

April 18, 2022; REVISED May 2, 2022

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

RE: 1201 Washington Boulevard

Dear Ms. Dye,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC (KDG) is writing to the Historic District Commission on behalf of Innovative Acquisitions, LLC regarding the building located at 1201 Washington Boulevard (a.k.a. Book Tower Arcade/Washington Mews Building). 1201 Washington Boulevard is located directly south of The Book Building (1249 Washington) and The Book Tower (1265 Washington). The north façade of 1201 Washington directly abuts the south façade of The Book Building. The Book Tower and The Book Building are currently undergoing a massive rehabilitation which will fully renovate both structures and will return two of the most architecturally significant buildings in the city back to productive use.

This request is a follow-up application for the submission from February 2021. At that time, the application was only partially reviewed, with the rear demolition of the building receiving a Notice to Proceed (attached). The remainder of the application for rehabilitation of the existing building was determined to be lacking sufficient detail and was only reviewed on an advisory basis. This application aims to present the remainder of the project for CofA approval at this time.

The previous design has been modified as indicated below and in the attached drawings. In general, the 2nd floor lobby entrance has been moved to the NE corner of the building on Washington Blvd for increased visibility. This has led to a modification of the stairwells, elevator shaft, and rooftop penthouses, accordingly.

Building History

1201 Washington Blvd. is a two-story wood-framed structure faced with limestone. The current windows and storefront are not original, and through various tenant improvements, most of the interior historic fabric has been removed. The building is currently vacant.

The main significance of the building is its original purpose as a temporary placeholder for a proposed 81-story tower that was intended to complete the Book Brothers block development to the north (1249-1265 Washington Blvd.) prior to the onset of the 1929 Great Depression. This future tower was intended to bookend the Book Building (1249) with a south tower but was never constructed except for its foundations. Archival research from that era and existing field conditions both support this history.

Behind 1201 Washington, an 1100 car parking garage was constructed in 1928 to support the original Book Brothers development, including the proposed 81 story tower. This structure has since been demolished and is now the site of the Rosa Parks Transit Center and People Mover maintenance facility.

At the February 10, 2021 HDC meeting, a Notice to Proceed was issued for demolition of the rear two structural bays of the building. These bays were demolished in order to allow the existing alley behind the Book Tower development to continue through to State St and provide more loading area for the block. The demolition work was completed in Spring 2021, and the open end of the building is temporarily protected with plywood sheathing

Rehabilitation

The following is a detailed description of the building rehabilitation. In general, this project is looking to completely rehabilitate the existing building to accommodate a new retail layout on the first floor, provide open office space on the second floor, and create rooftop infrastructure to support a prospective roof deck and penthouse. The sidewalks on Washington Blvd and State St will be completely replaced and a new paving design will be provided in the extended alley, replicating the alley work proposed for the book Tower rehabilitation project.

Accordingly, this application proposes to restore the existing masonry façade, construct a historically compatible façade at the new west elevation, replace non-historic storefront glazing, provide new exterior lighting, show tenant



signage opportunities, reconstruct the roof assembly to accommodate new Assembly loads associated with a roof deck, and construct new penthouses to house stairs, elevators and HVAC equipment. In addition, views of a prospective tenant provided rooftop penthouse is shown for an advisory opinion by the Commission.

Masonry

The building is a wood framed, two story structure that is faced in Indiana limestone. The limestone is in fair condition with some staining, cracking, and numerous anchor holes from previous installations of signage and awnings. Several areas have been identified, especially after removal of the non-historic storefront assemblies, where limestone cladding was removed from the columns to allow the storefront design span across multiple bays. In these areas, the underlying brick masonry backer material is now visible.

