Preservation 101: An Introduction to the Landmarks Preservation Commission

What is the Landmarks Preservation Commission?
The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the NYC agency responsible for identifying and designating the city’s landmarks and historic districts. The Commission also regulates changes to designated buildings. The Commission consists of 11 Commissioners and a permanent staff.

The LPC has designated and regulates over 28,000 buildings in all five boroughs, including 187 historic districts and over 1,400 individual landmarks.

Departments at LPC
- Archaeology – reviews subsurface work and mitigates archaeological finds.
- Environmental Review – offers guidance and information about impact certain projects may have upon the City’s archaeological and architectural resources.
- Research – evaluates and proposes buildings for designation as landmarks.
- Preservation – regulates landmarked buildings through issuance of permits.
- Enforcement – ensures compliance with the Landmark Law.

The History of the LPC
The LPC was established in 1965 when Mayor Robert Wagner signed the local law creating the Commission and giving it its powers. The Landmarks Law was enacted in response to New Yorkers’ growing concern that important physical elements of the City’s history were being lost despite the fact that these buildings could be saved. Events like the demolition of the architecturally distinguished Pennsylvania Station in 1963 increased public awareness of the need to protect the city’s architectural, historical, and cultural heritage.

The Landmarks Law (1965)
- Protect improvements that represent the city’s cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history
- Safeguard the city’s historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage
- Foster civic pride
- Protect and enhance the city’s attractions to tourists
- Promote the use of historic districts, landmarks, interior landmarks and scenic landmarks for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the people of the city

§ 26–601, New York City Administrative Code

Declarations of Public Policy
- “The elevation of this city as a worldwide tourist center and world capital of business, culture and government cannot be negated or enhanced by disregarding the historical and architectural heritage of the city and by countenancing the destruction of such cultural assets.”

Definitions of a Landmark
- “Any improvement, any part of which is thirty years in age, which has a special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state or nation, and which has been designated as a landmark pursuant to §26–601(d) or any provision of law.”

Criteria for Landmarking
- 30 years old, in whole or part
- Cultural significance
- Historical significance
- Architectural significance

Types of Landmarks: Individual Buildings and Structures
- Woolworth Building (1913)
- Lever House (1952)
- Madison Square Garden (1968)
- Brooklyn Bridge (1883)
Performing Work on a Designated Property

When is approval required?
The Landmarks Preservation Commission must approve in advance all work affecting any individually designated building or any property within an historic district, including any restoration, alteration, restoration, demolition or new construction.

The Commission has adopted rules that authorize the staff to issue permits for certain types of work. If your proposal meets the criteria set forth in the rules, the staff will issue a permit. If your proposal does not meet certain criteria, the project is reviewed by the full Commission.

When is approval NOT required?
No permit is necessary for ordinary maintenance or for interior alterations that do NOT require a G&G permit. It is always best to call LPC if you are unsure whether you need a permit.

www.nyc.gov/landmarks

What are the LPC’s Rules?

Title 63

The Commission has established Rules and Regulations that allow Commission staff to issue permits for various frequent work types such as, HVAC equipment, awnings, window replacement, masonry repair, and signage. These rules allow for staff-level review and approval of work that meets certain criteria.

The Commission’s Rules and the Landmarks Law are included in the Charter, Administrative Code, and Rules of the City of New York, and available for download on our website.

www.nyc.gov/landmarks
Public Hearing Process

*When Does’t Meet the Rules*

- Staff will meet with you to discuss the project and the process, and where appropriate, will make recommendations that reflect the Commission’s policies.
- The application must be presented to the local Community Board prior to the hearing date.
- At the hearing, the 11 members of the Commission review the proposal, listen to testimony from the applicant and the public, discuss the proposal and either vote to approve or disapprove it. This hearing may recommend changes and reschedule the item for a future public meeting.
- If approved, the staff issues the permit upon receipt and review of the final DOB filing documents.

Array Materials

Required materials must be filed with your application. These materials vary by project, but typically include:

- Photographs
- Floor plans (i.e., interior work)
- Technical drawings (i.e., windows and doors)
- Material samples (i.e., masonry requiring)
- Technical specification (i.e., waterproofing, masonry, and facades)
- Elevations (i.e., storefronts, facades changes)
- Elevations drawings (i.e., storefronts and rooftop additions)

Complete applications (all required materials submitted with application) are processed faster and permits issued more quickly. If additional materials are required, LPC staff will provide a Materials Checklist.

