

# FACADE

## guide to storefront design



Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor

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New York City's diverse collection of commercial districts is in large part defined by the character and quality of their individual storefronts. When executed well, the storefront can serve as an invitation to the shopper, increasing business for individual merchants and improving the overall shopping experience. Well-designed storefronts can create an environment where people will want to linger, shop and return again.

The New York City Department of Small Business Services has developed this Guide to Storefront Design to help you understand the individual elements of the storefront – the sign, awning, lighting, color and security devices – and make good design decisions. We have also provided you with an overview of some of the regulations relating to storefronts, and direction on compliance.

At SBS we are committed to assisting New York City's small businesses and commercial districts. To learn more about how the City of New York can help your business, visit us at [www.nyc.gov/sbs](http://www.nyc.gov/sbs). We hope this manual can be a useful tool as you consider improvements to your storefront.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Walsh". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Robert W. Walsh  
Commissioner

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# storefront design

The general guiding principal of excellent storefront design is to keep it simple, and to let the natural architectural elements of your building and storefront speak clearly. Let's first look at some of the different components of the storefront so you know where you can make improvements. Not all buildings have all of the architectural elements below, but these storefront components should translate to most building types.



# steps to storefront renewal

## CHECKLIST

### INVENTORY YOUR EXISTING ASSETS

- Look at what you have – older buildings often have interesting architectural details that may have been covered up over the years. An interesting and attractive facade can be an asset and enhance your sales.
- Check to see if you are in a landmark building or historic district. If you are, there are additional rules that pertain to making changes in that building (see page 18).

### GENERATE IDEAS

- Think about what changes you could make to improve the street appearance of your store. Remember that too much visual clutter can confuse your customer. If possible, let the merchandise speak for itself.
- Brainstorm ideas – hopefully this guide will help inspire some ideas. Look around at other establishments that have particularly nice facades. Contact any local resources such as a local development corporation, chamber of commerce or business improvement district for technical or financial assistance for your project.

### UNDERSTAND REGULATIONS

- Find out which zoning regulations govern your building. For instance, each area may have different rules and regulations when it comes to sign requirements. More details on zoning are included on page 21 of this book. To find your zoning district you can log onto the NYC Department of City Planning at [nyc.gov/planning](http://nyc.gov/planning) or call the Zoning Information Desk at (212) 720-3291.
- Make sure you know what permits are required for the work you want to do. Most of the time you will need to engage the services of a licensed architect, engineer or signhanger to submit the paperwork to the Department of Buildings.

### HIRE QUALIFIED VENDORS

- Licensed architects can be found by contacting the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Information can be found at [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org). To search for license status for any professionals (contractors, engineers, etc.) you can go to [www.op.nysed.gov](http://www.op.nysed.gov). Signhangers are licensed through the Department of Buildings and an updated list can be found at <http://nyc.gov/html/dob/html/violations/signlist.shtml>. In addition, the Department of Small Business Services maintains a database of minority and women-owned businesses that could meet your contracting needs, visit [www.nyc.gov/sbs](http://www.nyc.gov/sbs) to access this list.

Signs are one of the most cost-effective and eye-catching ways to draw more attention to your business. Effective signs are attentive to the scale of the building and the point of view of the pedestrian. **Though it may surprise you, the simpler the sign, the more attention it will likely get.** Studies have shown that people quickly reach a visual saturation point – if there is too much visual clutter, people shut down and ignore all of the signs around them. A bigger sign is not always better.

Below are some examples of different types of signs used in New York City today that will work for both the merchant and shopper to give you an idea of all the different ways you can announce your store name.



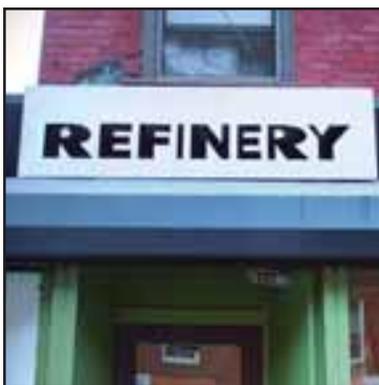
**Painted Plywood Sign:** This is a great example of an eye catching solution that is simple yet creative.



**Painted Glass:** Painting your name directly on the glass is a very low-cost and attractive option.



**Fabric Sign:** A low-cost choice, yet it requires more frequent replacement and upkeep.



**Punched Metal Signboard:** Durable and eye-catching.

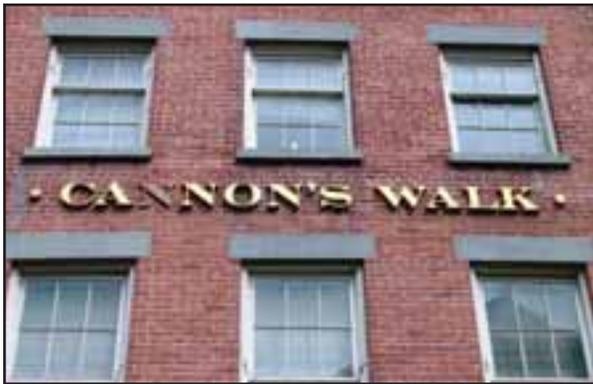


**Metal Logo and Lettering:** This three-dimensional sign which casts a shadow creates another level of texture.



**Metal Signband:** By using just two colors and minimal text, the eye is immediately drawn to the sign.

In addition to the applicable district regulations in C1 and C2 districts (see page 21 for zone designations), the total square footage of all signs should not be greater than three times the street frontage of the ground floor establishment or more than 150 square feet. For example, a ten foot wide store could erect a sign no larger than 30 square feet. Also in C1 and C2 districts, the signage may not be higher than 25 feet above curb level. In C1 and C2 overlays in residential districts, signage may not extend into the residential portion of a mixed-use building. In C4 districts signage may extend as high as 40 feet and may have a total square footage equal to 5 times the street frontage of the ground floor establishment, but not more than 500 square feet.