The remaining limestone will be inspected for damage, cleaned, and repaired. Stone will be repointed, and mortar will match the color, texture, compressive strength, joint width, and joint profile of the existing mortar. Damaged stone will be repaired as necessary. The many small holes found across the façade from former signage locations will be patched with matching materials. Loose or displaced pieces will be reset. If any stone is too badly deteriorated to repair or reset and in those locations where original stone cladding was previously removed from the building, the pieces will be replaced—new Indiana limestone will be selected to match the existing in color, profile, and finish. All stone 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.

New Western Façade

The new western façade, constructed at the open end of the building where the two structural bays were demolished, will be clad in buff colored brick to match the alley brick found on the Book Building/Tower. See attached brick samples for color and texture of the proposed brick cladding. The façade, also acting as new lateral/shear wall support will be largely solid on the first floor with a few BOH entry doors to the exit stair, loading and trash rooms. The second floor façade will be punctuated with window openings (see Storefronts and Windows section for more detail).

Storefronts, Main Entry and Windows

There are no historic storefronts or windows remaining on the building. It is believed that the historic storefronts were removed and replaced at an unknown date; later, in the 1980s, aluminum-framed storefronts were installed on the second floor while the first-floor storefronts are aluminum units from a similar era. The current first-floor storefronts are mismatched, seals and panes are broken, storefront glazing has been shortened, and the glazing is dark and reflective—the storefronts are, altogether, in poor condition and not historically compatible.

On the two primary facades (east and south facades) all non-original exterior storefronts and associated overhead signage panels are to be removed and replaced with new storefront systems designed to be appropriately compatible with the historic character of the building. Large format storefront windows, approximately 10'-8" H x 11'-8" W, divided into three vertical glazing panels with transoms above, will be installed in the first and second floor window openings. A curb wall (actual height will vary with floor and pavement elevations) clad in limestone will be built beneath each storefront assembly on the first floor. The limestone veneer will be split into three panels to align with the storefront frames above. At the second floor the non-historic storefront will be removed and replaced with new storefront with a similar tripartite w/ transom design. Product info and details are submitted. All storefront framing and associated doors shall have a factory painted finish to match the "Quaker Dark Bronze" finish in the attached Product Info

On the east façade, the main double door entrance for the primary retail tenant is located in the vaulted center bay. The existing wood double doors and frame are glazed with an arched transom overhead that is divided into three lights. The wood frames and doors will be repaired and restored with new door hardware. The coffered vaulted ceiling will be repaired and restored, and the non-historic utility light removed. Side walls of the recessed entry will remain as is, with limestone panels restored as part of the façade work.

The northern-most storefront bay on the east façade will receive an entry door into a lobby for the 2nd floor tenant. This new entrance door will be a fully glazed aluminum stile and rail unit, centered within the new storefront assembly with sidelights on either side of the door and a transom overhead. The door will be recessed into the storefront bay with limestone clad wall returns, storefront glazing into the adjacent tenant space and exterior gyp bd ceiling. The solid wall on the north side will have a similar storefront system as the south, but with a solid inset panel for tenant directory and electronic card reader.



On the west façade, new aluminum windows previously installed at the adjacent Book Building, and since removed, will be repurposed to provide glazing. The non-operable windows, shown in attached shop drawings and photos, will be grouped together in each structural bay at the 2nd floor to provide large areas of mostly continuous glass as much as possible. Two pairs of flush metal doors, factory finished to match the “Quaker Dark Bronze” color, will be installed near the north end of this façade for building loading and trash removal access. A single door will be provided near the center of the façade for the exit stair.

Façade Lighting

Architectural sconces will be added on the two primary facades (east and south) at each column to accentuate architectural features. The sconces are rectangular in shape, will be Satin Black in color, and provide up/down light. Please see the attached elevations and cut sheet for the proposed sconce.

