

June 18, 2020

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

RE: 1225 Woodward –The Fowler Building

Dear Ms. Ross,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC (KDG) is writing on behalf of Woodward Acquisition Company, LLC to the Historic District Commission regarding the building at 1225 Woodward (known as the Fowler Building). This project will rehabilitate the building for new office and retail space. The exterior rehabilitation plan includes terra cotta repairs, granite repairs, recreate the missing cornice, window repair and replacement, rehabilitating the 1940 Raymond Loewy designed storefront and canopy while providing complimentary design elements to enhance Loewy's design, fire escape repairs, rooftop and penthouse repairs, and exterior door replacements. The following is a detailed description of each exterior feature proposed to be rehabilitated.

Built in 1911 the Fowler Building is an eight-and-a-half stories tall commercial building located on Woodward Avenue. It is adjacent to 1219 Woodward (the Traver-Bird Building) on the south, and 1241 Woodward (Heyn's Department Store) on the north. The Fowler Building has a white glazed terra cotta exterior on the Woodward facade (above the storefront level). The structure is composed of three vertical bays of ribbon windows containing a three-part vertical double-hung windows in each ribbon. Dark metal window surrounds and dark spandrels allow the windows to recess and emphasize the white terra cotta skeleton.

Called a skyscraper in 1910 when it opened, the building was designed by the Detroit architectural firm of Donaldson & Meier. The Fowler Building housed Kline's Ladies Wear from 1911, when it opened, until 1958. In 1940, Kline's renovated its storefront and entirely replaced the original materials of the divided storefront with a recessed street-front entry that had streamlined details and new cove lighting.

The storefront that was added to the building in 1940 was designed by one of the most significant industrial designers in history. Despite having made substantial contributions to modern design, Raymond Loewy is rather unknown today but his contributions to modern design are undeniable: He revolutionized the design of the 1934 Coldspot refrigerator, taking it from a box on legs to the modern unit, set directly on the ground, still in use today; designed the iconic blue, white and chrome Air Force One livery; and designed the Shell and Exxon logos still in use today. Because this 1940 storefront was designed by such a significant designer and falls within the Period of Significance for the Lower Woodward Avenue Historic District, we have used the 1940 era design of the building as a guide for the rehabilitation of the façade as opposed to the original 1911 design.

After Kline's was closed, the building was purchased and became a Franklin Simon store, also specializing in ladies wear. When Franklin Simon closed in 1977 the building housed another retailer, Pam's. The building finally housed AJ Beauty Supply before it too closed in 2002. The building has been vacant since that time.

Brick, Glazed Terra Cotta, and Granite

The east façade of the building is primarily clad in white glazed terra cotta which is in fair condition in most areas with cracking, crazing, puncture holes, and missing pieces present. The terra cotta located above the eighth-floor windows is in poor condition with significant cracking found on nearly every unit.

The east façade also has pink and grey flecked granite at the first floor. This granite is not original but rather was added during the 1940 renovation of the façade. The granite is in fair condition in most areas, although the granite located directly below the storefront windows is in poor condition due to salt damage and physical impacts. Two openings in the granite at each end of the storefront, originally intended as display cases, have been boarded over with plywood. Further description of this condition is in the storefront description below.



Flanking either side of the main entrance is travertine cladding installed sometime after the 1940 storefront renovation, outside the period of significance of the Lower Woodward Ave Historic District and replacing the original curved metal cladding at that location. Further description of this condition is in the storefront description below.

The alley façade (west) is faced in common brick in fair condition. Several areas are cracked and spalled. Overall, the brick is in fair condition. There is also brick found on the east façade where the cornice used to be located. This brick is in fair condition with some cracking and missing mortar. The portion of the south façade that rises above the adjacent building is red brick, in fair condition.

All terra cotta, granite and, brick is to be inspected for damage. Damaged or missing terra cotta and brick units will be replaced or repaired as necessary and loose or displaced units to be reset. Any salvaged brick and terra cotta will be reused where replacements are needed before new units are created. If new units are necessary, they will be created to match the existing in size, profile, color and finish. Terra cotta and brick is to be cleaned using the gentlest means possible to achieved desired effect. Terra cotta and brick will be repointed as needed and any loose or displaced units reset. Re-pointed mortar will match the color, texture, compressive strength, joint width and joint profile of the existing historic terra cotta.

The granite will be inspected, cleaned, and repaired; however, it is anticipated that the granite located directly beneath the storefront windows will be replaced with new matching granite due to the deteriorated conditions in this area. Replacement stone will match the historic stone as closely as possible. New matching granite will also be installed at the two former display cases at each end of the first-floor storefront, recessed from the primary face of granite one inch to represent the original masonry opening at the display cases. The remaining granite is to be cleaned using the gentlest means possible to achieve desired effect.