**Metal Letters affixed directly to the building:**  
Excellent choice for minimizing how much of the building itself gets covered up.



**Wooden Letters on Signboard:**  
Fitting your sign into the signband area defined by the architecture is important to maintain the integrity of the building and project an upscale image.



**Illuminated Sign:** Generally internally lit signs are not desirable, but this one fits well into the scale and context of the building.



**Metallic paint on wooden letters glass background:**  
These letters stand out against the material and fit into the architecture of the window.



**Signs from earlier in the 20th century:** if properly maintained, older signs can be rich and beautiful elements of a commercial district.



**Shingle signs:** Small shingle signs are an attractive, eye-catching way to display your business name. Make sure they comply with specific zoning regulations.



**Signs that do not require a permit:** Non-illuminated signs that are six (6) square feet in total area or less, or those that are painted on exterior walls do not need a permit, but they must comply with local zoning regulations.

# awnings

Awnings define storefronts and embellish the commercial street. They are attached to and supported solely by the building.

Zoning regulations require that lettering on awnings be no higher than 12 inches and not cover more than 12 square feet of space; only the name and address of the business are permitted to be printed on the awning.

Awnings were originally invented as a shade and sheltering device – to protect merchandise in the window from the sun and to cover the pedestrian from the elements. In the best cases, they still serve these functional purposes.



The retractable awnings on the side of this restaurant are a great choice because they last much longer and can be kept clean easily. Plus, even when retracted, as above, they still draw attention.



These awnings are properly fitted into window openings of the building. Larger awnings that cover up the facade are strongly discouraged, as they detract from the overall streetscape.



A very simple awning that announces the business can be very effective and costs less than a retractable awning.



These awnings fit into the architectural elements of the building and are visually effective by restricting text to just the name of the business.



This retractable awning is ideal. It can be kept clean and well-maintained while providing shade from the sun.

**GOOD**



**BAD**



Not only are corporate logos illegal, but they also mean that customers won't notice the name of your business – which can severely hamper your ability to be remembered.



Awnings must be maintained. This ripped and shredded awning sends a message that the business does not care about its products.



This awning is illegal. It includes more information than just the business name and address.

# lighting

Warm, inviting lighting can entice people down the street to your business. Lighting is also a proven crime deterrent. The selective use of illumination elements like neon can be especially eye-catching as well. All exterior lighting should be done by a licensed electrician. Illuminated signs may not be permitted in some zoning areas.



## NEON



The selective use of neon can be quite effective in drawing the customer's attention.

An astute use of color differentiates your business from the rest of the street and is one of the most cost-effective ways to dramatically improve the appearance of the facade. Always keep the architectural features of the facade in mind when picking colors.

## SINGLE COLOR



In both of the examples above, a fresh coat of a simple white paint applied to all of the storefront elements presents a unified appearance that makes each store stand out.

## TWO COLORS



## DISTINCTIVE COLOR



The same effect was achieved by using one color of green (above right), while a edgier approach, yet still unified, was used above, left. Still, despite the eye-catching design, note that only two colors of paint were used. Generally three is the maximum number of colors one should use.

# security

Physical security elements are important to any storefront business. Ideally, “invisible” electronic security systems should be used. But if you must use a gate, an open-grid security gate creates a “24-hour” business by allowing potential customers to view window displays after hours. Open link security gates also provide greater visual access for security and will not be blemished by graffiti which brings down the entire neighborhood.



Note how graffiti has already appeared on the solid part of the security gate, whereas the open grid part makes graffiti impossible.



The solid security gate closes off the streetscape and makes the area seem less safe. Also, for stores, pedestrians that pass by when you are closed cannot see what merchandise you are selling.



Open grid gates allow merchandise to be always on display and makes the entire street more appealing and graffiti-free.



Open grid security gates offer protection in two ways – they not only shield the window but allow for visibility into the store from both pedestrians and police patrolling the area. Case in point: Madison Avenue merchants (example above) display very expensive merchandise, but feel that open grid gates provide the security they need.

# gateboxes

Gate boxes (the long boxes above a store window that hold the rolled-up security gate when it is not in use) can be very unsightly additions to a store facade. Attention should be paid to how these boxes fit into the front of your store. They can be mounted behind a store window, inside the store itself, or concealed behind an awning or a sign. (Where signage is mounted on a gatebox, the signage and gatebox cannot project more than 12 inches over the sidewalk.) At the very least, the box can be painted to fit in with the building or signage colors.