Roof and Penthouses

The existing roof assembly is composed of a built-up wood-framed sloped roof deck. A series of 2x4 wood knee walls are built atop the 2x10 ceiling framing set between the building’s steel frame components. While the ceiling structure is sufficient for roof loading, the roof deck is undersized, not only for the proposed Assembly loads associated with a roof deck, but also just for basic rooftop live loads. Accordingly, all roofing materials, including the built-up wood framing and deck, will be removed down to the structural steel frame at the ceiling level below. Once removed, the roof structure will be rebuilt by stubbing up at each column location with new steel columns and beams sloped to drain. New wood roof joists and decking will span between the new steel beams. New insulation and roof membrane will be provided to meet code.

Two new penthouses will be constructed. The first, housing the exit stair, will be constructed in the SW corner and held back two structural bays from State St. The second penthouse is proposed along the north end of the building. This penthouse will house mechanical space and the top landings of the stair and elevator. The east end of this penthouse will be held back three full structural bays from the Washington Blvd façade to reduce visibility as much as possible. Both penthouses will be clad in the same buff color brick proposed for the alley façade.

Rooftop mechanical equipment will be located in the space between the two penthouses along the west facade. A brick parapet wall, contiguous with the new alley wall, will screen the rooftop equipment from view from the alley. The rooftop equipment will be shorter than the two new penthouses and neither the rooftop equipment nor future screen wall will be visible from State St or Washington Blvd.

Please see the attached sightline studies for visibility of rooftop additions and equipment.

Site Work

The original alley ran behind the Book Building/Tower from Grand River to the south, terminating at the NW corner of the 1201 Washington building, which extended the full depth of the site to People Mover facility. Once the western two bays of the 1201 Washington building were demolished, the alley was extended to connect to State St. Currently, the alley has been left unpaved, and this application proposes to pave with materials similar in design with the proposed Book Tower alley paving. Brick pavers similarly used behind Book Tower will compose the driving surface of the alley, with standard finish concrete curbs at either side of the alley.

The State St and Washington sidewalks shall be completely replaced as part of the 1201 Washington work. The design is to match the sidewalk design for Book Tower, including a wide concrete walkway against the building, landscaped planter beds near the curb, permeable pavers between the landscape beds and curb, and a granite curb against the roadbed. This design shall wrap around both facades of the building with a much narrower concrete walkway on the State St façade.



Future Tenant Work

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. However, this being a core and shell proposal, there are future tenant work items that we would like the Commission's consideration and input on.

Storefront – At this time, the building Owner is seeking a single tenant for the first-floor retail space. That tenant would use the existing front door as their primary entrance. However, if multiple tenants eventually occupy the space, additional entrances will be required. See future rendering and elevations for how those added doors would appear. These are not pre-determined locations, rather, they are shown as potential locations drawn for consideration.

To facilitate this work, which may occur retroactively, the storefront system has been designed with a central glazing unit the same size as a future door opening. Moreover, a section of the knee wall will be constructed with masonry joints aligning with the future door opening. This allows that section of the storefront, limestone cladding and associated knee wall to be removed without damaging the remainder of the storefront opening. A new door frame will then be inserted within the opening and an aluminum stile and rail door similar to the new second floor lobby entrance will be added.

Roof Deck and Penthouse - The roof structure is being reconstructed to accommodate live loads from a future roof deck and penthouse addition. The roof deck would be a simple pedestal paver system, and not visible from the right of way. Extents for a roof deck are shown in the attached plans – the roof deck will be built out by a future tenant, will be set back from the parapet, and will not be visible from the street. Potential structural methods for the deck include new wood framing or a pedestal roof deck system set atop the new roof membrane.

The penthouse would be constructed of similar masonry materials to the proposed penthouses. See alternate rendering views showing what the maximum scale of that penthouse addition would be. Does this appear to be an appropriately scaled addition for this building?

Signage

Proposed areas for future tenant signage are indicated on the attached elevations, and generally include the band above the storefronts under the decorative limestone and a blade on the southeast corner of the building. These areas are proposed as conceptual locations only, final locations and sign materials would be determined by each tenant.

All future tenant work will be submitted to the HDC for review and approval by the tenants prior to construction.

Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC



Brian Rebain, RA, NCARB
Principal

