

Chapter 6

Additions



Photo: Bext Ingur Architects, P.C.

Historic buildings in New York City are often modified or expanded over time as building uses and needs change. The relationship of a proposed addition to an existing building in terms of scale, visibility, massing, and materials, as well as its effect on significant building features, serve as the basis for LPC's rules for additions (see LPC Rules, Section 2-15, available on our website, www.nyc.gov/landmarks.)

In This Chapter, You Will Find:



This chapter explains LPC's rules for rooftop and rear yard additions, bulkheads, decks, dormers, and other rooftop elements. 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.



Note: If **excavation work** is part of your application for an addition, please refer to *Chapter 7* for more information. If **rooftop or rear yard mechanical equipment** is part of your application, please refer to *Chapter 12*.

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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 LPC Rules apply.

What type of building is it?

Search for your building on the [Discover NYC Landmarks map](#) to determine how the LPC 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 your 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.

What's the visibility?

Determine how visible your proposed addition would be by reviewing block plans or aerial maps, walking the block and surrounding streets, and testing with mock-ups. Document whether visibility is over the primary facade or a secondary facade. Visibility (or invisibility) is an important factor.

How big is the building?

Verify the number of stories and dimensional height of your building. Visibility requirements can vary depending on building height.

See If Your Work Requires an LPC Permit

Maybe you don't need a permit.

LPC requires a permit for constructing, enlarging, or replacing most additions to existing buildings, but a permit is **not required** for:

Replacing flat roofing on existing additions.

Unsure whether your work requires a permit?

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

What You Will Need

A complete application typically requires the materials listed below, but additional materials may be required depending on the work type. 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 addition that show location and context of proposed work.
- For rear yard additions only, a full block plan showing the number of floors (height) and approximate depth of existing additions.
- Comparative drawings:
 - Elevation of existing conditions and proposed additions
 - Roof, floor, and/or site plans of existing conditions and locations of proposed additions
 - Section of existing conditions and proposed additions on/adjoining the building
 - Sightline section taken at 6-foot eye level from directly across the street at the property line and at other points where the addition may be visible. This determines maximum level of visibility and overall visibility
 - Details of existing conditions and proposed additions
- Color specifications / paint cards.
- Material specifications.

A physical mock-up may be required to determine potential visibility, typically for rooftop additions but sometimes for rear yard additions as well. If so, submit the following application materials:

 - Color photos of the mock-up and roof from surrounding points on the street to determine potential visibility.
 - If the addition would be visible from a public thoroughfare, color photos from points of visibility:
 - If requested by staff, a photo montage for each view with the addition drawn into the image
 - Staff must be invited to the site to review the mock-up in place.

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 additions to existing buildings. See [LPC Rules](#), Section 2-15, for more information.

→ In This Section:

Visibility Standards for Additions

Rooftop Additions

- Occupiable Space
- Non-Occupiable Space
- Dormers

Rear Yard Additions

- Rear Yard Additions
- Decks

Visibility Standards for Additions

Staff can approve **minimally visible rooftop additions** in some cases, depending on the type of addition, how it is seen in the context of its building and neighboring buildings, and building height. In this section, “minimally visible” refers to visibility of the addition from its maximum point of visibility when viewed from any public thoroughfare. Certain types of buildings may have different visibility requirements for rooftop additions.

Staff cannot approve visible rear yard additions, even if visibility is minimal.

Staff assesses visibility using dimensional standards or contextual standards.

Dimensional Standards

Using dimensional standards, **the addition must meet maximum visibility standards from a public thoroughfare**, based on the height of the building or setback as set forth in the below chart.

Using dimensional standards, the visible portion of the addition must not span more than 50 percent of the length of the facade it is seen above — unless it is an open railing or installation with a similar open quality. (Read *Rooftop Additions* for more information.)

Contextual Standards

In assessing minimal visibility using **contextual standards**, staff considers the following factors:

Whether the addition is visible at a significant distance.

Whether the addition is visible from limited vantage points, including through alleyways, yards, or similar open portions of sites that are not vacant building sites.

Whether the addition is visible from an oblique angle.

Whether the addition is visible in combination with other existing additions or structures that share a similar level of visibility.



Note: The invisibility or minimal visibility of an addition is a critical consideration in approving a rooftop addition. It is the applicant's responsibility to accurately describe the visibility, including the maximum points of visibility from public thoroughfares. Mistakes or errors are the responsibility of the applicant and can result in alterations or removal after construction.



This mock-up of a proposed addition, in orange, is visible through a narrow break in the street wall.