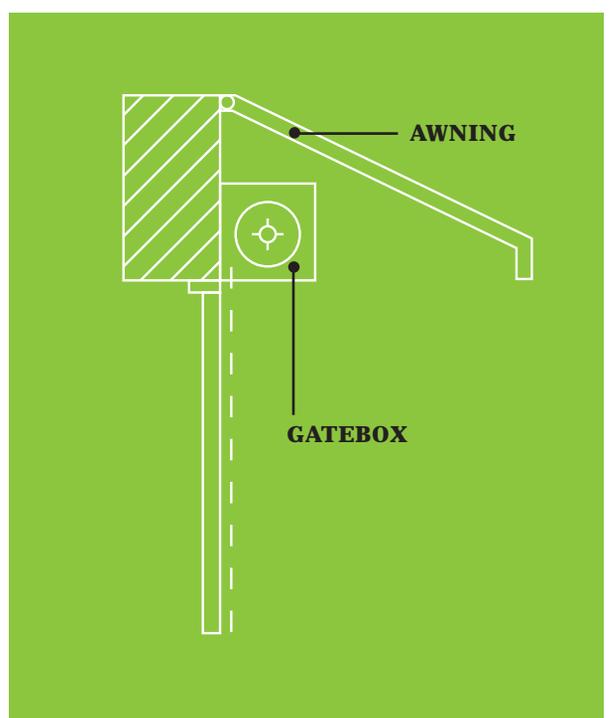
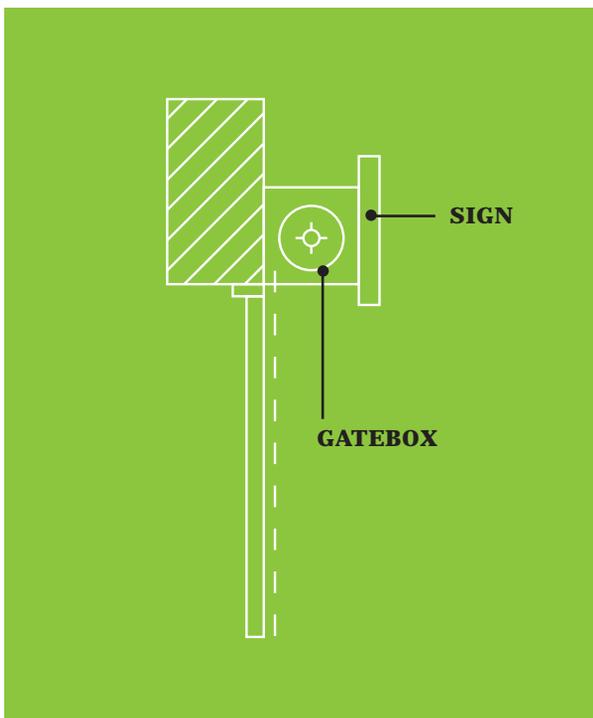
Here the boxes are painted. One is partly concealed behind signage.



Boxes hidden beneath awnings.



Another example of a well-concealed gate box behind an awning.



Graffiti sends the message to your customers that the area is not safe, or that the businesses do not care about welcoming people to their stores. Graffiti that remains on buildings invites further vandalism. The Mayor's Anti-Graffiti Task Force was established in 1995 as a vital part of the City's effort to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers. The Mayor's Anti-Graffiti Paint Program distributes graffiti removal supplies to civic groups planning clean up projects ([www.nyc.gov/cau](http://www.nyc.gov/cau)). If you are not involved with a civic group and have property that has been vandalized by graffiti, you can request the City to remove the graffiti. To make a request, send in a properly filled out waiver form with a letter from the building owner requesting the City to remove the graffiti. The Anti-Graffiti Program Paint Waiver Form can be downloaded at [www.nyc.gov/cau](http://www.nyc.gov/cau). The form may be returned by mail to: Community Assistance Unit, Paint Program, 100 Gold Street, 2nd Floor, NY, NY 10038 or faxed to (212) 788-7754.

## **MAYOR'S ANTI-GRAFFITI TASK FORCE PHONE NUMBERS**

Community groups seeking to obtain free paint and supplies or to volunteer to clean graffiti, call:  
Mayor's Community Affairs Unit (212) 788-7413  
[www.nyc.gov/cau](http://www.nyc.gov/cau)

To report graffiti vandalism in progress, call: 9-1-1

To report graffiti in any NYC public park,  
call: (646) 613-1200  
online: [www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks)

To report graffiti on street signs or highways,  
call: 3-1-1 or (212) NEW-YORK  
online: [www.nyc.gov/dot](http://www.nyc.gov/dot)

To report graffiti on City-owned residential buildings,  
call: NYC Housing Preservation & Development  
(212) 863-7064

*“Graffiti is not just an eyesore;  
it is an invitation to criminals  
and a message to citizens  
that we don't care.”*

*— Mayor Bloomberg*

# before & after

Community organizations implemented storefront renewal programs throughout New York City. These are some examples from before and after the facade improvements these businesses made. Many merchants were very happy with the effect these improvements had on the neighborhood.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



## AMSTERDAM AVENUE, MANHATTAN

The storefronts of this building were steamed cleaned and repainted. New green signs with raised gold letters were installed in the sign band above each of the four stores and green faux retractable awnings hide the gate boxes of roll-down open-mesh security gates. The result is a cohesive, welcoming, and rejuvenated block front of retail stores.

Heritage, Health and Housing Inc.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



## GUN HILL ROAD, BRONX

The building was cleaned and painted to accentuate its architectural style. New red awnings unify the composition of this unique building while the sign bands distinguish the individual stores.

Mosholu-Jerome – East Gun Hill Road Business Improvement District

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**EAST 16TH STREET, BROOKLYN**

Cha's Market renovation included a handsome burgundy flat front sign, goose neck lamps and a festive striped awning.

[Flatbush Development Corporation](#)

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**MYRTLE AVENUE, BROOKLYN**

The White Elephant Gallery installed open mesh security gates, a striped faux retractable awning and distinctive shingle sign.

[Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project](#)

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



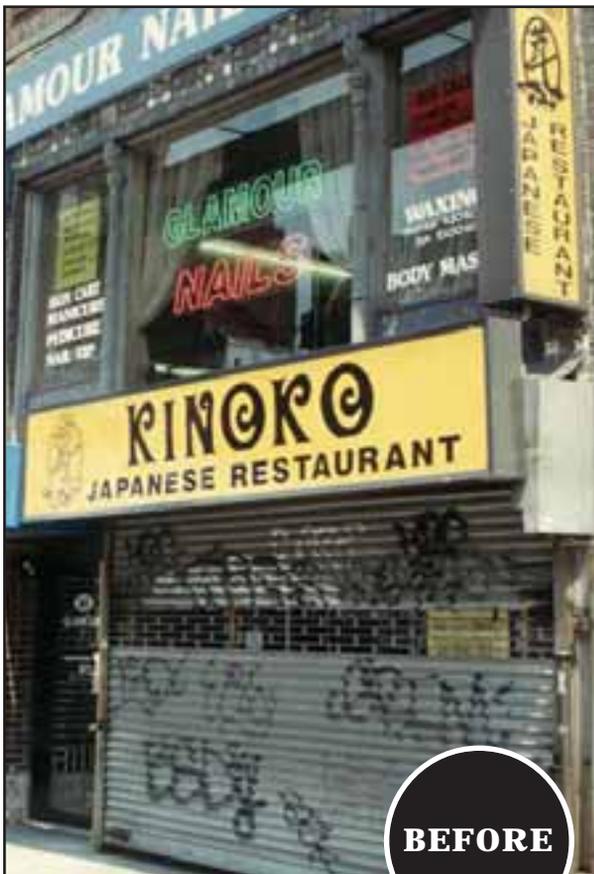
**WEST 72ND STREET, MANHATTAN**

In this example, inappropriate sidewalk canopies were removed. (Canopies are more appropriate for residential entrances.) A more inviting storefront was created with awnings that reveal rather than hide the store interior and its merchandise.

Landmark West!



In this example, beautiful and unique tile work had been covered up over the years. The renovations revealed this craftsmanship.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

**WEST 72ND STREET, MANHATTAN**

Landmark West!

# storefront design tips

## TOP TEN

### **1 LESS IS MORE.**

The simpler your design, the better. Too much visual clutter makes it difficult for the passer-by to see your individual business and take notice. One well-placed sign is often the most attention-grabbing.

### **2 CHOOSE GOOD MATERIALS.**

Cheap materials break down quickly and need to be replaced or else your business begins to look shoddy, discouraging shoppers from entering.

### **3 IF YOU ARE GOING TO USE A ROLL-DOWN SECURITY SOLUTION, ALWAYS CHOOSE AN OPEN-GRID SECURITY GRILL.**

Allowing visibility into the store at night encourages nighttime window shopping (and therefore more daytime customers) and discourages graffiti. The street as a whole feels safer and your business looks better.

### **4 KNOW WHO YOU'RE HIRING.**

Most work, including awnings and any signs larger than six square feet, requires a permit from the Department of Buildings. Architects, engineers and signhangers should all be licensed. Choosing a reputable contractor and ensuring that they are aware of the zoning regulations will help you avoid unnecessary fines. Remember that just because someone else on your block has a particular awning or sign, doesn't mean that it is legal and that you can't all be fined.

### **5 PROPER MAINTENANCE GOES A LONG WAY AND IN THE END WILL HELP YOUR BOTTOM LINE.**

Keep your windows clean and your signs and awnings in good repair. A fresh coat of paint is a good investment.

### **6 KEEP IN MIND THE FABRIC OF YOUR BUILDING AND YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.**

Oftentimes, beautiful historic buildings are covered up by more modern materials. Sometimes simply stripping that covering away reveals beautiful detailing that will draw attention to your store.

## 7 THINK ABOUT WHAT IT IS THAT MAKES YOUR AREA UNIQUE.

Complement your distinctive local character to create a sense of place that draws more people to a commercial strip.

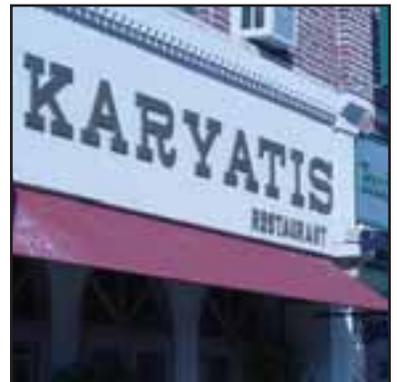
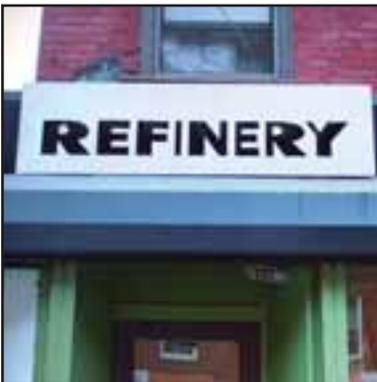
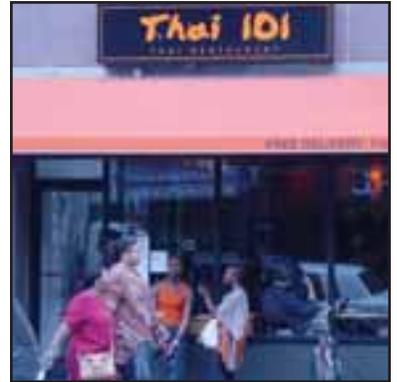
## 8 MAKE IT EASY TO SEE INTO YOUR STORE.