The travertine jambs at the main entrance will be removed and replaced as described in the next section.

1940 Raymond Loewy Designed Canopy, Storefront, Entrance

The original 1911 storefront was removed and replaced in 1940 with a streamline moderne style storefront, canopy and entrance designed by the preeminent industrial designer, Raymond Loewy. The storefront windows, doors, and travertine cladding at either side of the entry doors currently located on the east façade are not original nor are they remnants of the 1940 design, but rather, were replacement units installed sometime after 1954—see the attached photo from 1954 showing the 1940 design. The 1940 storefront windows were very large plate glass (or two panels with an invisible seam) with no dividing mullion whereas the current storefront windows are smaller glazed units with mullions. The original 1940 storefront doors were recessed and were located on either side of a centrally placed, curved display case which is no longer extant. The current storefront window and door units are in poor condition with failed seals, corroded frames, and historically inappropriate glazing.

The existing non-historic storefront windows and doors will be removed in their entirety. Historic photographs have been used to design a new storefront that compliments the historic character of the façade without appearing falsely historic. Specifically, the new design includes butt-glazed insulated glass units to replicate the original large monolithic glazing on the two main storefront windows. and a deep recessed entry vestibule has been created to echo the 1940 design. Two sets of double doors will be located on the north and south walls of the recessed vestibule with the northern doors leading into a lobby for the office tenants on the upper floors and the southern doors leading into the first-floor tenant space. The large storefront windows will utilize structural silicone glazing as a dividing “mullion” to achieve the look of extra-large format glass. The storefront window frames will be edged in brass with a champagne brass finish to evoke the historic bronze finish. Additionally, the non-historic travertine column cladding on either side of the entry doors will be removed and replaced with curved champagne brass metal panels to evoke the original curved display cases at these locations. The new storefront system is designed to be appropriately compatible with the remnants of the 1940s design as well as the building as a whole.

The canopy features a large bronze rectangular canopy with a smaller, decorative, curved bracket tucked underneath the larger canopy, also made of bronze. The canopy itself is anchored to the building by tension chains. The underside of the larger canopy is composed of curved plaster that gracefully spans the joint between the canopy and the building. Historically, this curved plaster area was lit up with lights—please see the historic photos. Currently the bronze remains mostly intact and the canopy, overall, is in fair condition although the entire thing was painted black by a prior owner.



The canopy will be repaired, and rehabilitation based upon the historic photos. New blackened steel hanger rods will be installed, and new anodized aluminum rosette plates will be installed where the hanger rods meet the face of the building. The bronze canopy cladding will be inspected, repaired, cleaned and the paint will be removed. All of the non-historic black paint will be removed using the gentlest means possible to avoid damaging the bronze. Where the bronze is damaged beyond repair new bronze pieces will be used to patch the canopy, however all existing bronze will be utilized before new bronze is installed.

The curved plaster found underneath the canopy will be repaired with a new skim coat and will be painted white. New lights will be added to illuminate the curved plaster feature—the light fixtures and wiring will be concealed behind the smaller, decorative curved bracket piece. This small curved bronze bracket will be cleaned and repaired. New recessed lighting will also be added to the underside of the canopy. The roof of the canopy will be replaced with new EPDM roofing.

Windows – Primary Facade

At the east façade, the mezzanine level currently features patterned glass block windows in fair condition with some units broken and cracked. The mezzanine glass block windows will be retained and repaired.

The second-floor windows on the east facade features three large format wood casement window units with each unit featuring a single large central fixed pane, flanked by two four-over-ten casement windows on either side—the large single fixed pane is missing on each window. Overall, the second-floor windows are in fair-to-good condition. The casement and transom sashes will be repaired as will the master frames. The huge center pane is larger than most glass manufacturers produce in an insulated glass (IGU) product therefore it is proposed that two smaller IGUs be installed with a structural silicone butt-glazed joint running vertically to replicate the look of the original monolithic glass panel.

Finally, on the east façade, on floors three through eight, there are three sets of three windows per floor. Each window is a proprietary pivot sash double hung window from the era that is no longer in production. (see attached report for more detail on the window type) The window frames and associated trim are bronze-clad and painted green. The window units are composed of one-over-one double hung wood sashes. The window sashes are not metal clad like the surrounding frames and trim.

Based on field observations and the attached window report, the window frames and trim, likely due to their protective metal cladding, are in good condition, and in need of minor repairs and cleaning. The double hung window sashes, on the other hand, are showing signs of severe fatigue at the joinery despite additional reinforcing at the sash corners and meetings rails and have numerous rotting components.