Visibility of Occupiable Rooftop Additions for Staff-Level Approval

Building or setback height at installation	Maximum amount of visibility
Up to 60 feet	12 inches or less
61–80 feet	18 inches or less
81–100 feet	24 inches or less
More than 100 feet	36 inches or less

Rooftop Additions

When reviewing a proposed rooftop addition, staff considers its relationship to the building in terms of scale, visibility, form, materials, and significant features. If the building is in a historic district, staff also considers how the addition relates to surrounding buildings when it is visible from a public thoroughfare.

Rooftop additions can be **occupiable** space: rooms or enclosures and accessory installations intended for human occupancy. They can also be **non-occupiable space**, including stair and elevator bulkheads, storage, privacy fences, decks, and railings.

Occupiable Space

Staff can approve rooftop additions of occupiable space on individual landmarks and buildings in historic districts if they meet the following criteria:

Installation

The installation must not damage or remove significant roof features.

If a rooftop element is considered a significant feature, e.g., artist's studio windows or decorative chimneys, that element must be preserved to obtain a staff-level approval.

If you are unsure whether a rooftop element is a significant feature, staff can help when you file your application and photos; you can also contact LPC in advance of filing.

Required Application Materials

- Photos of building facades and roof.**
 - Photos of areas of construction at the roof.**
 - Existing and proposed annotated roof plans** showing locations where construction will occur.
 - Comparative elevations** of existing conditions and proposed additions.
 - Comparative building section drawings** showing existing conditions and proposed additions on the roof, including chimneys, railings, and surrounding parapets:
 - Sightline section taken at 6-foot eye level from directly across the street at the property line and other points where the addition may be visible
 - Large-scale detail drawings of visible additions only
 - Material specifications on drawings.**
 - Color specifications for visible additions only.**
- Two sets of DOB filing drawings** if work requires a DOB permit.
- DOB Objections Sheet or HUB documentation** clear of zoning objections.
- A physical mock-up of the construction** is required to determine potential visibility. The following application materials must be submitted:
- Color photos** of the mock-up and roof from surrounding points on the street to document visibility of proposed addition at a 6-foot eye level.
 - If the proposed addition is visible from a public thoroughfare, **color photos from points of visibility**:
 - If staff requests, a photo montage of each view with the addition drawn in.
- If LPC requires additional materials after your application is reviewed, you will receive a Materials Checklist from LPC staff.*



An artist studio window, considered a significant feature in the Greenwich Village Historic District.



Note: All permit applications for occupiable additions must be filed with the Department of Buildings (DOB). In order for your permit to be issued, your application must include a copy of the DOB Objections Sheet or HUB documentation showing that no outstanding zoning objections exist.

Roof features that are not considered significant, such as a roof hatch, may be removed as part of proposed construction work.

Visibility

The addition must not be visible over the primary facade, and can only be minimally visible over secondary facades at buildings seven stories or higher. However, minimal visibility of chimneys or flues is allowed over primary facades in some cases. See the chart on the next page, *Visibility of Occupiable Rooftop Additions*, for more details. Staff will request that you construct a mock-up of your proposal to verify visibility.

Height

The addition may be no more than one story high and up to 11 feet above the midpoint of the existing roof.

