
Chapter 3

Storefronts



Storefronts and commercial streetscapes contribute to the vitality of historic buildings and historic districts in New York City. The appearance of storefronts and relationship to their buildings and streetscapes are the basis of LPC's rules for work involving storefronts. (See [LPC Rules](#), Section 2-12, available on our website, www.nyc.gov/landmarks.)

In This Chapter, You Will Find:



This chapter explains LPC's rules as they apply to the replacement and modification of storefronts. Our goal is to help you submit a fully completed permit application for work that conforms to the LPC Rules so you can get your permit more quickly.



LPC has a separate guide that specifically covers new storefronts. See *Guidelines for Storefront Design in Historic Districts*, available at www.nyc.gov/landmarks.

Note: If your storefront work involves signage, barrier-free access, or HVAC, please refer to *Chapter 5: Signage*, *Chapter 9: Barrier-Free Access*, and *Chapter 12: HVAC and Other Mechanical Equipment*.

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Section A

How to Get Started



Before applying for your permit, you should:

Find Information about Your Building

This will help you determine how the rules apply.

What type of building is it?

Search for the building on the **Discover NYC Landmarks map** to determine how the rules apply to your specific building type.

Click on your building to find **construction date, architect and style, building and landmark type**, and a link to the **LPC designation report** with additional historical background.

What did the building look like?

Find **historic tax photos** from the 1940s and 1980s, available through the NYC Department of Records & Information Services [NYC Municipal Archives Collections](#).

Additional information, including guidance on finding **historic maps**, can be found in the **LPC Resource Guide** [Researching Historic Buildings in New York City](#), available at www.nyc.gov/landmarks.

Is the building in a historic district that has a storefront master plan?

Special regulations may apply if your building is part of a district-wide master plan for storefronts. Visit the [Rules and Master Plans](http://www.nyc.gov/landmarks) page at www.nyc.gov/landmarks for information on the following:

Carnegie Hill Historic District

Jackson Heights Historic District

Metropolitan Museum Historic District

Stone Street Historic District

Upper East Side Historic District

Does the building have a storefront master plan?

If one has been established, ask the property owner for a copy or contact 212-669-7817 or info@lpc.nyc.gov.

See If Your Work Requires an LPC Permit

Maybe you don't need a permit.

LPC generally requires a permit for altering and installing new storefronts, but a permit is **not required** for the following types of work:

Ordinary maintenance of storefronts including repainting the same color, replacing broken glass, and graffiti removal.

Replacing storefront door hardware.

Minor probes or other investigative work.

- Probes must be made in connection with an open or future application for storefront work.
- Probes must take place in unobtrusive areas and require simple removal of a limited amount of material to expose underlying conditions for a short period of time.
- All existing conditions must be restored in-kind upon completion of a probe.

Unsure whether your work requires a permit?

Contact LPC at 212-669-7817 or info@lpc.nyc.gov.

Consider Establishing A Master Plan

If your building has multiple storefronts and you plan to make repetitive storefront alterations over time, you can apply for a master plan. A master plan provides the opportunity to incrementally perform work. Once you have a master plan, future applications that conform to it will be quickly reviewed by staff since specific work standards have already been established and approved. This type of permit generally does not expire. See *Section C* for more information.

What You Will Need

A complete application typically requires the materials listed below, but additional materials may be required depending on the type of work. See *Section B* for a list of all materials required for your work type.

Basic Application Materials

- **An LPC Permit Application Form**, filled out and signed by the property owner.
- **Color photos** of the entire building and close-ups of the areas of the storefront or alteration to pinpoint proposed work and provide context.
- **A full floor plan** showing all existing storefronts and entrances.
- **Comparative drawings:**
 - Elevation of existing conditions and proposed storefronts or alterations
 - Floor plan of existing conditions and location of proposed storefronts or alterations
 - Section of existing conditions and proposed storefronts or alterations
 - Details of existing conditions and proposed storefronts or alterations
- Comparative drawings to show any changes to the size of existing storefront openings or creation of new door openings
- **Color specifications / paint cards.**
- **Material specifications / manufacturer cut sheets.**
- **Two sets of Department of Buildings (DOB) filing drawings** if the proposed work requires a DOB permit.

Section B

LPC Rules and Criteria



This is how the Landmarks Preservation Commission works:

The LPC Rules establish criteria that allow staff to review and approve proposals for certain types of work at landmark properties. Permit applications for work that meets the LPC Rules can be approved faster. If the work does not meet the rules, staff may suggest alternatives that do meet the rules — or your proposal may be presented to the LPC Commissioners for review at a public hearing. LPC staff can guide you through this process. Visit www.nyc.gov/landmarks for more information.