The steel reinforcing angles at the corners of the sashes and continuous reinforcement bars along the meeting rail appear to be original. This observation stems from the fact that the steel components appear to have been carefully recessed into the sash components and not roughly cut in over time. It is rare to these kinds of reinforcement components as part of the original window installation (it is common to them added after the fact, especially after decades of wear) and were likely added because the window sashes themselves are very large for this type of window, and would have been at the edge of structural capacity. These limitations are apparent in the noticeable warping and deflection of the sash components, especially at the meeting rails.

The pivot/hung operability of these sashes results in many more joints between the various wood sash components than a simple hung window would have, and rot has set in at these joints over time, as evident in the photos taken from the exterior. Within these joints lie the metal pivot hardware which has also corroded over time.

Because of the unique character of these proprietary windows, replacement hardware for these window components is generally not available. Moreover, given the deterioration of the sash components and structural limitations and deflection of the original sashes, it is not recommended that these sashes be restored (especially with the additional weight of new IGUs), and instead this project proposes to restore the frames and replace the wood sashes with new metal clad wood sashes that match the size and profiles of the original wood sashes. The new window sashes shall be fixed in place. See attached replacement window details.

Windows – Alley Facade

The windows on the alley façade are three-over-three double hung hollow metal, cold-rolled steel windows. These windows are in poor condition with evidence of corrosion on all exterior elements with many missing and broken



panes and joinery failure on the bottom sash rails and meeting rails. Because hollow metal windows corrode from the inside-out, and because corrosion is now visible on the exterior of these units, the structural integrity of these windows are deficient. The units on floors two through eight will be removed and replaced with thermally broken aluminum replica units. The units on the first floor will be removed and infilled with brick to allow for back of house tenant areas. The infilled brick will be inset 1" and the sills will remain to provide evidence of the historic window locations. The proposed window details are attached.

Please see the attached referenced Blackberry Window reports which document these conditions.

Cornice

The cornice on the building was removed in 1958 and was never replaced. On the east façade, just below the parapet, where the cornice used to be located, is approximately fifteen courses of white brick in fair condition. A new glass-fiber reinforced plastic (GFRP) cornice is proposed along the primary façade. The newly constructed cornice will be recreated based on historic photos and will be similar in proportion and design to the original cornice. Please see the attached cornice details and historic photo references.

Fire Escape

A single steel fire escape runs from the roof to the second level at the alley. The fire escape is black metal and is in poor condition with extensive corrosion, signs of rust, and damaged/missing components. The fire escape is to be removed and replaced with a new unit that will be used as a means of egress from the building. Connections to the building shall be repaired as necessary to ensure structural stability. It will be repainted black.

Façade Lighting

Exterior building lighting will be provided and designed to highlight building features. Lighting locations may include up lights on canopy roof, concealed lighting on small shelf under the canopy, water table lighting, and cornice lighting. 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 a very faded painted sign on the south façade, near the roof—the paint is very nearly invisible but there are good historic photos of this old signage. Historically, during the 1940 era, the building had applied signage above the second-floor windows, centered under the canopy over the entry doors, and at hanging below each end of the canopy.

Pursuant to historic precedence—see attached photo from 1954—it is proposed that future tenant signage will be reinstated on the building centered above the middle bay of the second-floor windows, under the canopy just above the main entrance, and at either end of the canopy itself. The painted sign on the south façade will not be reinstated. If these general areas are approved, final signage drawings (including size, color and design) will be submitted for staff approval before installation.

Doors

On the first floor of the alley (west façade), there is one exterior metal door in fair condition. On floors two through eight there are two exterior doors on each floor that lead out onto the fire escape. Some of these doors are modern replacements and some are original metal units. Overall, they are in poor condition. The first-floor exterior door is not historic and will be removed and replaced with a new metal double door unit. The exterior doors on floors two through eight will be removed and replaced with new metal units as well. See Storefront section for description of new main entrance doors on east façade.

Roof and Penthouses

The flexible black rubber membrane appears to be in fair condition. The roofing will be removed and replaced with a new black EPDM roofing material. Mechanical units will be added to the roof in an inconspicuous location behind the existing penthouses at the NW corner of the roof. 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. Final rooftop equipment cutsheets and layouts are not yet available.

There are two penthouses: one on the north side and one at the southwest. Both penthouses are composed of brick and a parge coat that covers, presumably, brick or CMU. The penthouses are in poor condition. These penthouses will be inspected, repaired, and repointed. The parge coat will be repaired as well. There is a large water tower on the southern penthouse, and it will remain in place and will be repainted.

The items listed above provide a synopsis of the proposed scope of work for the rehabilitation of the Fowler Building. 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Rebain".

Brian Rebain, RA, NCARB
Principal

