

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
452 Amsterdam Avenue
June 16th, 2009**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to legalize storefront alterations at this Romanesque Revival-style flats building, designed by Gilbert A. Schellenger and built in 1891.

Master Plan for Storefronts

As the LPC *Rules* state, “the objective of [a storefront master plan] is to provide owners, architects and store tenants with design criteria which will allow timely review of storefront alterations while protecting the architecturally and historically significant features of the buildings.”¹ The actions of this applicant make all the more apparent—and all the more urgent—our need for a District Master Plan for Storefronts on the Upper West Side.

Already, our East Side neighbors in the Carnegie Hill and the Metropolitan Museum Historic Districts (to name just two locations in the city privy to storefront master plans) are able to effectively manage their evolving storefronts with timely LPC approval. Without such a tool, the commercial character of the West Side will be forever prone to inappropriate modifications made without LPC review.

In this case, the applicant had a clear understanding of their obligations to the Landmarks Commission. Indeed, they had applied for a Certificate of Appropriateness for storefront infill and were less than a week from their scheduled public review before the Commission when they embarked on their own work schedule, LPC permit or not. Claims of naïveté just don’t hold water here. The applicant was in contact with LPC staff, who most certainly explained to them the purpose of their forthcoming hearing. Regardless, the applicant plowed ahead.

Correcting the Problems

Working quickly, the applicant was able to complete nearly all of their desired work before this violation was reported. Now, they’re open for business, just as planned. The applicant consciously circumvented the Commission. Had this project been subjected to its scheduled review by the Commission, you would have surely recommended some modifications. Do not lower the bar now.

For example, no signage should ever be mounted directly into cast iron (a directive of the Commission’s own *Guidelines and Materials Checklist for Performing Work on Landmarked Buildings*, see “Signage,” bullet #3). The projecting sign now compromises the cast iron, allowing in water which will corrode and lead to myriad problems. Storefront bulkheads of no less than 12 inches in height are required at all storefronts in those areas protected by master plans. As constructed, the bulkheads are not permanent

¹ *The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Rules*, Chapter 12: Historic District Master Plans. Specifically, pages 12-5, 12-7, 12-10, and 12-12.

facets of the storefront's character, disappearing as the louvred doors are opened up. This is inappropriate.

Note to Committee: Will review plans for wooden cornice at Public Review on Friday and report back. Also, testimony will be supplemented with "before" and "after" images.

To be continued ... (though very minimally!)