Can I Obtain a Permit Quickly?

**FastTrack** service makes it possible for applicants to obtain permits for certain types of work in an expedited fashion. LPC has assigned a team of expert preservationists to work exclusively on permits for work ranging from interior alterations to window replacement and HVAC installation. Through this service, your project will be approved within 10 business days if your application includes the required documents and materials and there are no outstanding LPC violations on your building.

The following work types can be approved through the FastTrack service:

- Interior alterations
- Notices of Compliance (“sign off”) for interior work
- Review of “as-built” drawings for FAA permits or other “no work” applications
- Concrete sidewalks replacement and below grade building utility installations
- Minor restoration work on rear facades
- Window replacement on non-visible facades
- Window/door opening modification on non-visible façade
- Rear decks on non-visible facades and non-visible roof decks
- Non-visible HVAC units in rear yards, awnings, andpatios
- Thru wall HVAC equipment on secondary and non-visible facades
- Wall-mounted HVAC units on secondary and non-visible facades
- Sidewalk calls

Application Process

LPC uses the Application form to track projects.

- The block and lot can be obtained from the Department of Buildings. You may be able to find this information online through the Department of Buildings. Please see www.nyc.gov/html/dob/permit (i.e., DOB NYC) for further information.
- If you are requesting a permit to remedy a violation, please note the violation number here.
- Choose the work types that apply to your request here. Mark “Other” if not noted.
- If additional City permits are required, please check these boxes as appropriate.
- Since LPC uses a single application form for all proposals, some fields may not apply to your project. For example, do not fill out “Tenant/Lessee/Co-Shareholder” if the property is a single family residence.
- Some projects do not require an architect or architectural drawings, such as painting, signage and awnings are welcome to submit the final documents.
- An original owner’s signature, or other officially recognized authority, must sign the form.

The Permitting Procedure

*What happens to my application?*

1. **Pickup**
   - Application must be signed and number assigned
2. **Review**
   - Application assigned to staff
3. **Review**
   - Application reviewed and drafted permit
4. **Submit**
   - Permit issued
5. **Submit**
   - Permit to pickup
6. **Submit**
   - Application assigned
7. **Submit**
   - Review permit and drafted permit
8. **Submit**
   - Final permit

Filing Effective Applications

- Read the guides for your type of work to understand the criteria as you submit complete documentation explaining how your project responds to the criteria. Even if your project doesn’t meet the rules, you should still submit all the relevant documentation so that staff can advise you accordingly.
- Always submit as complete an application as possible.Incomplete applications will take longer to process.
- When submitting digital information, like photographs, name the file so it is easy to tell what the photograph is showing.
- If LPC asks for more information, follow-up as quickly as possible.
- Include documentation of the original façade by submitting a copy of the 1940s tax photo.
Is My Building a Landmark?

NYCMaps City Wide GIS
www.nyc.gov/landmarks

Department of Buildings: BIS
www.nyc.gov/buildings

Is My Building a Landmark?

LPC website – Maps
LPC website – Proposed Districts
LPC website – Designation Reports

Determining Historical Appearance:
References for Work

Between 1919 and 1941, New York City photographed every house and building within the five boroughs. LPC staff use these photos to determine the historic appearance of structures, and thus, the appropriateness of work.

Tax photos can be ordered through the Municipal Archives at www.nyc.gov/records or by dialing 311 (212-NEW-YORK).