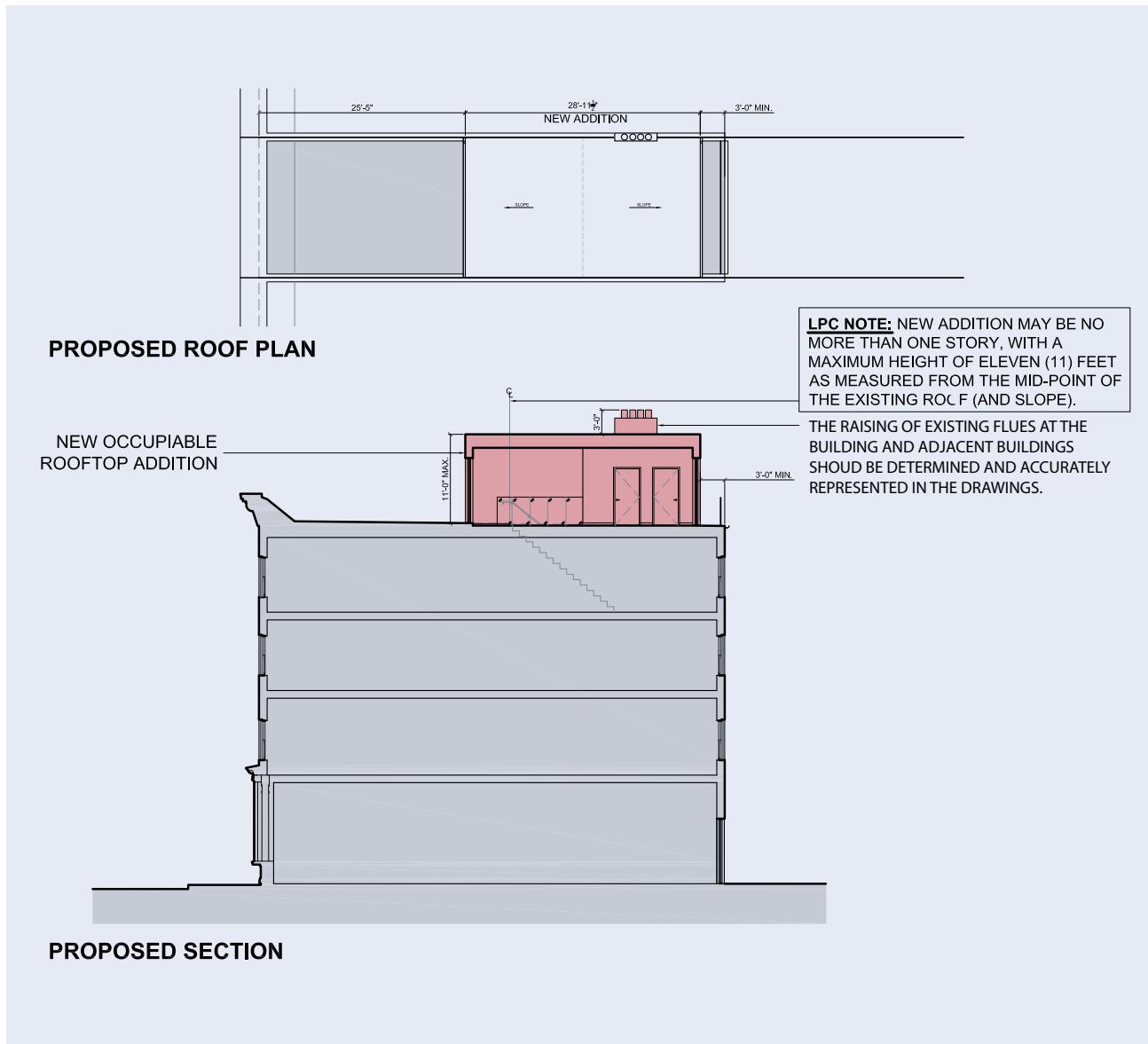
Setback

The addition must be set back from sightlines at the front facade and set back at least three feet from the rear facade.

Cumulative Impact

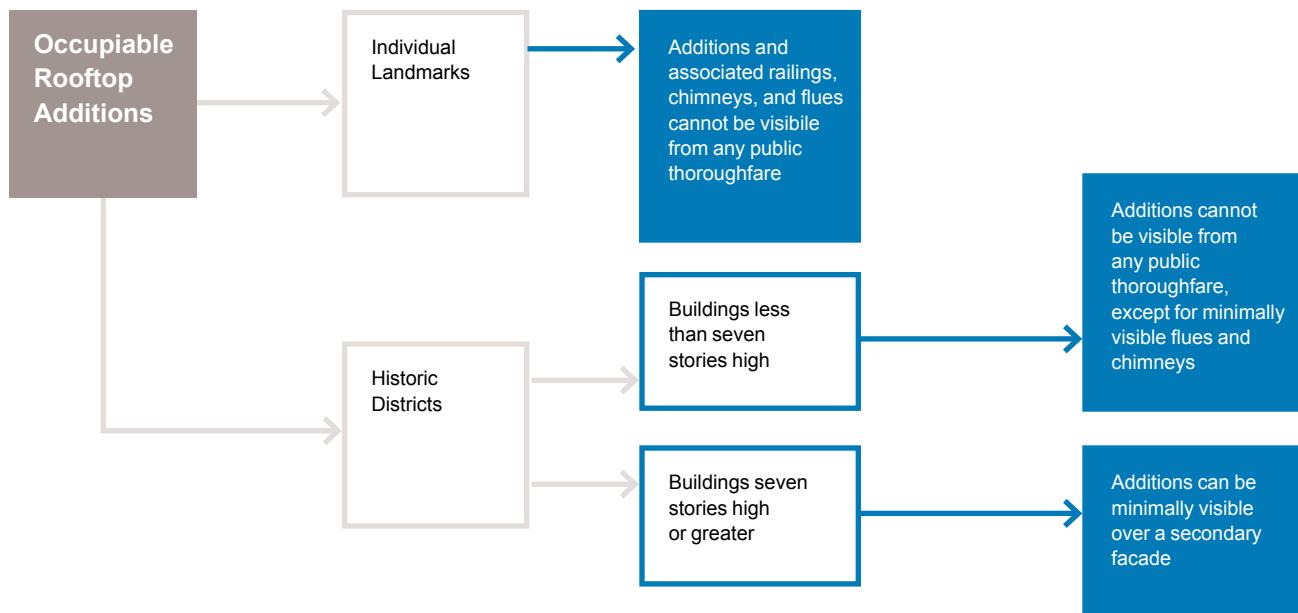
Staff assesses the cumulative impact of additions at the roof and rear of the building. If there is an existing rear yard addition or an approval for one, staff cannot approve constructing a new occupiable rooftop addition unless the rear yard addition is considered original or historic.

