

January 15, 2021

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

RE: 93 Seward – Midtown Square Apartments (The Malvern)

Dear Ms. Ross,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC (KDG) is writing to the Historic District Commission on behalf of Midtown Square LDHA LP regarding the building located at 93 Seward (a.k.a. Midtown Square Apartments and Malvern Apartments). The Midtown Square Apartment building was originally called the Malvern Apartments and was built in 1926. The building has a rectangular footprint on the first floor while the second through eighth floors have an "I" shaped footprint set atop the rectangular plinth of the first floor. The primary façade located on the end of the "I" which faces north onto Seward Avenue. The building is an eight-story brick and limestone clad, occupied multi-family residential building with a ninth-floor residential penthouse located at the front of the building. A faux-copper finished aluminum clad, steeply pitched hip roof crowns the ninth-floor penthouse. The rest of the roof on the building is flat. The front section of the building is clad in dark red and brown brick with limestone accents while the back portion of the building is clad in common brick which has been painted a dull brown color.

There is a flat roof, brick-clad garage structure on the back of the building along the alley which is original to the building and another flat-roof brick clad garage along the rear part of the west wall at the SW corner of the building which was constructed later in 1938. The remainder of the site is an asphalt parking lot servicing the building. The garages have a utilitarian design without any architectural styling.

Executed in the late Gothic Revival style, the Midtown Square Apartments was originally built as a residential or apartment hotel catering to middle- and upper-class individuals and families desiring the convenience of apartment living. Renovations were completed on the building by a prior owner in 2004 which included complete replacement of windows, installation of the aluminum metal roof on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor penthouse, masonry cleaning, masonry repair, and painting of the common brick on the back half of the building. The 1938 garage structure has masonry openings with chain link fencing in place of windows, which were removed during the 2004 renovations. Modern coiling metal doors on the south façade were installed at that time as well.

The building is located in a Certified Local Historic District, the New Center Area Historic District.

#### Scope of Work

This application will present the following exterior work planned for the building: site improvements, partial garage demolition, canopy over west entrance, masonry cleaning and restoration, gutter repairs, window repair of the four-over-one units and window replacement of the one-over-one units, door replacements, façade lighting, and rooftop work. The following is a detailed description of each work item:

#### Demolition of the Attached Garage

There are two existing, separate garage structures on the building. The original garage was a small one-story appendage isolated to the south façade of the building connecting it to the service alley behind. It is a concrete framed structure clad in brick with a flat roof and a series of overhead doors opening onto the alley. A second one story concrete frame and brick garage, was added in 1938 and extends out from the SW corner of the building. The garage extension connects to the original garage, although the structures are distinct and separate, and was heavily modified during the 2004 renovation, when the prior owner took out all the doors and windows to create a covered but largely open parking area. The added garage is very large for the size of the building, and comprises a non-characteristic trait appended onto this large apartment when compared to other apartment buildings in the district. As a result, the garage addition appears to be an anomaly in the district and does not contribute to the significance



of the district. Note that the historic district report for the New Center Area does not give a specific period of significance but it does note that the apartment buildings in the district were built between 1914 to 1940, so the garage was added at the end of this noted period.

The added garage has no unique or well-crafted traits, nor does it possess any important history or other notable traits that would merit deeming this structure as significant. Moreover, it was built at the tail end of the period of significance and does not have much of its original integrity given the removal of all original windows and doors during the 2004 renovation. The addition does not fit within the rhythm, scale, and style of the surrounding apartment buildings, and because this garage is not architecturally or historically significant, we seek approval to remove the western portion of this garage to improve the parking situation for the residents of 93 Seward. The portion of the garage located directly behind the building will be retained to provide a sheltered area storage of the building's waste receptacles. A new CMU wall will be built to enclose the open west wall of the original garage directly south of the building once the western portion of the garage is demolished. The CMU will be painted to blend in with the western façade of the building. The four coiling doors facing the south alley will be repaired if possible and replaced with similar coiling units if too far deteriorated.

