

STAFF REPORT: FEBRUARY 12, 2025, REGULAR MEETING **PREPARED BY:** T. BOSCARINO
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00693
ADDRESS: 445 LEDYARD UNIT 6-7 (AKA 445 LEDYARD [MARINERS INN] AND 457 LEDYARD [JOHN H. AVERY HOUSE])
HISTORIC DISTRICT: CASS PARK LOCAL
APPLICANT: JR WATKINS, PEA GROUP
OWNER: MARINERS INN
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: DECEMBER 2, 2024
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JANUARY 8, 2025

SCOPE: EXPAND PARKING LOT



The subject properties, viewed from the north. January 2025 photo by staff.



Detroit Parcel Viewer image with the subject properties outlined in red.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Subject of this application are two adjacent properties. Due to a condominium provision, they are noted in official Office of the Assessor records as 445 Ledyard Unit 6 and 445 Ledyard Unit 7, despite being separate parcels containing separate buildings. For clarity, this report refers to the properties as 445 Ledyard and 457 Ledyard, respectively, reflecting common usage and the address numbers posted on the buildings.

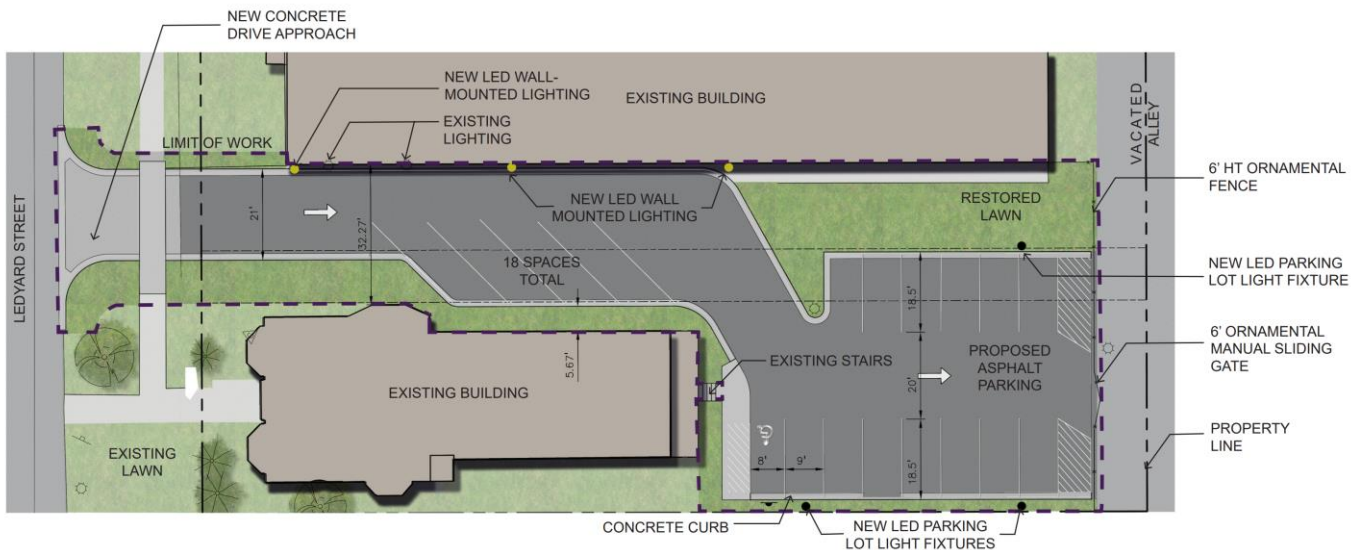
445 Ledyard is the historic Mariners Inn building, a two-story, Moderne-style building built in 1955. To the west of the building, a curb cut onto Ledyard Avenue provides access to a relatively small, asphalt-paved parking area that appears to accommodate only a few cars. To the rear (south) of the building is a grassy area containing a large (approximately 200 square feet) shed that appears to have been installed without Historic District Commission approval. The shed appears to consist of black polycarbonate panels on an aluminum frame.

457 Ledyard, historically the John H. Avery House, was built in 1878 as a two-story, Italianate house, later enlarged to three stories and converted to apartments. To the rear (south) of the building is an area of dirt, gravel, and grass that appears to be informally used for parking. That area also contains a small (less than 100 square feet) shed.

Bordering the vacated alley at the rear of the property is a chain link fence, consisting of both 4' and 6' sections, that is in disrepair and leaning.

PROPOSAL

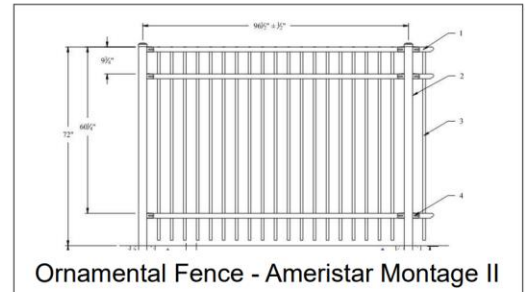
The primary scope item is the expansion of the current parking lot. The proposed work would move the curb cut a few feet to the east, repave the relatively small parking area beside 445 Ledyard, and expand the parking area to cover most of the rear yard of 457 Ledyard. To accommodate this additional paved area, the sheds would be removed.