To determine whether your existing addition is original or historic, do preliminary research as described in Section A and/or submit photos of existing conditions to discuss with staff.



A plan and elevation drawing showing an occupiable single-story rooftop addition with instructions for determining the maximum height allowed for staff-level review.

Visibility of Occupiable Rooftop Additions



A photograph showing a chimney flue extension seen over the front facade of a row house as a result of a new rooftop bulkhead. The bulkhead itself is not visible from public thoroughfares.



Non-Occupiable Space

Staff can approve non-occupiable rooftop additions, including stair and elevator bulkheads, pergolas, storage, privacy fences, decks, and railings on individual landmarks and buildings in historic districts if they meet the following criteria:

Installation

The installation must not damage or remove significant roof features.

If a rooftop element is considered a significant feature, e.g., artist's studio windows or decorative chimneys, that element must be preserved.

If you are unsure whether a rooftop element is significant, staff can help when you file your application and photos; you can also contact LPC in advance of filing.

Roof features not considered significant may be removed as part of proposed construction work.

Visibility

The addition **can be minimally visible over the primary facade in some cases, and minimally visible over the secondary facade**. See the chart on the following page, *Visibility of Non-Occupiable Rooftop Additions*, for more details, as well as the chart on page 6.6 documenting how far additions can project into the maximum line of sight from a public thoroughfare. Staff may request that you construct a mock-up of your proposal to verify visibility.

Required Application Materials

- Photos of building facades and roof.**
- Photos of areas of construction and/or installation at the roof.**
- Existing and proposed annotated roof plans** showing where construction/installation will occur.
- Comparative elevations** of existing conditions and proposed additions and /or installations.
- Comparative building section drawings** showing existing conditions and additions on the roof, including chimneys, railings, and surrounding parapets with heights:
 - Sightline section taken at 6-foot eye level from directly across the street at the property line and other points where additions and/or installations may be visible
 - Large-scale detail drawings of visible additions and/or installations only
- Material specifications on drawings.**
- Color specifications** for visible additions and/or installations only.
- Two sets of DOB filing drawings** if work requires a DOB permit.
If the visibility cannot be documented from the previous items, a physical mock-up of the construction and/or installation is required to determine potential visibility. The following application materials must be submitted:
- Color photos** of the mock-up and roof from surrounding points on the street to document the potential visibility of the proposed addition and/or installation at a 6-foot eye level.
- If the proposed addition is visible from a public thoroughfare, **color photos from points of visibility and maximum visibility**:
 - If requested by staff, a photo montage for each view with the addition or installation drawn into the image

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

In some cases, staff can approve work that **increases visibility** of an existing addition or structure if it meets the following criteria:

Work is required by NYC Building Code or Fire Code, and documentation confirms that there is no feasible alternative.

Extending an existing historic elevator shaft bulkhead to a visible (or more visible) condition to meet relevant codes, without adding an additional stop to a new floor or the roof.