Let your merchandise speak for itself whenever possible. Too many signs in the window obstruct views that invite customers into stores and make for a more secure environment. Zoning requires 80% transparency.

## 9 INCLUDE INVITING LIGHTING.

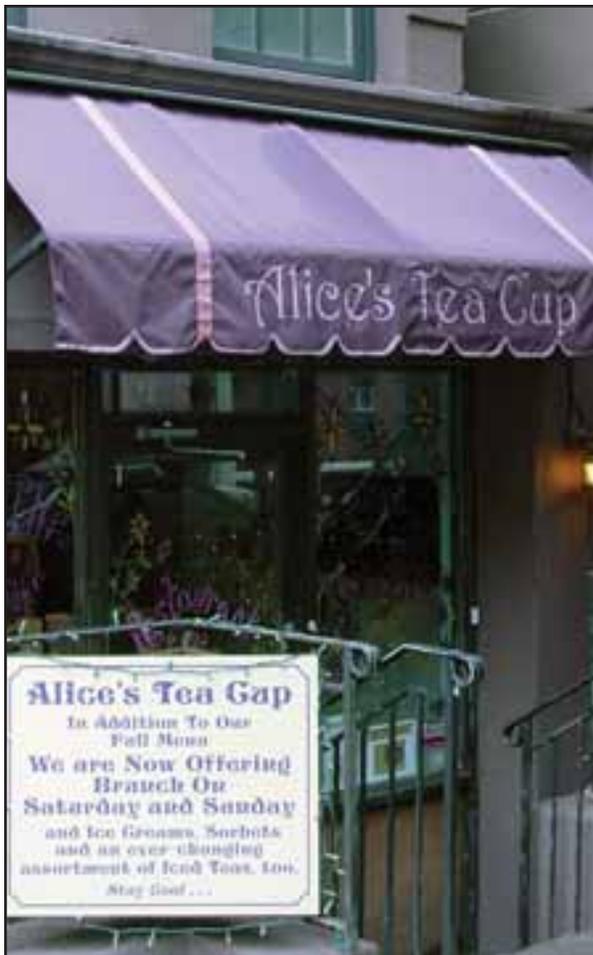
Think about including inviting lighting when and where possible. It draws attention to your business and makes then entire street more enticing.

## 10 REMEMBER: KEEP IT SIMPLE!



# historic preservation

Before making any changes to your building, check to see if your building is in a designated historic district. To make this determination, call the Public Information Officer at the New York City Landmarks Commission at: (212) 669-7817 or send an email to [info@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:info@lpc.nyc.gov). In addition, the Commission's website provides listings and maps of most historic districts in the city and the rules and permits required for making changes to your building can be found at [www.nyc.gov/landmarks](http://www.nyc.gov/landmarks). There are additional rules and regulations regarding historic preservation that you will be required to follow if your building is landmarked.



There are 90 historic districts in New York City. While you must check with the Landmarks Commission to be certain whether or not your property falls under their jurisdiction, the map here gives a general idea of where these districts are located.

**MANHATTAN**

- African Burial Ground and the Commons
- Audobon Terrace
- Carnegie Hill
- Charlton-King-Vandam
- Chelsea
- East 17th Street / Irving Place
- Ellis Island
- Fraunces Tavern Block
- Gansevoort Market Historic District
- Governors Island
- Gramercy Park
- Greenwich Village
- Hamilton Heights / Sugar Hill Historic Districts (4)
- Hardenbergh / Rhinelander
- Henderson Place
- Jumel Terrace
- Ladies' Mile
- MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens
- Madison Square North
- Manhattan Avenue
- Metropolitan Museum
- Mount Morris Park
- Murray Hill [Murray Hill Extension]
- NoHo
- NoHo East
- Riverside Drive-West 80th-81st Street
- Riverside Drive-West 105th Street
- Riverside / West End
- St. Mark's
- St. Nicholas
- Sniffen Court
- SoHo-Cast Iron
- South Street Seaport
- Stone Street
- Stuyvesant Square
- Treadwell Farm
- Tribeca East
- Tribeca North
- Tribeca South
- Tribeca South Extension
- Tribeca West
- Tudor City
- Turtle Bay Gardens
- Upper East Side
- Upper West Side / Central Park West
- Weehawken Street
- West 71st Street
- West End-Collegiate



**BRONX**

- Bertine Block
- Clay Avenue
- Fieldston
- Longwood
- Morris Avenue
- Morris High School
- Mott Haven
- Mott Haven East
- Riverdale

**QUEENS**

- Douglaston
- Douglaston Hill
- Fort Totten
- Hunters Point
- Jackson Heights
- Stockholm Street
- Sunnyside Gardens

**STATEN ISLAND**

- Farm Colony-Seaview
- St. George / New Brighton
- St. Paul's Avenue-Stapleton Heights

**BROOKLYN**

- Albemarle-Kenmore Terraces
- Boerum Hill
- Brooklyn Heights
- Brooklyn Academy of Music
- Carroll Gardens
- Clinton Hill
- Cobble Hill
- Crown Heights North
- Ditmas Park
- DUMBO [Eberhardt Faber Pencil Factory]
- Fort Greene
- Fulton Ferry
- Greenpoint
- Park Slope
- Prospect-Lefferts Gardens
- Prospect Park South
- Stuyvesant Heights
- Vinegar Hill

AS OF MARCH 2008

# special purpose districts

Special purpose districts are amendments to the zoning ordinance that allow for the creation of new zoning districts with distinctive characteristics and restrictions. They are specifically tailored to the different needs of each area. The protection of Special District designation allows areas with unique characteristics to prosper rather than be overwhelmed by new development. If your business is located in one of these special districts, you will be subject to a unique set of rules and regulations.

