



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

330 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 26<sup>th</sup> floor New York, NY 10036  
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512  
[www.nyc.gov/mcb4](http://www.nyc.gov/mcb4)

**COREY JOHNSON**  
Chair

**ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.**  
District Manager

February 1, 2012

Hon. Robert B. Tierney  
Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building, ninth floor  
One Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: 641 Sixth Avenue**

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board 4 is writing about the application by the building owner to alter the ground floor exterior of 641 Sixth Avenue, which falls within the Ladies' Mile Historic District in the Chelsea section of Community District 4. The application for this installation appears appropriate, and employs design strategies similar to those recently approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission for restoration of the 19th Street facade of the same building in the wake of damage caused by a transformer vault explosion in 2010. The currently proposed alterations will continue the ground floor exterior renovation around parts of Sixth Avenue and 20th Streets. The Board commends the proposed alterations and recommends their approval by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

641 Sixth Avenue is the Simpson, Crawford & Simpson Building, a seven-story Beaux-Arts style department store designed by William H. Hume and Son and built in 1900-02. The District's Designation Report notes that "the store had unusually large plate glass show windows." The current application will regularize these windows, restoring their original iron-framed window divisions, typically divided by modeled, non-structural, iron pilasters, with transoms above show windows. The proposed work includes new aluminum framing, insulated glass and wood trim to match historic profiles. All existing cast-iron and wood framing and moldings at the storefront level will be restored. While doors for individual commercial tenants and mechanical louvers will be inserted into the storefront pattern at various points, the overall effect will be expressive of the building's original character than the existing condition. Within window bays on the 20th Street facade, former masonry spandrels just above sidewalk level are a vestige of an earlier, higher first floor level which had very short basement windows immediately above sidewalk level. These spandrels will be removed to allow nearly full-height glazing that will express the current lower floor level inside. The shorter windows now in place above these spandrels will be replaced to match the standard taller ground floor fenestration. Abbreviated iron pilasters separating these shorter windows will be replaced with taller fiberglass reinforced plastic versions retaining the head and foot modeling of the existing pilasters. These window bays will adopt the transom-over-show-window pattern of the building's Sixth Avenue

façade and easternmost bay of its 20th Street façade, an appropriate strategy for integrating their increased glazing area.

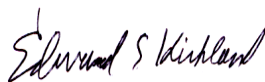
Along with restored glazing, one of the window bays on 20th Street which serves as a building lobby entrance will receive a canopy and flanking exterior wall sconce lighting fixtures. The canopy will be of painted aluminum with a non-glazed top incorporating down-lights. It will project partway over the sidewalk from the horizontal dividing member of the window system separating show windows from transoms, seen in archival photos to have historically been a mounting place for canvas awnings on the south and east sides of the building. The wall-mounted lighting fixtures will be modeled on nearby historic precedents. If carefully studied and executed, these changes will be fully consistent with the character of the building and the Ladies' Mile.

The Board wishes to remind the Commission that due to a mistake in reading a map at the time of designation of the Ladies' Mile the boundary of the historic district at this point was inaccurately mapped and as a result the western portion of the Simpson Crawford Simpson Building, including features used as models for aspects of this application, was thus omitted from the Historic District. It has been the desire of the Board ever since this error was discovered not long after the time of designation that this omission should be corrected as threatening the integrity of the District. We further note that in the area to the west of the Simpson Crawford Simpson Building stand buildings of similar design, history, and character. 19<sup>th</sup> Street just to the west is particularly handsome; and 18<sup>th</sup> Street just to the south has some fine buildings as well, some of which have already drawn the attention of the Commission. The Board included the area in its recent preliminary survey of historic resources in its entire district and would be glad to support appropriate extension of the Ladies' Mile Historic District in this area. It is particularly concerned that the next boom will renew development pressures that have already led to the replacement or alteration of many buildings close to the District. We believe that other preservation organizations join in this opinion, and hope to approach the Commission in the near future in this matter.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson  
Chair



Edward Kirkland  
Co-Chair  
Landmarks Committee

[signed 2/1/2012]

Damyanti Radeshwar  
Co-Chair  
Landmarks Committee

cc: Applicant