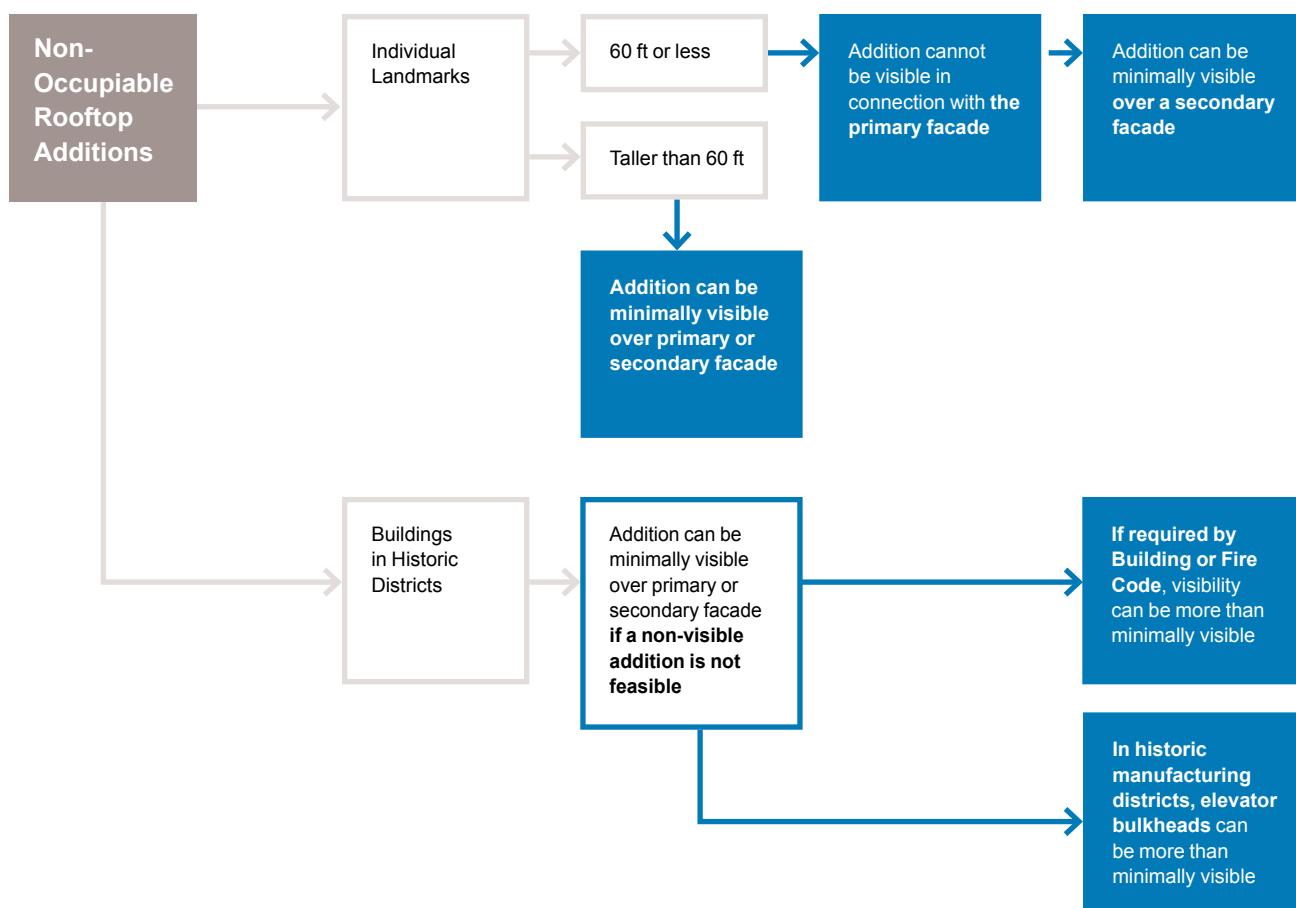
Buildings with visible elevator bulkheads at or just behind the primary facade are found at certain originally commercial and manufacturing historic districts, such as the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District and SoHo-Cast Iron Extension; Tribeca East, West, North, and South Historic Districts; NoHo Historic District; NoHo East Historic District; NoHo Extension; and the Ladies Mile Historic District.

Bulkhead materials and finish must be utilitarian and compatible with materials and finish of the primary facade.



An elevator bulkhead visible over a front facade in the SoHo Historic District.

Visibility of Non-Occupiable Rooftop Additions



Dormers

A dormer is a window, or window assembly and framing, that projects from a sloping roof. Staff can approve installing new dormers if they meet the following criteria:

Location

The dormer must be located on the non-visible side of a peaked or pitched roof above the rear facade, facing the rear yard.

Design

The design must be in keeping with the type of dormers found on buildings of a similar age and style, and must harmonize with the building's fenestration pattern.

A new dormer or an enlarged dormer must not span the entire width of the roof, and the historic roof pitch must be maintained by retaining at least 24 inches at both sides of the dormer.

The highest point of the dormer must be at least 18 inches below the existing ridgeline of the roof, and the lowest point must be at least 18 inches from the plane of the rear facade, unless the building is of a type or style that historically had a higher or lower dormer.

Materials

Materials must be in keeping with the type of dormers found on buildings of a similar age and style.



Dormers at a pitched roof facing the rear yard.