The Department of City Planning is in charge of designating these districts. Further details can be found on their website at [www.nyc.gov/planning](http://www.nyc.gov/planning). Below is a list of the designated special districts at the time of publication. This list is subject to change as new districts are designated.

- ◆ Battery Park City District
- ◆ Bay Ridge District
- ◆ City Island District
- ◆ Clinton District
- ◆ Coney Island Mixed Use District
- ◆ Downtown Brooklyn District
- ◆ Downtown Jamaica District
- ◆ Garment Center District
- ◆ Grand Concourse District
- ◆ Hillside Preservation District
- ◆ Hudson Yards District
- ◆ Jacob K. Javits Convention Center District
- ◆ Limited Commercial District
- ◆ Lincoln Square District
- ◆ Little Italy District
- ◆ Long Island City Mixed Use District
- ◆ Lower Manhattan District
- ◆ Madison Avenue Preservation District
- ◆ Midtown District
- ◆ Natural Area District
- ◆ Northside Mixed Use District
- ◆ Ocean Parkway District
- ◆ Park Improvement District
- ◆ Planned Community Preservation District
- ◆ Scenic View District
- ◆ Sheepshead Bay District
- ◆ South Richmond Development District
- ◆ Stapleton Waterfront District
- ◆ Transit Land Use District
- ◆ Tribeca Mixed Use District
- ◆ Union Square District
- ◆ United Nations Development District
- ◆ West Chelsea District

# rules & regulations

New York City is divided into residential, commercial and manufacturing zones that dictate where different types of uses can be located. The Department of City Planning is in charge of the New York City Zoning Code. Further details about zoning and tools for determining what zone you fall into can be found at City Planning's website at [www.nyc.gov/planning](http://www.nyc.gov/planning). Below is a general description of what type of development can be found in each of the eight commercial zones. Most small businesses with a traditional storefront will likely be located in C1 and C2 zones.

DISTRICT	USES
<b>C1</b>	Wide range of retail stores and personal services establishments for local shopping.
<b>C2</b>	Wide range of local service establishments.
<b>C3</b>	Waterfront recreation, related to boating and fishing.
<b>C4</b>	General commercial such as department store, theatre, etc.
<b>C5</b>	Central commercial uses which serve the entire metropolitan region.
<b>C6</b>	Full range of commercial uses requiring a central location.
<b>C7</b>	Large, noisy, traffic-generating uses such as open amusement park.
<b>C8</b>	Service establishments such as automotive service stations.

## BUILDING CODE

This code is a set of regulations that governs everything from the size of the sign you can put up to the text allowed on awnings in New York City. Further explanation of the administrative code regarding signage can be found on pages 22 & 23 of this guide, but the following regulations apply in all zoning districts:

### PERMITS

Awnings, marquees, flagpoles and signs require Department of Buildings permits. No permit is required for signs smaller than six square feet or painted directly on a building. Canopies require Department of Transportation permits.

### LIGHT FIXTURES

Light fixtures supported by the building projecting more than two feet beyond the street line or less than eight feet above the sidewalk are not permitted.

### SIGNS

The following are not permitted:

- Wall signage projecting more than 12 inches over the sidewalk and any projecting signage less than 10 feet above curb level or within two feet of the curb line.
- Signage attached to a fire escape/exterior stair/required door/window or obstructing required light/ventilation.
- A ground sign projecting beyond the street line.
- Wall signage covering a required door/window without providing Fire Department access.
- Projecting/illuminated signage at certain restricted locations (listed in Building Code, RS-7).

# signage code

## 01

Signage which is located on a portion of frontage that is within 20 ft. of frontage on the same side of the street in a residence district is prohibited. Signage which is located on a portion of frontage of a corner lot that is within 75 ft. of frontage on the same side of the street in a residence district is prohibited.

## 02

Advertising signage is prohibited.

## 03

Flashing signage in a window is prohibited. An illuminated sign larger than 8 sq. ft. in a window is prohibited. More than 3 illuminated signs in one window is prohibited.

## 04

Signage with a surface area of greater than 50 sq. ft. is prohibited.

## 05

Signage with a surface area greater than 3 times the street frontage of the zoning lot (or more than 150 sq. ft.) is prohibited.

## 06

Signage with a surface area greater than 3 times the street frontage of the zoning lot (or more than 200 sq. ft. per street frontage) is prohibited.

## 07

Signage with a surface area greater than 5 times the street frontage of the zoning lot (or more than 500 sq. ft. per street frontage) is prohibited.

## 08

Signage with a surface area greater than 6 times the street frontage of the zoning lot (or more than 750 sq. ft. per street frontage) is prohibited.

## 09

Illuminated signage with a surface area greater than 3 times the street frontage of the zoning lot (or more than 50 sq. ft. per street frontage) is prohibited. Flashing illuminated signage is prohibited.

## 10

Signage with a surface area greater than 5 times the street frontage of the zoning lot (or more than 500 sq. ft. per street frontage) is prohibited.

