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Bricken Arcade: Weaving the Fabric of History

ABS Partners Real Estate, LLC

Bricken Arcade. The building's name alone evokes a bygone, more fanciful era. In fact, many of the most well-known fashion designers of the past century walked the halls of this Garment Center stalwart located at 225 West 37th Street and 230 West 38th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Even today, its legacy and popularity continue to grow, in part, because tenants Mood Designer Fabrics is featured prominently in numerous episodes of the long-running television reality program "Project Runway," meanwhile Kay Unger and Joanna Mastroianni attract attention for their designs.

Constructed in 1925 by Abraham Bricken of the Bricken Construction Company, the site was known as the epicenter for the Garment District and was built to house garment industry businesses and services including designers, manufacturing processes and sample makers. Bricken, who also developed other Garment-area properties, hired one of the most active architectural firms of the first half of the 20th century, Schwartz and Gross, to design the site. The 225 West 37th Street address has base floors of 12,000-rentable-square-feet tapering to the 17th floor of 7,500-square-foot plates for a total of 175,000 square feet, while 230 West 38th Street has 11,000-rentable-square-foot floor plates and totals 149,000 square feet.

These classic loft spaces feature attributes include high-ceilings, newly replaced oversized windows and abundant natural light. There are six manned passenger elevators and beautiful retro-design block-through connected lobbies. Bricken Arcade is one of the handful of properties with manned elevators remaining in the city.

"Features such as the manned elevators add levels of history, safety, and an extra set of eyes, though the operators are not security officers," said Jay Caseley, Executive Managing Director, of ABS Partners Real Estate, LLC and Leasing and Managing agent for the properties. "Our tenants say they appreciate the sense of familiarity and welcoming atmosphere at Bricken Arcade."

The property also boasts a prime location in the heart of the Fashion District, near both Times Square and Herald Square, in one of the most trafficked areas in New York City. It is convenient to all major transportation hubs including Penn Station, Port Authority and Grand Central and is near the N, R, Q, W, 1, 2, 3, 7, and S subway lines.

Tremendous Potential

"Bricken Arcade provides tremendous opportunity with its old-world charm, wide-open spaces, value and locations," adds Andrew Udis, who recently joined ABS as Executive Managing Director and shares

leasing responsibilities at Bricken Arcade with Caseley. “There is an appeal for value as we’re happy with rent in the \$20s, when others in the area are getting \$40s.”

Current opportunities include move-in condition space totaling 11,000 square feet and encompassing the entire ninth floor at 225 West 37th St. and the entire 10,000-square-foot fifth floor and entire 9,111-square-foot tenth floor at 230 West 38th Street (which is currently under negotiation). Space can be divisible from 4,000 square feet.

Bricken Arcade, which has undergone a communications upgrade in recent years, is open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Friday and 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday and closed on Sundays — “the hours generally work fine for the tenants.”

Another potential boast for Bricken Arcade is the expansion of the property’s current big draw. Mood Designer Fabrics. The company, which has become a tourist and fashion-business mecca, provides the latest in designer fabrics with an extensive and affordable inventory hand-picked from the collections of today’s foremost in American and European designs. The company offers a wide range of fabrics from silk to wool, and abundance of styles and colors and an everexpanding inventory. Mood, as a retail/wholesale anchor currently occupies 40,000 square feet of space over the second, third and fourth floors of 225 West 37th Street and, according to Caseley, a deal is in the works to expand Mood’s presence in the site.



230 West 38th Street



225 West 37th Street

Other Bricken Arcade tenants include:

- Famed clothing and handbag designer Joanna Mastroianni
- Kay Unger New York and Phoebe Couture
- Accessories designer Kara Ross
- Bari-Jay — formals for women
- C&J Textile, Inc. — a respected stalwart in wholesale designer fabrics
- Debeche Mode Clothing Company, LLC
- Fashion Avenue Knits, Inc.
- JLM Couture, Inc.
- Michael Stuart Design, Ltd./Geri Gerard
- Tailored Sportsman, LLC — a must-have equestrian apparel maker
- General Sportswear
- Makhilon — menswear design and manufacturing

Zoning Restrictions

Bricken Arcade is located within the boundaries of the Fashion Center Business Improvement District (BID), which extends approximately from 35th to 41st streets between Fifth to Ninth Avenues. The group's mission is to promote the area, which encompasses approximately 6,500 businesses and 575 property owners, as a strategic business location for fashion and non-fashion related business. In recent years, the surrounding area has been attracting high-tech and media companies.

Bricken Arcade is located within the Special Garment Center District (SGCD), a special zoning area designated by the New York City Planning Commission in the late 1980s, which provides unique restrictions on side street buildings within its boundaries, according to the BID. The side street properties are designated a manufacturing "preservation area," which restricts the conversion of manufacturing space to non-apparel related office or other non-manufacturing uses.

According to the local Garment Center BID, these restrictions are no longer relevant as the majority of manufacturing has moved overseas and they have caused space to be underutilized or vacant in the SGCD. Additionally, the zoning has suppressed property values, which has discouraged investment in the district, the BID pointed out. For the past few years, the BID has been working with various city agencies to alter the zoning and find new uses for the unused space.

"Bricken Arcade's evolution has been hampered and limited by its zoning," concurs Caseley, who would support zoning change. "Because of these restrictions, the rental rates are artificially low for New York City." Caseley also sees potential for the site to be used by design houses as showroom space in keeping with the spirit of the Garment District. "As the un-restricted Avenue showroom buildings become more expensive and occupied by non-apparel uses, we become an alternative to accommodate showroom and design uses at more moderate rental rates."

It appears the Bricken Arcade is solidly positioned for another 100 years of service to industry in New York City.

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