Required Application Materials

- Photos of building facades and roof.**
 - Photos of areas of construction at the roof.**
 - Existing and proposed annotated roof plans** showing where construction will occur, including setbacks from top, bottom, and sides of roof.
 - Comparative elevations of** existing conditions and the proposed dormer.
 - Comparative building section drawing** showing existing conditions and the proposed dormer on the roof, including setbacks from the top and bottom of the roof:
 - Large-scale detail drawings of dormer windows, cladding, and roofing
 - Full block plan to show potential visibility.**
 - Material specifications on the drawings.**
- A physical mock-up of the construction** may be required to determine potential visibility. If so, the following application materials must be submitted:
- Color photos** of the mock-up and roof from surrounding points on the street to demonstrate that the proposal is not visible from a public thoroughfare.
 - If the proposed dormer would be visible from a public thoroughfare, **color photos** from points of visibility:
 - If staff requests, a photo montage for each view with the addition drawn in
- If LPC requires additional materials after your application is reviewed, you will receive a Materials Checklist from LPC staff.*

Rear Yard Additions

When reviewing proposed rear yard additions, LPC considers the relationship of the addition to the building in terms of scale, visibility, massing, and materials, and its effect on significant building features. In historic districts, the Commission also considers the relationship to surrounding buildings and rear yards. A rear yard addition can generally be no taller or deeper than typical rear yard additions on the block.



Note: Before an LPC permit can be issued, applications for occupiable additions must be filed with the DOB and include a copy of the DOB Objections Sheet or HUB documentation to show that no outstanding zoning objections exist. **The addition must be as-of-right for bulk, massing, and height under the NYC Building Code and Zoning Resolution.**

Required Application Materials

- Photos of building facades and rear yard.**
 - Photos of areas of construction at rear facade and rear yard.**
 - Full block plan** showing number of floors (height) and approximate depth of existing additions.
 - Existing and proposed annotated site, floor, and roof plans** showing where construction will occur.
 - Comparative elevations** of the existing conditions and proposed rear yard addition.
 - Comparative building section drawings** showing the existing condition and proposed rear yard addition, including any below-grade floors or crawlspaces:
 - Large-scale detailed drawings of windows, doors, cladding, and parapets/railings
 - Material specifications on drawings.**
 - Color samples.**
 - Two sets of DOB filing drawings.**
 - DOB Objections Sheet or HUB documentation clear of zoning objections.**
- A physical mock-up of construction may be required to determine potential visibility.** If so, the following application materials must be submitted:
- Color photos** of the mock-up from surrounding points on the street to confirm the addition is not visible from a public thoroughfare.
- If LPC requires additional materials after your application is reviewed, you will receive a Materials Checklist from LPC staff.*

An original or early extension at the back of a rowhouse, often referred to as a rear “el”.



Removing Elements

Staff can approve the removal of features on the rear facade and existing rear yard extensions **not considered significant** as part of proposed construction work. If a facade element or structure is considered **significant**, e.g., stained glass windows or decorative cornice/window surrounds, the element must be preserved.

If you are unsure whether a rear facade element or structure is a significant feature, staff can help when you file your application and photos; you can also contact LPC in advance of filing.

Impact

Staff assesses the **cumulative impact** of additions at the roof and rear of a building. If there is an existing rooftop addition or an approval for one, approval of a new rear yard addition is not permitted at the staff level, unless the addition is considered original or historic.

If you are unsure whether an existing addition is original or historic, staff can help when you file your application and photos; you can also contact LPC in advance of filing.

Visibility

Rear yard additions cannot be visible from any public thoroughfare. Staff may request that you construct a mock-up of your proposal to verify visibility.

Context

A majority (more than 50 percent) of buildings of a similar type (e.g., rowhouses or town houses) in a block must have an existing rear yard addition or extension. The proposal can be as tall and as deep as the predominant height and depth of those existing additions. Full-height rear yard additions are not permitted, regardless of context.

Rear Yards

When reviewing applications for rear yard additions, LPC considers the effect on open space, including the rear yard of the building and shared central space of the block. These additions must not extend to the rear lot line or substantially eliminate the rear yard, as uncharacteristically deep additions can negatively impact the character of shared central space.

Materials

The facade of the addition (facing the central rear open space) can be clad in traditional or modern materials such as brick, stucco, wood, or fiber cement siding.

Exposed or painted concrete or concrete masonry units, vinyl siding, and exterior insulated finish systems (EIFS) are not permitted on facades facing central open spaces.

Lot-line walls of the addition must have a neutral finished surface such as brick or stucco.

Exposed or painted concrete, concrete masonry units, and vinyl siding are not permitted.