## 11

Illuminated signage is prohibited.

## 12

Flashing signage is prohibited.

## 13

Illuminated signage with a surface area – greater than 5 times the street frontage of the zoning lot (or more than 500 sq. ft. per street frontage) is prohibited.

## 14

Signage projecting more than 8 ft. across the street line is prohibited.

## 15

Signage (double or multi-faced) projecting more than 18 in. across the street line is prohibited. Signage (parallel or wall) projecting more than 12 in. across the street line.

## 16

Illuminated awning/canopy signage is prohibited. Awning/canopy signage with a surface area exceeding 12 sq. ft. is prohibited. Awning/canopy signage with letters higher than 12 in. is prohibited. Awning/canopy signage not limited to identification of the name and address of the establishment is prohibited. Signage projecting more than 12 in. below or 48 in. above a marquee (except in C6-5, C6-7 or C7 district) is prohibited.

## 17

Illuminated signage extending higher than 40 ft. above curb level is prohibited. Non-illuminated (or indirectly illuminated) signage extending higher than 58 ft. above curb level is prohibited.

## 18

Signage extending higher than 25 ft. above curb level is prohibited.

## 19

Signage extending higher than 40 ft. above curb level is prohibited.

## 20

Signage extending above the roof (or parapet wall) is prohibited (except vertical signs not wider than 28 in., which can extend no higher than 15 ft. above the roof)

## 21

Roof signage is prohibited.

## 22

Signage within 200 ft. and within view of an arterial highway (or public park) that exceeds 500 sq. ft. of surface area is prohibited. (beyond 200 ft., signage is permitted to increase an additional sq. ft. for each additional linear foot from an arterial highway or public park).

Advertising signage within 200 ft. and with view of an arterial highway (or public park) is prohibited. (beyond 200 ft. signage is permitted if it is more linear feet from an arterial highway or public park than there are square feet in its surface area).

## 23

Signage facing at an angle of less than 165 degrees away from and within 100 ft. of a residence district/public park is prohibited.

Advertising signage facing at an angle of less than 165 degrees away from and within 100 ft. of a residence district or which adjoins a public park is prohibited. Other signage at such location is subject to C1 zoning district regulations.

## 24

Signage in violation of sign regulations for Residence Districts located in (or extending into) the residential portion of a mixed building is prohibited. Signage accessory to non-residential uses on upper floors of a mixed use building may not be illuminated.

# signage code

## ZONING RULES & REGULATIONS CHART

### SIGNAGE CODES

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
<b>C1</b>	X	X	X		X				X					X	X		X		X	X				X	
<b>C2</b>	X	X	X		X				X					X	X		X		X	X			X	X	
<b>C3</b>	X	X	X	X							X			X	X		X		X	X			X	X	
<b>C4</b>	X	X	X				X			X				X	X			X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C5</b>	X	X	X											X	X					X	X			X	X
<b>C5-1</b>	X	X	X			X				X					X		X			X			X	X	
<b>C5-2</b>	X	X	X			X				X					X		X			X			X	X	
<b>C5-3</b>	X	X	X			X				X					X		X			X			X	X	
<b>C5-4</b>	X	X	X				X			X					X			X		X			X	X	
<b>C5-5</b>	X	X	X			X				X					X		X			X			X	X	
<b>C6</b>	X		X												X								X	X	
<b>C6-1</b>	X	X	X				X			X					X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C6-1A</b>	X		X									X			X			X					X	X	
<b>C6-2</b>	X	X	X				X			X					X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C6-3</b>	X	X	X				X			X					X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C6-4</b>	X	X	X				X			X					X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C6-5</b>	X		X										X		X							X	X	X	
<b>C6-6</b>	X		X				X			X					X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C6-7</b>	X		X										X		X							X	X	X	
<b>C6-8</b>	X	X	X				X			X					X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C6-9</b>	X	X	X				X			X					X	X		X	X	X			X	X	
<b>C7</b>	X		X											X		X						X	X		
<b>C8</b>	X		X					X					X		X	X	X					X	X		

COMMERCIAL ZONES\*

\* see page 21 for zone designations

## DOB OFFICE LOCATIONS

### BRONX

1932 Arthur Ave., 5th Floor  
Bronx, NY 10457-6306  
Tel: (718) 579-6920  
TTY: (718) 579-6903

### BROOKLYN

210 Joralemon St., 8th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11201-3715  
Tel: (718) 802-3675  
TTY: (718) 802-4330

### QUEENS

120-55 Queens Blvd., 1st Floor  
Kew Gardens, NY 11415-1554  
TTY: (718) 286-0781

### STATEN ISLAND

Borough Hall, 2nd Floor  
Staten Island, NY 10301-1903  
Tel: (718) 816-2310  
TTY: (718) 816-2164

### MANHATTAN

280 Broadway, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10007-1801  
Tel: (212) 566-0042  
TTY: (212) 566-4769

## FAQS ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS:

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### **DO I NEED A PERMIT TO CHANGE/REPLACE WINDOWS WITHOUT CHANGING THE SIZE OF THE OPENING?**

No permit is needed.

### **HOW MUCH MUST I PAY FOR A WORK PERMIT?**

This depends on the scope of the work which is determined by the fee schedule.

### **WHEN IS A SIDEWALK SHED REQUIRED?**

When construction work is over 40 feet high or 25 feet high for a demolition and whenever there is a "dangerous condition", irrespective of the height.