Site plan from application documents. The “existing building” at the top is 445 Ledyard, the building at the bottom is 457 Ledyard. Note that the parcel boundary is not shown on the site plan; it approximately corresponds with the northern extent of the footprint of the building at 457 Ledyard.

The proposed work would also replace the chain-link fence with a 6' ornamental fence and install three, pole-

mounted light fixtures.



Proposed light fixture and fence. Images from application documents.



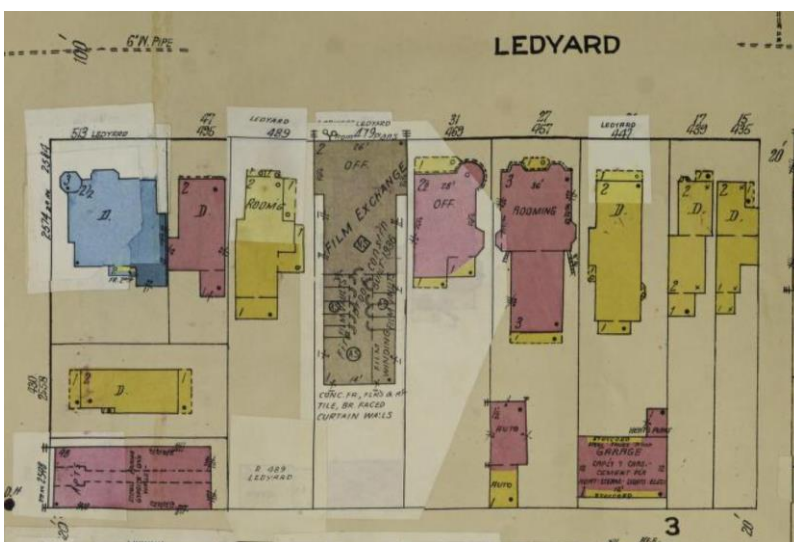
Rear (viewed from alley, facing north) of the subject properties showing smaller shed proposed for removal (left), informal unpaved parking area proposed to be paved (center) and larger shed proposed for removal (right). In the foreground is the fence proposed to be replaced. January 2025 photo by staff.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Cass Park Local Historic District was established by City Council ordinance 19-16 in 2016. The Final Report lists 445 Ledyard and 457 Ledyard as contributing resources. No period of significance is given. The Final Report states that the Cass Park Local Historic District is “derived from” an earlier National Register of Historic Places listing (Cass Park Historic District, 2005), but with reduced boundaries due to demolitions in the intervening years.
- The 2005 National Register of Historic Places documentation referenced in the Final Report provides a period of significance of 1860–1955, which staff suggests should therefore be applicable to the Cass Park Local Historic District.
- The Elements of Design (Sec. 21-2-233) for the Cass Park Local Historic District provide the following pertinent observations:
 - (5) Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets. The overall character of the district is one of densely clustered, yet visually distinct, structures separated by narrow side setbacks. ... There

is a general irregularity in the widths of buildings, and in the widths of subdivision lots themselves, [and in] subdivision lots from one block to another, contribut[ing] to an irregular rhythm of spacing of building on streets.

- (13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatment. Alleys provide access to the rear of a majority of lots in the district. ... Curbs, while historically stone, have been replaced with concrete in a majority of the district.
 - (18) Relationship of Lot Coverages. Buildings typically cover most of their lots save small front or sides setbacks. Exceptions are smaller residential buildings at 2753 Park and 457 Ledyard, which have rear yards.
 - (22) General environmental character. The general character of the district is that of a dense, mixed-use, urban, neighborhood of apartment, office, and institutional buildings, which surround and complement the green space of Cass Park.
- The chain-link fence does not appear to be a historic or character-defining feature, staff opinion is that it may be replaced.
 - According to Google Maps images, the smaller shed predates the 2016 designation of the Cass Park Local Historic District. Nonetheless, it is of a relatively recent construction date and clearly not a contributing resource; its removal is appropriate.
 - The larger shed was installed without approval; its removal is acceptable as it would be reversing unapproved work.
 - A “mixed-use, urban, neighborhood of apartment, office, and institutional buildings” is noted in the Elements of Design as quoted above. Staff notes that this character existed during the period of significance. Staff opinion is that the proposed parking lot, fence, and lighting are consistent with the character of such an environment, satisfying Standard #9: “New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.” The proposed fence also meets the *Fence and Hedge Guidelines*.



Sanborn Map Company, 1950. (Note that 447 Ledyard in the map above corresponds with 445 Ledyard today, and the frame building depicted in that location has since been replaced with the Mariners Inn.)

- Staff suggests that the proposed, pole-mounted light fixtures, being of a simple and unobtrusive design, satisfy the “compatibility” required by Standard #9.
- The rationale for moving the curb cut is not provided; however, staff does not consider its location to be character-defining.

ISSUES

- The proposed change to the curb cut would remove a small section of sandstone curb, contrary to Standard #2: “The removal of historic materials ... shall be avoided.”

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Recommendation 1 of 1, Certificate of Appropriateness

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Cass Park Local Historic District Elements of Design, with the condition that:

- *The section of sandstone curb that is removed will be retained and reused to infill the gap to the west of curb cut.*