Making Changes
Windows, Storefronts, Restoration & Repair, Additions

Windows
Rules and Guidelines

- Ordinary Maintenance, Repairs and Replacement
- Parts of a Window
  - Configuration
  - Material
  - Operation
  - Detail
  - Finish

How the Rule Works
HISTORIC WINDOW VS. PROPOSED WINDOWS

VISIBILITY:
principal façade, secondary façade, visible and non-visible facades

TYPE OF BUILDINGS:
rowhouses, buildings exceeding 41 ft street frontage and over 6 story in height

TYPE OF WINDOWS:
regular windows and special windows
Application Checklist

- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- Photos of building and typical existing window(s) elevation drawings of the proposed and historic windows to show the configuration
- Vertical and horizontal section drawings of the proposed windows showing the head/jill, joint, mullion and muntin to show the details, profiles, dimensions
- Vertical and horizontal section drawings of the historic windows if they still exist to compare the details
- Floor plan indicating the number and location of proposed windows
- Color / finish sample
- Conditions statement/photos describing the extent of deterioration for windows to be removed
- Documentation of the original window if the existing windows are not the original windows

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Application Checklist

- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- Photos(s) of entire building
- Conditions statement describing the type and extent of deterioration
- Two copies of the DOB filing drawings if the work requires DOB review
- Written specifications for the method of repair

Specifications should include mortar and/or rendering/spalling mixes, and other proprietary products being used, and should note that new material will match the historic material in terms of color, texture and dimension, color samples, and water pressure.

Approval of test patches is required after the permit is issued.

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Application Checklist

- Ordinary Maintenance, Repairs and Restoration
- Substitute Materials

Sheet metal cornice Fiberglass cornice

Restoration and Repair work that follow LPC guidelines and good preservation practice are eligible for Staff-Level Permits

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Application Checklist

- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- Photos(s) of entire building
- Conditions statement describing the type and extent of deterioration
- Two copies of the DOB filing drawings if the work requires DOB review
- Written specifications for the method of repair

Specifications should include mortar and/or rendering/spalling mixes, and other proprietary products being used, and should note that new material will match the historic material in terms of color, texture and dimension, color samples, and water pressure.

Approval of test patches is required after the permit is issued.

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**Storefronts**

Rules and Guidelines

- Restoration
- Special Districts
- Components of a Storefront
  - Masonry opening/ piers
  - Storefront infill
  - Materials and details
  - Display window
  - Bulkhead
  - Transom
  - Sign band and Signage
  - Cornice
  - Security screens and housing
- Design Considerations

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**Storefronts**

Filing an Complete Application

**Application Checklist**

- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- If the project requires a Department of Buildings Permit, submit two copies of the DOB filings drawings. Drawings must be signed and sealed by a licensed architect or engineer.
- Color Photographs of building and close-ups of existing storefront
- Plan: Elevation drawings of existing, proposed storefront, and an overall building elevation, and large scale section details at head, jambs, bulkhead, and sill.
- Building Floor Plan of storefront area.
- Drawings of Signage, lighting, and Security, Color and Material Sample(s).

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**Awnings**

Rules and Guidelines

**Principles**

- Types of Building: Residential, Commercial, Institutional
- Type of Awnings: Fixed, Retractable
- Material of Awnings: Canvas, Color, striping etc.
- Location of Awnings: Entrance, storefront, terraces
- Details/ Method of attachment: within the masonry opening, significant features, arched openings etc.
- Signage: limited to the door
- Size of letters:
- Other Details:
  - **Skirt, Height from sidewalk**

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**Signage**

Rules and Guidelines

- In approving an application for signage the LPC staff will consider the overall amount of approved signage for the storefront. If the staff determines that the overall amount of signage is excessive and will detract from the architectural features of the building, the adjacent buildings, or the streetscape.

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**Signage**

**Filing an Complete Application**

**Application Checklist**
- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- Color photo(s) of the existing building with proposed location of sign indicated
- Close-up photo of proposed location of sign
- Detailed drawings showing dimensions of the sign and how it will be attached to the building
- Drawing of the sign with dimensions and sign lettering indicated
- Material and color samples
A staff member will contact you if additional materials are required.

**Additions on Buildings**

**Rooftop additions guidelines and rules**
- Visibility
- Scale
- Surrounding Buildings
- Materials
- Form
- Effect on Significant Features

Additions Eligible for Staff-Level Permits must not be visible from any public thoroughfare, set back at least three feet from the rear façade, rise no more than one story of no more than 12 feet from the roof of the original structure, should be allowed by zoning and the building should not have previously approved or grandfathered rear addition.

