

Fact Sheet

Storefronts in Historic Districts

Storefronts are a vital part of New York City's streetscapes. The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) regulates changes made to storefronts on designated buildings. This guide provides resources for business owners looking to get a permit from LPC for work on historic district storefronts and related installations to help speed up the approval process.

How can I find out if my storefront is on a designated building?

You can search for the building on the Discover NYC Landmarks Map. If an individual landmark, see NOTE. If in a historic district, see below.

How does LPC regulate changes to storefronts in historic districts?

LPC has rules that establish the criteria for staff to review and approve permit applications for proposed storefronts in historic districts. They allow staff to issue permits for storefront proposals that do not involve the removal of historic materials. The design can either replicate the historic storefront or it can be contemporary as long as it is based on relevant historic features within the district and includes typical storefront elements like large display windows, bulkheads and transoms. For more information, see Section 2-12 of the LPC Rules.

There are also specific rules and master plans for the following historic districts:

- Jackson Heights Historic District
- Stone Street Historic District
- Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side Historic District
- Metropolitan Museum Historic District
- Carnegie Hill Historic District and Extension

Permit applications that meet LPC rules and master plans can be approved faster by staff. If they do not meet the rules and requirements, staff may suggest alternatives or the proposal may be presented to the full Commission for review at a Public Hearing. LPC staff can guide you through the process.

NOTE:

Different rules apply if any of the below conditions exist:

1. The property is an individual landmark
2. The property has a Warning Letter or Notice of Violation for removing a storefront without permits. Warning Letters and Notices of Violation are posted to Department of Buildings' Building Information System (BIS).
3. The property has more than three uniform storefronts and one of them contains most of the building's historic elements.

Contact LPC to find out how to get approval in these cases.

Call (212) 669-7817 or email info@lpc.nyc.gov.

Applying for a Permit

Before you begin work on your property, you must get a permit from LPC. You can apply for a permit by filling out the Application Form for Work on Designated Properties, which can be used for any work type.

LPC also has a Fastrack Application Form that can be used for certain types of work including installing an unenclosed sidewalk café and temporary installations, as long as there are no violations from LPC.

In order to obtain faster approval, make sure your application is complete. A complete application includes:

1. The correct application form (see above) signed by the property owner
2. Color photos of the property
3. Written specifications, drawings, and/or samples that fully describe the proposed work

For a detailed checklist, please refer to the Permit Application Guide. If the application is complete upon submission, staff can issue the permit within 10 business days (Fastrack) or 15 business days.

Only complete applications can be processed, so make sure it is complete. If the application is incomplete, staff will send you a checklist showing what materials are missing.

Applications must be submitted in hard copy either by mail or in-person drop off to:

NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
Attn: New Applications
1 Centre St., 9th Floor, North
New York, NY 10007

Links to Additional Resources

Guide to Researching Historic Buildings
Barrier-Free Access/Accessibility
Temporary Installations Guide
SBS Guide to Storefront Improvements
Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Equipment

When do I need a permit?

Any changes to the exterior of a storefront require a permit. Common work types include:

Storefront Installation

You need a permit to restore or install a storefront. See the Guide for Storefronts in Historic Districts.

Awning Installation

You need a permit to install or replace awnings. See the Guide for Awning Installation.

Signage and Lighting

You need a permit to install or replace signs and lighting. See the Guide for Signage and Lighting.

Painting

You need a permit to: change the paint color, power wash, or use a chemical solution to remove paint. See the Guide for Restoring Architectural Features.

Sidewalk Café

You need a permit from LPC and a Sidewalk Café License from the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to install an unenclosed sidewalk café. See the Guide for Sidewalks and Sidewalk Cafes.