Design

The bottom two levels of the addition can be composed of punched window and door openings or a double-height opening, with mullions or muntins to break down the scale of glazing.

Openings must be framed by outer piers of at least 24 inches and separated by a horizontal spandrel of at least 18 inches at the location of the intermediate floor.

Design of openings must be consistent with Section 2-14 of the LPC Rules for new and modified windows and doors at minimally or non-visible secondary facades. See Chapter 2 for more information on window and door configurations.

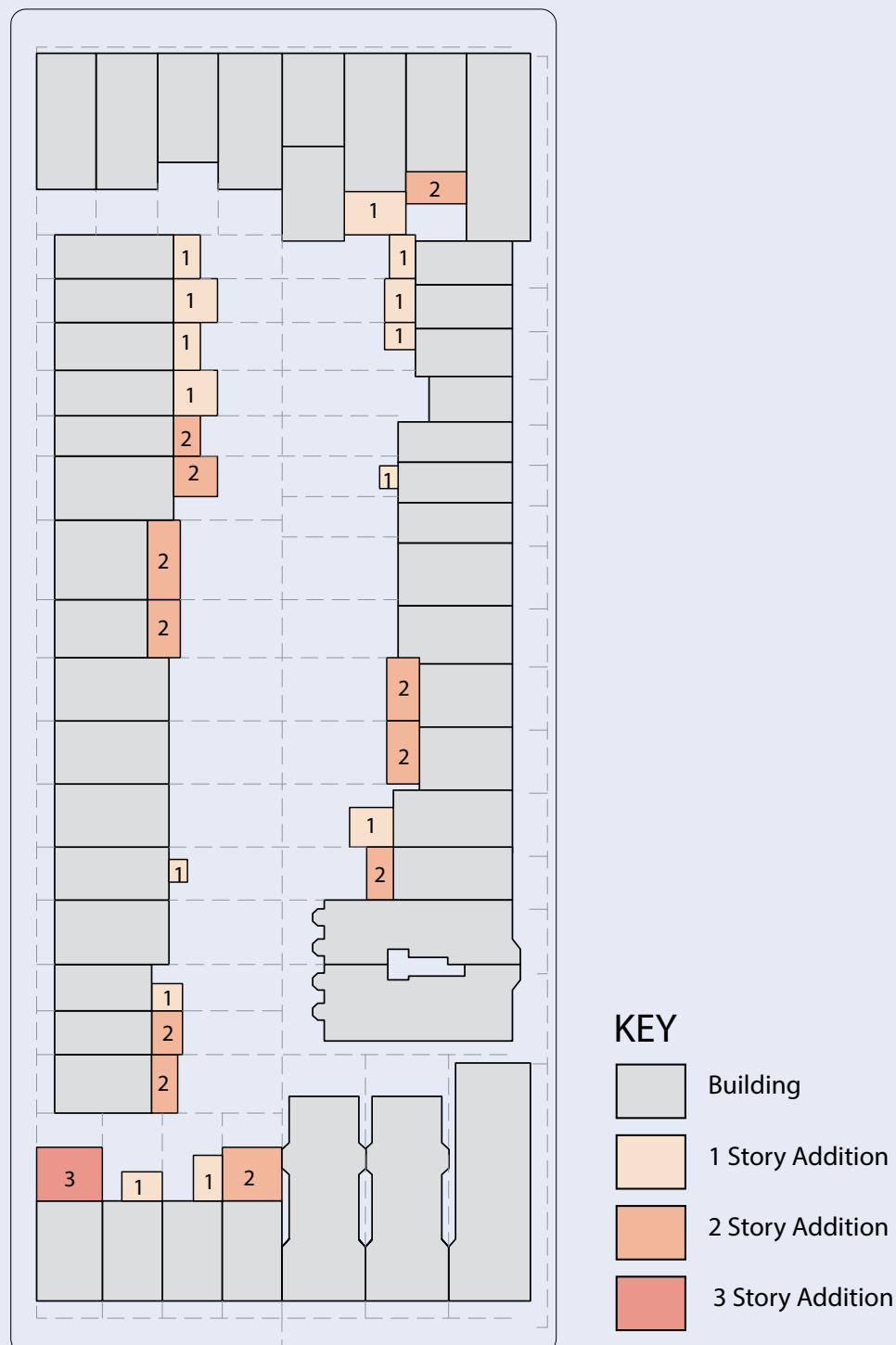
Parapets and railings can extend up to 42 inches above the roof or deck surface of the addition, as required by NYC Building Codes and Fire Codes.

Railings must be used.

Elevation and section drawings illustrating current conditions and a proposed two-story rear-yard addition.