**Rooftop Additions**

**Filing an Complete Application**

**Application Checklist**
- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- If the project requires a Department of Buildings Permit, submit two copies of the DOB filings drawings. Drawings must be signed and sealed by a licensed architect or engineer.
- Photographs and sight line drawings
- Front (street), rear, and side elevations and building section drawings
- Mock-up of the proposed addition
- If visible, photos of the mock-up and photomontages showing proposed addition
- Copy of the DOB Objection Sheet showing there are no zoning objections.

**Rear Additions**

**Filing an Complete Application**

**Application Checklist**
- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- If the project requires a Department of Buildings Permit, submit two copies of the DOB filings drawings. Drawings must be signed and sealed by a licensed architect or engineer.
- Color photos of rear façade and close-ups of any significant features
- Existing and proposed rear elevations, building sections
- Sightlines/visibility sections, and floor plans including the rear yard
- Full block plan at large scale, color coded to describe the number of floors of each building and addition
- Photos of other rear façades and rear yards with the block
- If visible, photos of the mock-up and photomontages showing the proposed addition
- Copy of the DOB Objection Sheet showing there are no zoning objections.

**Making additions to buildings**

**Building Additions**

**Preparing an Application**

A Sample Application
HVAC's and Mechanicals

guidelines and rules

• Visibility
• Effect on Significant Features

The installation of rooftop HVAC units are reviewed as mechanical rooftop additions, and requires visibility studies in addition to the supplemental materials.

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Mechanical applications

Filing an Complete Application

Application Checklist

- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- Photos of building with proposed A/C locations indicated
- Elevation drawing showing A/C centered under window(s) and dimensions of the exterior grille
- Section drawing showing grille flush with masonry and dimensions beneath sill, catalogue cut sheet showing grille type and unit (architectural grille), paint card showing finish to match surrounding masonry (Through wall A/C units)
- Sightline/visibility sections, and floor plans including the rear yard (rooftop HVACs)
- If visible, photos of the mock-up and photomontages showing the proposed addition

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Sidewalks

guidelines

• Repairs
• Historic Fabric
• Relationship to the adjacent properties

Applications for concrete sidewalk replacements and the installation of below grade utility installations can be fast-tracked when the Landmarked Building has no outstanding LPC violations and if:

- If the proposed new concrete sidewalk will be tinted or untinted to match the color of the adjacent sidewalks
- Closest to align with the scoring or flag pattern of the adjacent sidewalks and
- Stone curbs must be removed and preserved.

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Sidewalk Applications

Filing an Complete Application

Application Checklist

- A permit application signed by the owner of the building
- Photos showing existing material(s), condition and the pattern of sidewalk and adjacent sidewalks.
- Plan showing existing and proposed scoring pattern indicating relationship to the patterns of the adjacent sidewalks
- Concrete specifications showing tint color to match the adjacent sidewalks or replacement bluestone material

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Photographing a Sidewalk

www.nyc.gov/landmarks

Sidewalk Drawings & Tint Specifications

www.nyc.gov/landmarks
FasTrack Permit Service
Sidewalk Cafes

LPC can FasTrack applications for sidewalk cafés that are filed at the Department of Consumer Affairs. The drawings you submit must be clear and show that the new work includes moveable installations that will not be attached to the building or sidewalk.

Application Checklist:
- A permit application form signed by the owner of the building
- Photographs of the base of the building, including the storefront associated with the sidewalk café
- Two copies of a dimensioned site plan showing the number and location of the tables.

Enforcement
- A complaint is received by the Enforcement Department
- Officer goes out to investigate the building and take photographs
- Photographs are compared to designation photos of building
- Permit history is researched
-any alterations made without a permit receive a Warning Letter, which allows owner to respond to LPC without facing court appearance or fines.

Resources for Homeowners
Historic Preservation Grant Program

LPC’s federally funded Historic Preservation Grant Program provides grants to income-eligible homeowners and non-profits to restore severely deteriorated facades.

Eligible work may include masonry rebuilding and repointing, repair and replacement of windows and front doors, and cornice restoration.

To qualify for a grant, the building must be a designated or proposed individual New York City landmark, or be listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

For Further Information

The Landmarks Preservation Commission
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New York, NY 10007
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info@lpc.nyc.gov
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