

November 20, 2020

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

RE: 2447 Cass Avenue—Hotel Ansonia/Grande Apartments

Dear Ms. Ross,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC (KDG) is writing on behalf of Sorin Enterprises, LLC to the Historic District Commission regarding the building located at 2447 Cass Avenue (known as both the Hotel Ansonia and Grande Apartments). The building is currently vacant, and this project will rehabilitate the building for new residential occupancy. The exterior rehabilitation plan for 2447 Cass includes brick and stone repairs, repairs to the entrance and new exterior doors, installation of new windows, fire escape repairs, façade lighting, signage, new roofing, repairs to the rooftop skylight, and rooftop equipment placement. The following is a detailed description of each exterior feature proposed to be rehabilitated.

Built around 1906, the building at 2447 Cass Avenue is a four-story brick building that faces east onto Cass Avenue with a green lawn located to the south and west while the Atlanta Apartments (2467 Cass) is located just north. The building is designed in a restrained Italian Renaissance revival style and is faced in dark red-brown brick which is laid in a Flemish bond pattern on the primary facade (Cass Avenue). The Flemish bond pattern wraps from the primary façade to both the north and south façade and transitions from Flemish to common bond near the midpoint on both the north and south façade. The rest of the building is laid in common bond with a header course of bricks at every seventh course.

#### 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 red-brown brick which is in fair condition in most areas with cracking, missing mortar, puncture holes, and some missing units found throughout. At the base of the building and in the central bay of the primary façade, the brick has been painted brown. Stone is found at the entry surround, at the sills of each window opening, and at water tables at the second floor and fourth floor—the stone is in good-to-fair condition.

All brick and stone are to be inspected for damage. 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. The brown 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 any masonry work to allow matching of mortar color.

#### Entrance and Doors

The main entrance and two flanking windows are currently closed in with CMU units. These CMU units will be removed, and a new double door will be installed in the stone surround. The new wood double door will have glazed panels and will be compatible with the historic nature of the building without appearing falsely historic. The windows next to the entry doors will also be replaced, see the section directly below. New solid doors will also be installed in the west façade in the fire escape, will be painted, and will be compatible with the historic nature of the building without appearing falsely historic.

#### Windows

There are no windows in the building currently. Therefore, it is proposed that historic replica, aluminum clad wood windows will be used—these will be based on historic photographs, see attached.

On the primary (east) façade, on the first floor, the windows will be two over one units except the two windows flanking the entrance which will be further researched to determine their design and will be replaced to match documented design. On the east façade, on the upper floors, it is proposed that six-over-one units will be used on the outer bay window openings and in the two central bays of the building, while the center bay window openings will have eight-over-one units. One-over-one single hung units will be used on the secondary facades. The window frames will be dark in color to match the historic window frame color.

#### Fire Escape and ADA Lift

This facade has two short walls that project outward from the main facade to partially enclose a wooden fire escape. Two doors and two windows open from each floor onto the wooden fire escape. The wooden columns that provide support to the fire escape rest on a CMU wall at grade. The wood components of the fire escape are in poor condition. The wood components are to be removed and replaced with new composite wood material. Connections to the building shall be repaired as necessary to ensure structural stability.

An ADA lift will be installed on the back of the building to access the first-floor fire escape to provide ADA access to the first-floor units.

#### Façade Lighting



Exterior building lighting will be provided and designed to highlight building features. Lighting locations may include either up-lighting or soffit fixture at the 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 a very faded painted sign on the south façade—the paint is nearly invisible but there are good historic photos of this signage which included a “Hotel Ansonia” sign near the parapet and a “Beck’s Beer” sign below it. There was also a “Hotel” sign applied to the southern-most bay on the east façade just above the first-floor window. Finally, there was a “Hotel Ansonia” sign on a metal pole on the lawn in front of the building. All of this signage is no longer extant.

Pursuant to historic precedence it is proposed that future signage will be reinstated on the on either a ground sign or some appropriate location on the front facade. 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.

#### Roof and Skylight

The building currently has an EPDM roof. It is in fair condition and will be removed and replaced with a new EPDM roof. Small condensers will be added to the center of the roof with painted metal panel mechanical screens added to obscure the condensers. This location was selected so that the units will be minimally visible from the street within a one block radius—please see attached sightline study. The perforated metal screens will be gray in color. A small skylight is located in the center of the roof. It is in poor condition. It will be removed and replaced with a contemporary low-profile skylight structure.

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, renderings, reports, and photos. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Kraemer Design Group, LLC



Brian Rebain, RA, NCARB  
Principal

