

January 11, 2021

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

RE: 1201 Washington Boulevard

Dear Ms. Ross,

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.

Building History and Materials

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.

Notice to Proceed

Innovative Acquisitions is seeking a Notice to Proceed for the work planned at 1201 Washington to provide the Book Building/Book Tower with adequate loading zones. To support the development at the Book Building/Book Tower it is proposed that the western two bays of 1201 Washington will be demolished while the eastern seven bays will be retained and rehabilitated. By demolishing the two western-most bays of the building, the alley that runs behind the Book Building/Book Tower can be fully extended from Grand River to State Street which will provide two loading zones for the Book Building/Book Tower.

The Detroit City Ordinance Chapter 21, Article II, Division 4 (Section 21-2-75) outlines four criteria which would allow for the issuance of a Notice to Proceed (NTP) if any one of those four criteria is met so long as the Historic District Commission also determines that the work outlined in the NTP request is necessary to correct the pertinent criteria.

- (1) The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or the occupants;
- (2) The resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community. Substantial benefit shall be found only if the applicant proposing the work has obtained all necessary planning and zoning approvals, financing, and environmental clearances, and the improvement program is otherwise feasible;



- (3) Retention of the resource would cause undue financial hardship to the owner. Undue financial hardship shall be found only when a governmental action, an act of God, or other events beyond the owner's control created the hardship, and all feasible alternatives to elimination of the financial hardship, which may include offering the resource for sale at its fair market value or moving the resource to an appropriate vacant site within the historic district, have been attempted and exhausted by the owner;
- (4) Retention of the resource would not be in the interest of the majority of the community.

Section 21-2-78 likewise directs the HDC to issue a notice to proceed when proposed work in a historic district "is without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the intents and purposes of this article, and where one or more of the conditions of section 21-2-75 have been met."

As outlined in Section 21-2-75(2), if a historic resource is a detriment to a major improvement program, a notice to proceed is the right course of action to ensure the transformational development can move forward. We believe Section 21-2-75(2) applies here.

The alley that runs just west of the Book Building/Book Tower is currently only accessible from Grand River Avenue. Thus, there is only one loading zone as there is only one entrance into the alley. Because of the size of the alley and because 1201 Washington closes off the alley at the southern end, the entire Book Building/Book Tower development (which features 118 hotel rooms, 225 apartments and over 60,000 square feet of retail/office space) would be relying on just one loading zone. The city ordinance (61-14-81) requires three off street loading zones for a development of this size. Recognizing this issue, on September 17, 2019 the City's Building, Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED) issued a conditional site plan approval for the Book Building/Book Tower development. It was a conditional approval because BSEED was unable to waive the requirement in Sections 61-14-81 that mandated three off street loading zones. Innovative Acquisitions was required to pursue a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) to rectify the deficiency in their site plan. Thus, on January 24, 2020 Innovative Acquisitions' civil engineer Giffels Webster applied for a variance from BZA and, subsequently, received the variance for the loading zone requirement on May 18, 2020. The variance approved by BZA stipulated that two loading zones be provided instead of three—please see the "Zoning Ordinance Approvals" document in the attached materials.

Because providing adequate loading zones to the Book Tower project is required per the variance, and because these loading zones will be a critical component in the ability to operate the retail, hotel, and residences located at the Book Building/Book Tower, we believe a NTP is the right course of action. Given the constraints of the site, the only way to provide the second loading zone is to extend the alley from its current termination point to the State Street right of way.

In January 2020 options were explored for creating a functional alley with minimal disturbances to 1201 Washington's State Street façade. Diagrams from this study can be found in the attached documents. Options explored included:

- Removing a single bay at the westernmost end of 1201 Washington. This does not provide the minimum required truck clearance width for DTE
- Removing two bays at the westernmost end of 1201 Washington. This has been determined to be the cleanest option, providing the variance requirements outlined above while minimally impacting 1201 Washington's façade.
- Removing two bays at the westernmost end of 1201 Washington and building a new infill wall to align the alley behind 1201 Washington with the alley behind Book Building/Book Tower. This would create additional structural challenges in supporting partial floors and is not as clean as the selected option.
- Removing only the two westernmost storefront bays and the shared column up to the bottom of the limestone floor band. This creates a structural challenge at the removed column and does not provide sufficient height for required DTE truck clearance.
- Remove the storefronts, limestone band, and 2nd floor windows in the two westernmost bays, leaving the column against the DTC building and the limestone parapet wall at the roof level. While providing sufficient clearance for DTE trucks, this creates structural support challenges and does not leave a significant portion of the façade in the westernmost bays on State St intact.



From the options explored above, the only feasible way to extend the alley, with the DTC People Mover station directly abutting the alley to the west, is through the removal of the two westernmost bays of 1201 Washington.

