

August XX, 2009

Andrew Goetz  
210 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10001

RE: 455 Amsterdam Avenue, Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District

Dear Mr. Goetz:

Our thanks to you and your project architect, Craig Konyk, for presenting your preliminary designs for 455 Amsterdam Avenue, the Malin + Goetz apothecary and lab, to our Certificate of Appropriateness (C of A) Committee on June 30, 2009.

We appreciate your approaching LW! in the spirit of early consultation and collaboration, during your design development phase and prior to formally submitting your application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. We look forward to meeting with you again in the near future to discuss further evolution in this project. Based on the drawings you showed us and our discussion about your proposed storefront design at 455 Amsterdam Avenue, in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, our Committee offers you constructive feedback.

A storefront restoration is a powerful gesture and can set off a “domino reaction”—once one property owner does the right thing and restores their storefront, neighbors follow suit. 455 Amsterdam Avenue is one member of a five-storefront family facing the Avenue between West 81<sup>st</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> Streets. As important as it is for Malin+Goetz to establish its own new and unique presence in the neighborhood, so must the apothecary respect the larger streetscape of which it is a part. Malin+Goetz is in the perfect position to be the catalyst for much needed change on this block, and we believe the following points can assist you in taking this project the remaining steps toward appropriateness.

### **Historic Fabric**

The storefront at 455 Amsterdam Avenue retains a remarkable amount of historic fabric. It is LANDMARK WEST’s position that when modifying historic storefront infill, as much historic fabric should be saved as is possible. In your preliminary design, you propose a near-wholesale removal of the existing historic storefront. LW! would not support the loss of such a great amount of historic building fabric and encourages you and your architect to reconsider design alternatives founded on the historic materials.

### **Transom Windows**

Our Committee was delighted to see that historic transom windows are still extant at No. 455. We understand that the question has been raised as to whether these windows, along with other aspects of the storefront, are original or, rather, the result of later alterations. Regardless, these windows are clearly evident in the circa 1940 Tax Survey photograph. At the very least, the transom windows are of late 1930s/early 1940s vintage, and thus one layer of this storefront’s long history. The rich layering of materials and styles is so important to the UWS/CPW Historic District and should be preserved.

*Over, please*

## **Bulkheads**

LW! echoes the Landmarks Commission's *Rules* in calling out bulkheads as definitive parts of historic storefronts. It is likely that the Commission will direct you to incorporate bulkheads into your design, and LW! would agree with such feedback. Beat them off at the pass; introduce bulkheads into the storefront design now.

## **Signage**

### **C of A Committee: PLEASE ADVISE!**

Some said "the link to the past is interesting, I like it ..." while others said "establish your own image, forget the barber shop sign." We need a consensus—keep in mind, our longstanding position is to hold on to as much historic fabric as possible. If they keep the barbershop signage, what does that mean about their font type? If they toss the signage, there's the loss of fabric.

Our Committee appreciates the architect's homage to the storefront's past in proposing to keep the old barber shop's signage. The signature Malin+Goetz font type seems to compete with that of the existing sign, though, and we would like to see that concept further worked out. Etc...

OR

Our Committee appreciates the architect's homage to the storefront's past in proposing to keep the old barber shop's signage. However, Malin+Goetz should make a strong statement with its signage, introducing a new, fresh aesthetic. Etc...

## **Color Finish**

All agree that the ultra white paint finish on the storefront is inappropriate. When it comes to masonry, our Committee firmly believes that the best finish is no finish at all! The rich color and energetic texture of stonework should be allowed to show, not be covered in layers of paint. Whereas you currently propose a gun metal-type gray, we believe this is inappropriate. We understand that preliminary investigation into the condition of the masonry deters you from leaving the stone exposed, as you cited earlier façade patchwork across the store's façade. However, the

## **Sidewalk**

Though ADA compliance standards must be met, they should never drive a major alteration to a historic storefront. In this instance, relocating the shop entrance is proposed to overcome the existing step-up entryway. Our Committee believes that a centrally located doorway is most appropriate for this storefront. As to addressing handicap access, you might look to your southerly neighbor L'Occitane, at 198 Columbus Avenue (at West 69<sup>th</sup> Street). After years of their shopfront being plagued by an unsightly and unsteady temporary metal ramp, L'Occitane repoured their immediate sidewalk at a grade that met their doorway. The same solution could work for Malin+Goetz.

We look forward to continuing this conversation when you come back to present your more developed proposal to our Committee. Please be in touch as early as possible so that we can schedule a second presentation well in advance of any public hearing on this proposal.

Sincerely,

Arlene Simon  
President

Cristiana Peña  
Director of Community Outreach

On behalf of LW's Certificate of Appropriateness Committee

cc: Craig Konyk, Konyk Architecture P.C.