#### Site Work

Once the western portion of the one-story garage is removed, the parking lot will be repaved and the area where the garage used to be located will be regraded. A new pedestrian gate from the parking lot to the sidewalk to the north will be installed. The fence around the parking lot will be replaced. The automobile gate will also be replaced. Site lighting will also be added with two new poles with lighting affixed to poles in the parking lot. The brick wall between the west garage and the alley will be removed down to a height of 48" above grade to create a partial height wall. Coping similar in color to the coping on the walls at the penthouse roof decks will cap the partial height wall. The south alley will be left as is and the grassy area to the east of the building will remain as is. Please see page AS100 in the attached drawing package for additional details.

#### Masonry

The building is built of concrete and is faced in brick and limestone. Large areas of brick on the north, east, and west facades near the top of the building were repaired in 1982 with mismatched mortar and brick materials. It appears from old photos that some of these replaced areas were originally limestone spandrels similar to the center bays of the north façade. The rest of the building is clad in common brick that was painted with a latex "Drylok" type waterproofing paint in a dull brown color during the 2004 renovation by the previous owner. The brick that is visible (unpainted) is in good-to-fair condition with limited cracking, spalling, damaged units, and missing mortar visible. Despite a non-compliant painted treatment with a waterproofing paint, the painted brick generally appears to be in good-to-fair condition with the paint flaking and peeling in some locations. Areas of more concentrated damage are isolated to window lintels in various locations exhibiting cracking, spalling, and deteriorated masonry units, and missing mortar visible. The limestone is in fair condition with some staining and cracking present.

The limestone and brick will be inspected for damage, cleaned, and repaired. Where needed, brick and stone will be repointed, and mortar will match the color, texture, compressive strength, joint width, and joint profile of the existing mortar. The poorly matched brick and mortar on the north portion of the building will remain, but any damaged mortar will be replaced with new. The painted brick will be left as-is, with any loose or deteriorating paint scraped off. Damaged brick and stone will be repaired as necessary and loose or displaced pieces will be reset. If any brick or stone is too badly deteriorated to repair or reset, they will be replaced—new brick and stone will be selected to match the existing in color, profile, and finish. The stone and brick will be cleaned with a light duty detergent and low-pressure water rinse prior to any masonry work to allow matching of stone and mortar color.

#### Windows

There are two different types of windows currently installed in the building: on the front part of the building—corresponding with the section of the building which does not have painted brick—the windows are four-over-one double hung copper clad wood units. These windows were replacement units installed in 2004 and are not historic but appear to be a compatible replacement and are in fair-to-good condition. On the back part of the building, one-over-one single-hung aluminum windows were installed during the 2004 renovations and these units are in poor



condition: the sash seals have failed; the panning has no blocking behind the brake metal and, thus, most of the panning pieces are heavily damaged or missing entirely. This has caused water and air infiltration at the windows in many places. Additionally, the sealant around the windows has failed in many places. The lintels above some of the windows are in poor condition and will need to be repaired or replaced as noted above. Along the western façade in the one-story garage, several window openings have been infilled with brick by a prior owner.

Because the copper clad units on the front part of the building appear to be in good condition, these units will remain and will be minimally repaired where necessary. Because the aluminum units on the back part of the building are in such poor condition, and because replacement parts for these aluminum units are obsolete and not widely available, these windows will be replaced with one-over-one aluminum historic replica windows. The new units will feature aluminum panning with a profile complimentary to the character of the building and simulated putty glazing details on the sashes and the new units will match the existing windows regarding the position in the wall and the dimensions of the individual elements including but not limited to muntins, head, sill, panes, jambs, sash, and overall depth. The final model is still to be determined but will be similar to the Quaker H503, Traco TR-9700, or Graham 2000H historic replica models. Further, old sealant around the windows will be removed, and new sealant will be applied and will be gunned and tooled to a watertight finish.