### **WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ON NON-COMMERCIAL SIGNS AND AWNING PERMITS OR SIGNOFFS ON NEWLY INSTALLED SIGNS OF ANY TYPE?**

Contact the Construction Inspection Division of the appropriate borough office.

### **WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS REGARDING MARQUEE AND ILLUMINATED SIGN FEES, PERMIT RENEWALS AND CANCELLATIONS?**

Contact the Department's Central Billing Unit at (212) 566-4700.

## **WHEN IS A CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY NOT REQUIRED?**

When construction work taking place does not change the type of occupancy or egress.

## **HOW CAN I SELF-CERTIFY MY JOB WITH OBJECTIONS?**

You can self-certify if you are a licensed Registered Architect/Professional Engineer. You must however indicate this at the time of pre-filing and submit the self-certification as outlined in Operational Policy & Procedure Notice # 2/95.

## **HOW CAN I FILE A COMPLAINT AGAINST A LICENSED INSTALLER?**

You must submit a complaint letter stating date, telephone number to the Licensing Supervisor located at 60 Hudson Street, 14th floor, New York, NY 10013.

## **WHAT KIND OF FORMS DO I NEED TO PERFORM CONSTRUCTION WORK IN MY HOME OR BUILDING?**

A PW-1 form is required. Additional forms, depending on the work to be done, may also be required. They are available in the Borough Manager's Office. Be advised that a licensed architect or engineer must submit these forms on your behalf.

## **MY JOB WAS FILED AND HAS NOT BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED. WHAT HAPPENED?**

The Department of Buildings will review all work in the order it was received. You can check the latest status of your job by checking the Public Access terminals in any borough office or go to [www.nyc.gov/buildings](http://www.nyc.gov/buildings).

## **WHAT ARE THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY'S HOURS OF OPERATIONS?**

According to the Department of Environmental Protection's noise code, working hours are 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

## **WHAT IS A "SUSPENSION" OR "HANGING" SCAFFOLD?**

A "suspension" scaffold is supported from the roof or setback of a building and held by either cables or rope.

## **WHAT LICENSE IS REQUIRED FOR SUSPENSION SCAFFOLD WORK?**

A master or special rigger must be contracted for the work. Also every worker must be employed by the master or special rigger or their company.

## **WHEN IS A CRANE PERMIT NOT REQUIRED?**

A crane permit is not required for short term "rigging" jobs such as replacement of transformers or air conditioning units. Although a permit is not required, a "master rigger" needs to be hired to perform the rigging work.

# storefront improvement programs

The Avenue NYC Program, run by the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS), strengthens conditions in targeted commercial areas through a series of economic development activities.

New York is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own shopping street or district. The health of these districts and the stability of the neighborhoods are intertwined.

The local shopping street is a magnet that attracts people to a neighborhood, and influences their impressions of it. The shopping district provides a meeting place and a center of activity for residents and visitors; it identifies and defines the neighborhood. Stores contribute significantly to the local tax base, generating property, sales and income tax.

The Avenue NYC program combines the efforts of the public and private sectors. Projects always have a local community sponsor, frequently a local development corporation (LDC) representing an active group of merchants and property owners. This sponsor usually enters into a contract with SBS to carry out an individually tailored program. The local sponsors are expected to provide services beyond the city's initial investment, for long-term management of the commercial strip.

**Awning:** Businesses use awnings to provide shade and to define their storefronts. A Department of Buildings permit is required. Awnings are attached to and supported solely by the building. Zoning regulations require that lettering be no higher than 12 inches and not cover more than 12 square feet of space. Only the name and address of the business are permitted to be displayed on the awning. Although awnings can be illuminated, awning signage cannot be illuminated.

**Business Improvement Districts (BIDs):** Geographic districts in which merchants and property owners use the City's tax collection powers to assess themselves. This enables merchants and owners to raise funds for additional neighborhood services and improvements. Several BIDs have their own storefront improvement programs.

**Canopy:** Canopies are to be used primarily by residential buildings, not businesses. They are attached to the building with additional supports going into the sidewalk, and therefore require a permit from the Department of Transportation. The same signage regulations as described above for awnings apply to canopies.

**Sign:** Any writing (letter, word, numeral), pictorial representation (illustration, decoration), emblem (device, symbol, trademark), flag (pennant, banner) or any other similar figure that is:

- a) a structure or attached to, painted on or represented on any structure
- b) used to announce, direct attention or advertise
- c) visible from outside a building or within a building when illuminated and located in a window

Not included: governmental, traffic and regulatory signs; legal notices and warnings; flags and emblems of political, civic, philanthropic, educational or religious organizations; temporary campaign signs; memorial signs; architect, engineer or contractor signs at construction sites; signs displayed for the convenience of the public

## SIGN TERMINOLOGY:

**Advertising:** directs attention to goods or services offered someplace other than upon the same zoning lot where the sign is located.

**Flashing:** exhibits sudden or marked changes in light and color effect (except time, weather, etc.)

**Illuminated:** gives forth artificial light or reflects light from an artificial source.

**Indirect Illumination:** Illuminated by an external light source but with no direct rays of light from that source projected in residences or streets.

**Surface Area:** the entire area within a single continuous perimeter enclosing the extreme limits of writing, representation, emblem or any figure of similar character, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the display or used to differentiate such sign from the background against which it is placed.

**Street Frontage:** The width of the lot facing the street. For the purpose of determining the surface area of signs, each ground floor establishment can be considered a separate zoning lot.

**Street Line:** Building line or the dividing line between the building and the sidewalk.