This section explains and illustrates the rules and criteria for the most common types of work involving storefronts. See [LPC Rules](#), Section 2-12, for more information.

→ In This Section:

Storefront Probes

New Storefronts

- Replacing Storefronts in Historic Districts
- Creating New Door Openings
- Installing Café-Style Operable Windows and Doors
- Installing Translucent or Opaque Glazing
- Installing Security Gates
- Replacing Service Entrances
- Installing Interior Partitions and Vitrines

Storefront Probes

Before considering storefront work, you must first determine whether significant historic features exist. Investigative probes are a way to identify concealed historic materials within or surrounding a storefront so they can be assessed for retention or replication. Probes are most commonly used at storefronts to expose the presence and condition of historic columns, cornices, and profiled trim, which are often concealed under modern metal or stucco cladding. Probes must be performed in unobtrusive locations and remove as little material as possible.

If you plan to remove infill and/or exterior cladding or finishes at a storefront, you must first perform probes to see if historic material exists behind the modern cladding.

If a significant portion of the historic storefront surround exists underneath cladding, it must be restored as part of your application for new storefront infill. Staff can help you determine whether a significant portion of the historic storefront remains, based on your probes and photographic or on-site documentation. See *Chapter 1* for guidance on restoring architectural features.

Required Application Materials

- An LPC Permit Application Form**, filled out and signed by the building's owner.
- Color photos of the entire building and close-ups** of areas of investigation.
- Proposed annotated elevation or photos** of areas of the facade to be probed.
- Material specifications for repairs** that may be required after probing.
- Timetable and plan for performing probes and reinstating the existing condition.**
- Two sets of DOB filing drawings** if the proposed work requires a DOB permit.

If LPC requires additional materials after your application is reviewed, you will receive a Materials Checklist from LPC staff.



The historic storefront has been covered with metal cladding. Probes have revealed the original cast iron piers.

If parts of the storefront are historic but not original to the building, can they be removed?

It depends. Consult with staff to review your specific case. Storefront features added to a building after construction but before designation may be considered significant layers of its historic fabric. For example, a 20th century Art Deco storefront at a 19th century building would likely be considered a significant part of its history and should be retained and restored.

New Storefronts

As a general matter, staff can approve either replicating or restoring a historic storefront or approving a new storefront for buildings in historic districts where no significant historic storefront features exist and the storefront design is based on storefronts in that district for buildings of a similar age and style. However, there are some limitations on what the staff can approve. Staff can only approve replicating or restoring the historic storefront where:

The building is an individual landmark.

The building has three or more matching storefronts and at least one is historic.

The historic storefront was removed illegally.

Where the building is subject to a *Modification of Use or Bulk*, there may be other requirements for an approvable storefront.

Where the building is subject to either a district-wide master plan or a building master plan that controls storefront design, check the plan to see what the requirements are.

Where the building has at least three storefronts and one was approved by the Commission at a public hearing and the building has no master plan, staff can only approve a design that replicates the historic storefront.

See *Chapter 1, Restoration*, for more information on how to restore or replicate your storefront.

If you are unsure whether your building is an individual landmark, needs a special permit, or has three or more matching storefronts with at least one being historic or Commission-approved, contact LPC at 212-669-7817 or email info@lpc.nyc.gov.

Note: Storefront design may be affected by the presence of historic elements that are hidden under modern storefront cladding. See *Storefront Probes* for more information.

Required Application Materials

- **Photos of building facades.**
- **Photos of storefronts** to be altered or replaced.
- **Historic 1940s tax photos**, if available. See *Section A* for information on how to obtain tax photos.
- If available, **documentation that supports matching the historic storefront at the building or other buildings used as prototypes**, including historic photographs or drawings of the building or similar buildings.
- **Existing and proposed annotated floor plans and elevations.**
- **Comparative storefront elevations for each proposed storefront type**, including configuration and indication of operable windows and the historic storefront, if it exists.
- **Comparative vertical and horizontal section drawings of proposed storefront**, including security gates and the historic storefront, if it exists.
 - Large-scale detailed drawings of bulkhead, transom, door, and window components and trim
- **Proposed interior plan and elevation** showing any built-in vitrines or partitions that are in close proximity to display windows.
- **Material specifications.**
- **Color samples.**

If LPC requires additional materials after your application is reviewed, you will receive a Materials Checklist from LPC staff.

