nearly identical Bretton Hall (439 Henry) two buildings to the east and the Berwin Apartments (489 Henry) across the surface parking lot 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 yellow-brown brick on the primary façade and brown brick on the remaining three elevations. The building is accented with pale stone including around windows, at sills, and a series of water tables. The north elevation (facing Henry Street) consists of five bays with the entrance located in the central bay at the first floor. The building features a central projecting porch with brick piers and pilasters and arches of painted stone, which shelters the main entrance. "CLARIDGE" is carved into the architrave just above the arch. The porch creates a balcony for the second floor which is surrounded by a metal railing. At the first floor, the double entrance doors are boarded over but are flanked by a set of paired windows on either side. 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 on the upper stories, located directly above the arched entrance porch, feature paired windows set in a stone surround with an iron balconette. The windows in the center bay are likely not original as beige brick – which does not match the historic brick on this façade – is found below each set of windows. The two outer bays on each floor have a single-hung window with a stone sill. The east, west, and south facades are largely devoid of decoration except for stone sills. Windows punctuate the facades at regular intervals. Some windows, mostly at the basement and first floor level, have been boarded over on all facades.

#### 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 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 yellow-brown brick on the north façade and brown brick on the remaining three facades. The brick 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 central window and knee wall openings and stone water table bands run under the window openings at the first, second, and fourth floors. The black paint on the stone pilasters and architraves is cracked and peeling. 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 masonry work to allow matching of mortar color. The painted stone at the arches and pilasters on the projecting porch on the north façade will be stripped of all paint and left as bare stone. 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.

#### Entrance and Doors

The main entrance, including the doors, transom, and sidelights are boarded over. The transom is leaded glass with an arts and crafts design. The entrance doors will be inspected for damage and repaired as necessary with new hardware or replaced to match existing. The two exterior basement access doors on the north façade are currently boarded over with sheets of plywood. They will be inspected for damage and repaired as necessary with new hardware or replaced with compatible doors.

The central bay above the front entrance contain non-original infill windows and brick within original stone surrounds. The anachronistic windows and infill brick knee wall will be removed. The openings will be replaced with wood double doors, using the balconette doors at 439 Henry as design intent. Aluminum storm doors will also be added in front of the double doors. The storm doors will be compatible with the historic nature of the building without appearing falsely historic. 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. These doors are currently boarded over. The ground floor steel door and the furniture loading doors will be inspected for damage and repaired as necessary with new hardware or replaced with compatible doors. The furniture loading doors contain glazed panels and transoms above.



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 provide a necessary accessible entry from both the Henry street sidewalk and the surface parking lot located to the west of 459 Henry into the building.

#### Cornice

A light-colored brick band exists at the top of the north façade where a cornice once existed. This ghost band wraps the corner onto the west façade and wraps the whole first bay of the east façade. The cornice likely matched those on the two adjacent 'sister' buildings at 439 and 489 Henry. A new fiberglass or GFRC cornice will be fabricated using the existing cornices at 439 and 489 Henry as design intent. The cornice color will match the original historic color found at 439 and 489 Henry.

#### 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 wall mounted fixtures 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 "CLARIDGE" on the projecting porch. It is proposed that future signage will be reinstated on the building at the same location. 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 flat membrane roof. It is in fair to poor condition and will be removed and replaced with a new single 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 459 Henry (The Claridge Apartments). 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