A block plan should show all the rear yard additions on the block for context and to show visibility.



Decks

Rear yard decks can be constructed to project from the plane of the historic rear facade or in conjunction with a new rear yard addition. Staff can approve rear yard decks that meet the following criteria:

Only one level and without a roof, with access only to the lowest full-height floor, e.g., the basement or first floor. Cannot be built on top of an existing rear addition or deck.

Extend up to eight feet from the rear facade, not including steps from the deck down to the rear yard.

Made of wood or metal framing.

Not visible or minimally visible from a public thoroughfare. If visible, railing must have an open quality, material, and design compatible with the building and streetscape.

If proposed in conjunction with a new addition, the projection of the deck is not taken into account when determining if the proposed addition is consistent with the predominant depth of additions within the block.



This metal deck extends eight feet from the rear facade, plus stairs.

Required Application Materials

- Photos of building facades and rear yard.**
- Photos of areas of construction at rear facade and rear yard.**
- Existing and proposed annotated site and floor plans** showing where construction will occur.
- Comparative elevation** of the existing condition and proposed deck, including stairs and railings.
- Comparative building section drawings** showing the existing condition and proposed deck, including stairs and railings:
 - Large-scale detail drawings of visible decks only
- Material/color specifications on drawings.**
- Two sets of DOB filing drawings** if the proposed work requires a DOB permit.

A physical mock-up of construction may be required to determine potential visibility. If so, the following application materials must be submitted:
- Color photos** of the mock-up from surrounding points on the street to determine potential visibility of the proposed deck at a 6-foot eye level.
- If visible from a public thoroughfare, **color photos** from points of visibility:
 - If staff requests, a photo montage for each view with the deck drawn in

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

Section C

Technical Guidance and Resources

This section provides additional guidance and resources to help you understand LPC's rules and criteria in order to submit the correct materials with your application.

→ In This Section:

How to Document Visibility of an Addition

- Mock-Ups
- Photo Montage or Mock-Up Montage

How to Document Visibility of an Addition

Mock-Ups

A mock-up is a temporary, accurate physical representation of proposed building modifications. It gives the Commission a sense of the impact an addition would have on the building and the streetscape in terms of visibility, massing, and scale as seen from a public thoroughfare.

Mock-ups are always required for rooftop additions of occupiable space and for some non-occupiable rooftop additions and rear yard additions. In cases where a mock-up is not required, staff uses required application materials to determine whether the addition is minimally visible or not visible from a public thoroughfare based on section drawings, sightline drawings, and photos of the building, the rooftop, and its surroundings.

A mock-up is typically constructed from 2x4s or metal pipe and draped with orange construction netting, painted a bright color, or wrapped with bright yellow caution tape, or, in certain circumstances, a story pole is used. These materials ensure that the mock-up is clearly visible from the street.

The mock-up must include all exterior walls and roofs of an addition that may be visible, as well as any required railings or mechanical equipment.

Once the mock-up has been constructed, contact the staff member assigned to your application and schedule a site visit. Your architect must be prepared to verify (with drawings and a measuring tape) heights and setbacks of various elements on-site.

At the site inspection, LPC makes an initial determination on visibility from public thoroughfares at the 6-foot eye level and may suggest modifications to lessen impact.

Mock-ups are often required for projects being presented at a public hearing. In this case, the mock-up must be constructed of sturdy materials so it can be safely left in place over the course of the hearing process so staff, Commissioners, and the community can view and document it.

Depending on the complexity and scale of your project, DOB and LPC permits may be required for the “temporary installation” of a mock-up. See *Chapter 14* for more information on temporary installations.

Photo Montage or Mock-Up Montage

Photo montages and mock-up montages are graphic representations of an existing building with a proposed modification, demonstrating what it would look like if a permit were granted.

The photo montage or mock-up montage may be a hand-rendered or computer-rendered image utilizing a combination of photos and 3D modeling or a full 3D model. It must clearly and honestly demonstrate the design and scale of the proposed addition.

Each image must be clearly numbered and labeled to include the exact location from which it is taken. All views must be keyed to a site map showing the location and direction from which they are taken.

Each proposed image must be shown adjacent to an existing image (the “before” view). If an image of the addition is difficult to see, the proposed image must circle or highlight the addition. Telephoto or zoomed-in views must also be included.

Photo montages must be taken from all surrounding street locations where the addition would be most and least visible (plus several in-between) — both inside and outside historic districts.



A mock-up (left) and photo montage (right) of a proposed penthouse, shown in orange. The penthouse would be an occupiable rooftop addition.