Replacing Storefronts in Historic Districts

Matching the historic storefront is also encouraged but not required (see *Chapter 1, Restoration*, for more information).

The rules for new storefronts are intended to support creativity.

While certain elements may be necessary based on the age of the building, new elements do not require a specific design. Staff can approve new storefronts that meet the following criteria:

Design

The design of new infill can match the original or historic storefront, or it can be a contemporary design based on the configuration and proportions of historic storefronts on similar buildings within the same historic district, and feature traditional storefront elements such as a large display window, transom, and bulkhead.

Configuration

The configuration of new storefront infill must be consistent with the proportions of display windows, transoms, and bulkheads of the typical or historic infill that serves as the basis of the design.

Bulkheads must be between 18 and 30 inches in height. In most cases, height includes a curb.

Profile

Storefront framing must have a molding profile that recalls the articulation of historic storefront framing. It can refer to a historic molded profile or it can be a contemporary profile. Stock



An example of new storefront infill, based on traditional designs.

rectangular extruded aluminum framing is generally not permitted.

Materials

If the building was constructed prior to 1900, the new infill material must match the historic infill material (in most cases, painted wood).

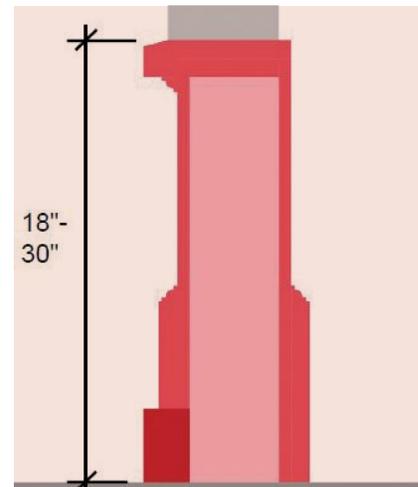
If the building was constructed after 1900, the new infill material can be painted wood or metal regardless of the historic material, or it can match the historic material.

Details

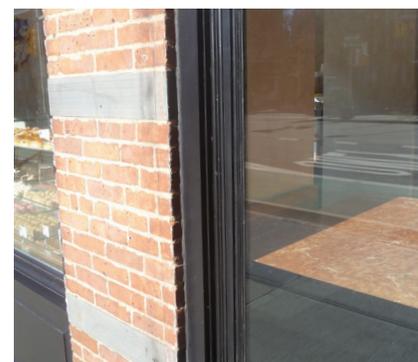
Details can be contemporary or match historic details such as large display windows, transoms, and bulkheads.

Finish

The new storefront finish must recall the finish of historic storefronts.



A section detail of the bulkhead, marked in red. The bulkhead must be between 18-30 inches tall in most cases.



The molding profile used in this storefront recalls the articulation of historic storefront framing.

Creating New Door Openings

Staff can approve new door openings if they meet the following criteria:

A new door and door opening can be installed to provide access to an existing storefront if the new door is on the same facade and in close proximity to an existing storefront display window.

The new door opening must be installed in non-historic storefront infill or through plain brick. The design must be consistent with existing storefront doors or meet criteria for a replacement door.

The width of the new door opening must be the minimum necessary to provide for a door that meets accessibility requirements and, if necessary, a sidelight.

The height of the door opening must align with the height of storefront features.



A storefront display window, top, was renovated to include a new door opening, bottom.

Installing Café-Style Operable Windows and Doors

A “café-style” storefront is a storefront where the display window and bulkhead completely or partially open up to allow outdoor or open air dining. In some cases, the entire display window and bulkhead can slide open to allow uninterrupted access to sidewalk dining, while in other areas the bulkhead remains but the display window opens up. Staff can approve the installation of café-style operable windows and doors if they meet the following criteria:

If new display windows are being installed as part of the storefront infill, staff can approve operable windows installed over storefront bulkheads. Staff can also approve windows configured as operable doors where the doors must have a solid bottom panel that maintains the height and design of the storefront bulkhead.

New infill must include mullions, piers, or some fixed display windows — or a combination of these elements — so the storefront is not completely open.

The width of each operable door or window panel must be as large as is practical.

A serving window can be no larger than 50 percent of the width of the storefront bay. Mullions and other associated elements must match the material and finish of the storefront framing.



New operable storefront window featuring fixed transom windows and mullions.

Installing Translucent or Opaque Glazing

Staff can approve new translucent or opaque glazing if it meets the following criteria:

Glazing in display windows and transoms must be clear.

A reversible grayscale translucent film can also be applied to a portion of the interior face of display window glazing.

The film must be less than 48 inches above the sidewalk or half the height of the display window.