Additional Scope of Work

This application will also present the following exterior work planned for the building: masonry cleaning and restoration, storefront replacement, window replacement, alley activation, new plan for the west façade (facing the alley), façade lighting, signage, and rooftop work. The following is a detailed description of each exterior feature proposed to be rehabilitated:

Masonry

The building is a wood framed, two story structure that is faced in limestone. The limestone is in fair condition with some staining, anchor holes, and cracking present. The 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 and loose or displaced pieces will be reset. If any stone is too badly deteriorated to repair or reset, they will be replaced—new stone will be selected to match the existing in color, profile, and finish. The 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.

Storefronts and Windows

There are no historic storefronts 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 too dark and reflective—the storefronts are, altogether, in poor condition and not historically compatible. All non-original exterior storefronts are to be removed and replaced with new storefront systems designed to be appropriately compatible with the historic character of the building.

On the east façade, the main double door entrance will be located in the center bay. The double doors are glazed with an arched transom overhead that is divided into three lights. Large format storefront windows, divided by a thin mullion at the center point, will be installed in the first-floor storefront spaces. The non-historic paneling above the storefronts will be removed, and the new storefronts will be 10' high with a metal panel for signage between the storefront head and the bottom of the limestone. Additional doors for tenant access if the 1st floor is leased by multiple tenants will be centered within the bay, as shown on the attached alternate elevations. At the second floor the non-historic storefront will be removed and replaced with new storefront with a centered vertical mullion and a thin three light transom overhead.

On the south façade, the first-floor storefronts and second floor windows are the same as those described on the east façade: Large format storefront windows, divided by a thin mullion in the center, will be installed in the first-floor storefront spaces. The non-historic paneling above the storefronts will be removed, and the new storefronts will be 10' high with a metal panel for signage between the storefront head and the bottom of the limestone. Additional doors for access to future tenants, if needed, will be centered within the bay, as shown on the attached elevations. At the second floor the non-historic storefront will be removed and replaced with new storefront with a centered vertical mullion and a thin three light transom overhead. One of the two western-most bays will receive an entry door into a lobby for the 2nd floor tenant. This new entrance door will be glazed and centered within the new storefront window with sidelights on either side of the door and a transom overhead. A simple metal canopy will be installed over this storefront bay to provide shelter as tenants enter and exit the building.

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 will be grouped together at both the 1st and 2nd floors to provide large areas of mostly continuous glass as much as possible. A double metal door will be installed near the southern end of this façade and a utilitarian metal door will be installed at the northern end of this façade, for building loading and building egress access, respectively. The DTE transformer is located near the southwestern corner of the building on this façade.



Alley Layout

An alley runs from Grand River south, just west of the Book Building/Book Tower and terminates at the 1201 Washington building as 1201 Washington is wider in plan than the two aforementioned buildings. Once the western two bays of the 1201 Washington building are demolished, the alley will be extended to run just west of the building. The alley behind the Book Building/Book Tower will be activated as part of the Book Building/Book Tower development. The alley at 1201 Washington will remain more utilitarian in nature, allowing truck access to service Book Building/Book Tower. The paving plan from the Book Building/Book Tower alley will be continued behind 1201 to create a connection across the length of the alley.

New exterior storefronts will be added to the western façade of 1201 Washington which will face the new alley to provide street-level retail.

New Western Façade

The new western façade will be clad in brick, punctured by window and door openings for tenants (see Storefronts and Windows section for more detail). To differentiate this new façade from something that might be interpreted as historic, the western façade will be clad in tan, non-historic sized brick to set this façade apart.

Façade Lighting

Architectural sconces will be added on the two primary facades (east and south) at each column to accentuate architectural features. In the alley, the same sconces from the two primary facades will be placed on the western façade near the retail storefronts. 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.

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 acceptable locations only, all future tenant signage will be submitted to the HDC for review and approval by tenants.

Roof, Rooftop Additions, and Roof Deck

All roofing, including structural roof support, will be removed and replaced with a new structural roof system, waterproofing, and membrane roofing as required by code. Extents for a new composite 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.

Two new penthouses will be constructed, one held back one bay from the southwestern most corner of the building, and the other at the northwestern most corner of the building. Both penthouses will be clad in brick to match the new brick at the alley so as to not appear falsely historic. Additional windows salvaged from Book Building will be used to provide light into the new penthouses. The south penthouse will be to provide stair and elevator access to the new roof deck, along with storage and convenience restrooms. The north penthouse will provide stair access to the new roof deck and a building mechanical room.

Rooftop mechanical equipment will be kept to the westernmost edge of the roof, along the new alley, as much as possible. A brick wall will help screen the rooftop equipment from the alley, and a screen wall may be installed by a future tenant to further screen the roof deck from any mechanical equipment. The rooftop equipment will be shorter than the two new penthouses and neither the rooftop equipment nor future screen wall will be visible from the street. Please see the attached sightline studies for visibility of rooftop additions, deck, and equipment.

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

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

Brian Rebain, RA
Principal