Finally, a pair of aluminum historic replica, single hung windows will be added on the west façade at the first floor: the community room sits against the west wall where several windows have been infilled with brick. One of these openings will have the infill brick removed and a new window (two one-over-one aluminum units) will be inserted to provide natural light to the community room. The rest of the infilled openings on this façade will remain as is.

#### Gutters

Gutters are currently located on the secondary facades (east, west, and south) of the hipped roof that covers the ninth-floor penthouse as well as along the south alley façade of the one-story garage. Overall, the gutters are in good condition with some limited damaged components. To provide proper water drainage, the gutters on the hipped roof over the penthouse will be maintained while the gutters on the west façade of the garage will be removed when the garage is demolished. The gutter found along the south façade of the garage will remain.

#### Exterior Doors

There is a double set of doors in fair condition at the main entrance on the north façade. These doors are glazed panel wood doors and do not appear to be historic. They were likely installed during the 2004 renovation. A non-historic steel door is located on the west façade which leads into the garage. A non-historic steel door is located at the south façade, also leading into the garage. On the east façade there are three doors: A single steel door at the midpoint of the façade, a set of non-historic steel double doors just south of the first steel door, and, finally, another single steel door. All steel doors are in fair condition. The primary entrance doors on the north façade will be removed and replaced with a new glazed aluminum double door unit. The non-historic steel door on the west façade will be replaced with a glazed aluminum door. The door openings on the south and east facades will remain as is but the steel doors will be removed and will be replaced with new painted flush steel door units.

#### Awning West Entrance

There are no awnings on the building at present. A new awning is proposed to be added to the west façade over the exterior door located on this façade. The awning will be attached to the building above the door and will be made of canvas over an aluminum frame and will complement the historic character of the building without appearing falsely historic.

#### Façade Lighting

Architectural lighting will be added on the primary (north) façade and safety/security lighting will be added to the east, west, and south facades. Existing sconces on the east and west walls of the ninth-floor penthouse at the existing patios will be replaced.



## Roof

At the northern portion of the building, the ninth-floor penthouse is crowned by a steeply pitched hipped roof clad in a faux-copper color aluminum metal finish which was installed during the 2004 renovation. The rest of the building is covered in a flat, black EPDM roof in fair condition. There are two penthouses (one on the northern end and one on the southern end, both of which are clad in brick and in fair condition with some poorly matched brick infill in old window openings and some areas painted. Mechanical equipment is placed just south of the southern penthouse and is not visible from Seward. A wood access stair is located on the northern end of the roof to provide access to the flat portion of the ninth floor. The wood stair is in poor condition with broken treads and general decrepitness. A similar wood stair, also in poor condition, provides access to the upper level of the rear penthouse. There are two small roof areas on the first floor where the building steps back at the second floor: these areas are covered in a black EPDM roof in fair condition. The black EPDM roofing located on the flat portion of the roof is in fair condition and will be removed and replaced with new black EPDM roof. The standing seam faux copper roof on the steeply pitched hipped roof will remain as is. The rooftop equipment currently located on the roof will be removed and replaced with new units, including a new chiller bank on the main roof and new generator on the lower rear garage roof. The chiller equipment is currently located behind the elevator penthouse and this location will be utilized for the new generator and new equipment so these new units will not be visible from the street. Finally, both rooftop wood stairs that access the elevator penthouses will be replaced with new stair—these are also not visible from the street given the steeply pitched hipped roof in front of it. The wood stairs will be removed and replaced with a new, prefabricated steel stair. A new black EPDM roof will also be installed on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor roofs in the two spaces where the floor plan pulls in at the second floor.

The items listed above provide a synopsis of the proposed scope of work for the rehabilitation of the building. Further detail is provided in the attached drawings and photos. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC



Cassandra Talley  
Architectural Historian