Film can also be installed to the interior face of a transom window where clear glazing would expose unsightly interior conditions such as a dropped ceiling or security roll-gate housing.

Installing Security Gates

Staff can approve installing security gates if they meet the following criteria:

Whenever possible, security gates must be located behind the storefront infill.

If it is necessary to mount a security gate on the exterior of the storefront, its housing must be recessed into the top of the opening so it does not protrude beyond the storefront framing. Tracks must be recessed or concealed within the framing.

Security gate installation must not obscure or damage historic fabric. The actual security gate build must be open mesh where it covers glazed areas.

Replacing Service Entrances

Staff can approve replacing service entrances if they meet the following criteria:

Non-historic infill can be removed at service entrances.

New infill at service entrances with egress doors, freight elevators, and other utilitarian uses can vary in design, configuration, and material — as long as it is in keeping with similar service entrances found throughout the historic district.

Alternatively, a service entrance that was not a garage opening or vehicle loading bay can be removed and replaced with a storefront entrance, display window, or other storefront infill.



This service entrance has been infilled with a planter. Staff can approve removing such non-historic infill and installing new infill or a storefront in some cases.

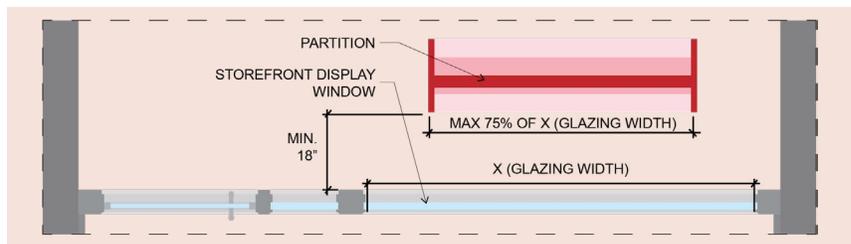
Installing Interior Partitions and Vitrines

Staff can approve installing interior partitions and vitrines if they meet the following criteria:

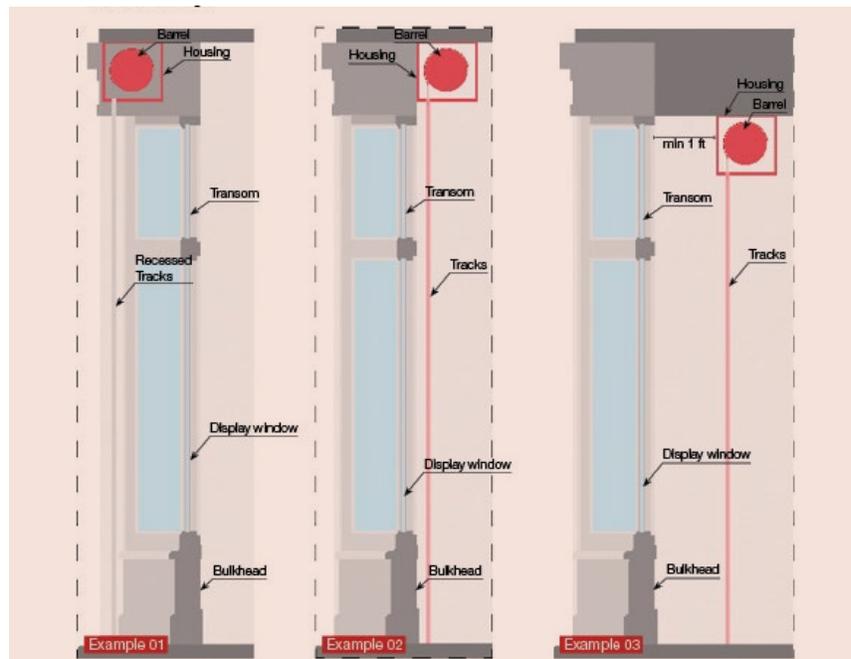
Interior partitions must be 18 inches or more away from display window glass and cannot box in an entire display window (sometimes known as a “vitrine”). Some transparency into and out of the window must be preserved.

Interior partition surfaces cannot block more than 75 percent of the width and 50 percent of the area of the display window.

Interior partition surfaces in close proximity to display windows must have an interior-quality finish and/or materials on the street-facing side, and feature non-illuminated or indirectly illuminated displays of graphics or merchandise.



An interior partition, in red, seen in plan. The interior partition is located a minimum of 18 inches from the glazing, and its width is no more than 75 percent of the width of the display window.



Example 01: A roll-down security gate installed on the exterior of the storefront door. Examples 02 and 03: A roll-down security gate installed on the interior of the storefront.

Section C

Technical Guidance and Resources

→ In This Section:

[Glossary](#)

[Master Plans](#)

This section provides additional guidance and resources to help you understand the rules and criteria and submit the correct materials with your permit application.

Glossary

A storefront is the area of the facade that provides access or natural illumination into a retail or commercial space. A typical storefront includes the following elements, defined and illustrated below.



Awning

is a metal frame clad with fabric above or within an opening, or within an integral housing, over the storefront to provide protection from the weather.



Cornice

is a horizontal projecting component that crowns an architectural element like a storefront or a building. Typically with a profile, it is functional, ornamental, and sometimes used for signs.



Bulkhead

is the part of the storefront that forms a base for one or more display windows.

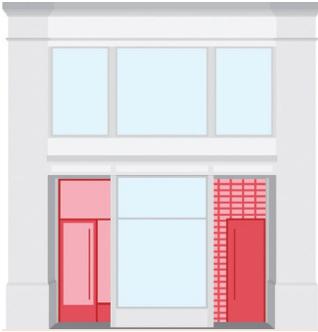
Cladding

is an outer layer of material covering another.



Display Window

is the large glazed portion of the storefront infill, and the associated framing above the bulkhead and below the transom, that extends pier to pier. It is typically used to display goods and provide daylight and visibility into the commercial space.



Entranceways

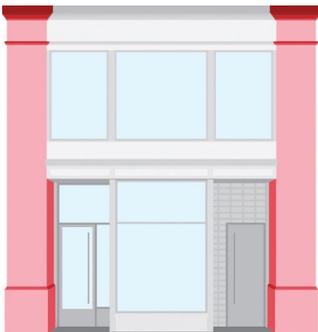
may refer to storefront, service, and/or building entrances. They are often recessed in straight or splayed returns, and doors typically have transoms and glazing.

Framing

is the elements that together give structural support and shape to the storefront.

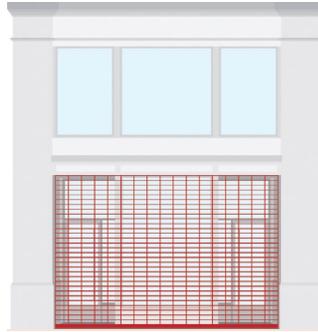
Lintel

is the horizontal member or element above a door, window, or storefront opening.



Pier

is an exterior vertical member or element, usually of brick, stone, or metal, placed at intervals along a wall that typically separates storefront openings within a single building or defines a single storefront opening.



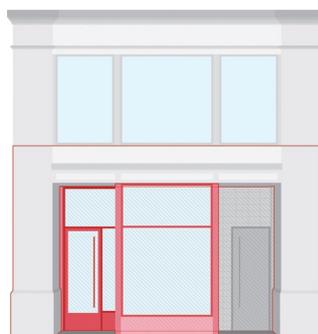
Security Gate

is a movable metal fixture installed in front of a storefront opening or bay, or inside the display window or door, to protect the store from theft or vandalism when closed.



Signage

includes sign bands, signs installed within display windows, and awnings.



Storefront Infill

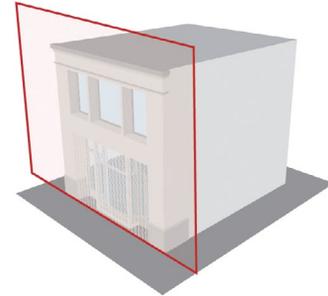
is the framing, glazing, and cladding contained within a storefront opening in the facade, including but not limited to display windows, bulkheads, and entranceways.

Storefront Opening

is the area of the facade between the piers and lintel which contains storefront infill.

Storefront Surround

includes decorative elements or treatment on the facade, around the storefront opening.



Street Wall

is a wall or portion of a wall of a building or buildings that faces a street and keeps the plane of the facade.



Transom

is the glazed area above a display window or door that is separated from the display window or door by a horizontal framing member.

Master Plans

Master plans, governed by Section 2-02 of the LPC Rules, allow property owners to apply for approval of repetitive alterations on architectural features, including storefronts. A master plan provides the opportunity to incrementally make alterations over time, as this type of permit generally does not expire.

Master plans can be approved at the staff level or by the Commission, depending on whether the work meets the LPC Rules.

Once established, you can move forward with work covered by the master plan by submitting a completed application form to the Commission, describing the scope of work and stating that it conforms to master plan drawings and other documents.

Staff reviews the application and issue an “Authorization to Proceed” permit prior to commencement of work.