
Chapter 10

Sidewalks



Sidewalks are a part of nearly every New York City neighborhood. In some historic districts, sidewalks aesthetically unify the streetscape. In these districts, sidewalk paving materials and location are considered significant features. Protection of historic sidewalks and uniform streetscapes in historic districts serves as the basis for LPC's rules for repairing and replacing sidewalks (see **LPC Rules**, Section 2-19, available on our website, www.nyc.gov/landmarks).

In This Chapter, You Will Find:



This chapter explains LPC’s rules for repairing and replacing sidewalks. 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: Businesses that want to install an outdoor dining setup will need to get a permit from the NYC Department of Transportation (NYC DOT). As long as the outdoor dining setup complies with the siting and design criteria adopted by the Dining Out NYC program, no LPC permit will be required.

An LPC permit is required for any elements of the setup which attach to the building, storefront, or sidewalk paving (including awnings, light fixtures, signage, conduit, etc.).

Sidewalks may need to conform to other applicable rules, requirements, and guidelines of the NYC Department of Transportation (NYC DOT), the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, and in some cases, the Public Design Commission (PDC). Be sure your proposal meets these requirements, as well.

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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 historical background.

What did your building and sidewalk look like?

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

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

Is the building's sidewalk regulated?

Identify whether your building is in a historic district where LPC regulates sidewalks (paving) because they are considered a significant feature of the streetscape. See *Section C* for a list of historic districts.

Note that sidewalks located adjacent to individual landmarks are typically not part of the designated landmark site and therefore may not require a permit from LPC. Consult the building's designation report for a description and map showing the boundaries of the landmark site.

See if Your Work Requires an LPC Permit

Maybe you don't need a permit. A permit is **not required** for:

Sidewalk paving replacement in a historic district where sidewalk paving is not considered a significant feature of the streetscape, as determined by LPC (See Section C for a list of historic districts where sidewalk paving is considered a significant feature.)

Sidewalk work at an individual landmark outside the boundaries of the landmark site

Repainting cast iron vault lights black

Sidewalk and roadway cafes that comply with the Dining Out NYC program rules and do not include elements that are physically attached to the sidewalk, road, or building

Unsure whether your work requires a permit?

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

What You Will Need

All LPC permit applications and supporting materials are now filed and processed through Portico, the agency's web-based permit application portal. Applications typically require submitting the materials listed below, but additional materials may be required depending on the type of work. See *Section B* for a list of all materials required for your work type.

Basic Application Materials

- ☐ **LPC permit application** filed on Portico
- ☐ **Color photos** of the entire building and close-ups of areas of sidewalk work, including adjacent sidewalks
- ☐ **Drawings:**
 - Plan of existing sidewalk, if historic, and proposed work showing paving pattern
 - Section of the proposed sidewalk if sidewalk is to be stone
- ☐ **An assessment of deteriorated conditions** is required for replacement of historic paving or cast iron vaults
- ☐ **Material specifications**, e.g., stone type, tint color for concrete, and dimensions of paving units
- ☐ **Department of Buildings (DOB) filing drawings** if proposed work requires a DOB permit.

Section B

LPC Rules and Criteria



This is how the Landmarks Preservation Commission works:

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

This section explains and illustrates the rules and criteria for the most common types of work involving sidewalks. See LPC Rules, Section 2–19, for more information.

→ In This Section:

General Criteria

Bluestone Sidewalks

- Removing Bluestone
- Repairing Bluestone
- Installing New Bluestone

Granite Sidewalks

- Removing Granite
- Repairing Granite
- Installing Granite

Concrete Sidewalks

Repairing or Replacing Other Sidewalk Materials

Accessibility Work

Vault Lights

- Installing New Vault Lights
- Protecting and Covering Existing Vault Lights
- Street Trees, Sidewalk Planting Beds, and Bioswales

General Criteria

Staff can issue permits approving sidewalk work that meets the following general criteria. Certain types of work may have additional requirements. See criteria by work type for more information.

Identify whether any historic materials remain at the sidewalk, such as bluestone or granite pavers or curbs, or cast iron vault lights. These features must be retained where feasible.

Identify whether any historic fabric remains at adjacent sidewalks. New paving materials must be harmonious with existing adjacent historic paving to lend continuity to the streetscape.

LPC only regulates sidewalk paving replacement within historic districts where paving is considered a significant feature of the streetscape. See *Section C* for a list of historic districts.

LPC regulates installing new tree pits or bioswales or expanding existing tree pits or bioswales in all historic districts, as well as guards at the perimeter of these installations.

Required Application Materials

- ☐ **Photos** of overall sidewalks
- ☐ **Photos of specific stone pavers or other distinctive paving** (not standard concrete) to be replaced
- ☐ **Comparative drawings:** (You do not need to include existing plans if the present sidewalk is concrete.)
 - Plan drawing of existing conditions and proposed sidewalk, showing paver and joint pattern at the sidewalk and adjacent sidewalks, including curbs and ramps at intersections
- ☐ **Comparative section drawings of existing and proposed conditions** when replacing stone pavers or other distinctive paving, or modifying sidewalks for accessibility
- ☐ **Material specifications on drawings**
- ☐ **Color tint specifications** for tinted concrete paving or patches
- ☐ **Conditions assessment** for historic stone pavers or other distinctive paving being altered, removed, or replaced

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

Bluestone Sidewalks

Staff can issue permits approving the removal of damaged stone, patching broken areas, and installing new pavers that meet the following criteria:

Removing Bluestone

Staff can issue permits approving the removal of heavily damaged or crushed bluestone pavers, but intact portions that meet DOT size requirements must be retained. All other bluestone pavers must be preserved.

A minimal amount of bluestone can be removed to accommodate enlarging tree pits to meet city requirements. If feasible, bluestone must be salvaged and relocated for use elsewhere on-site.

If necessary, existing pavers may be carefully removed and stored in a dry, secure area so they can later be reinstalled without additional damage.

Repairing Bluestone

Staff can issue permits approving the installation of small amounts of cementitious patching at voids or other areas that have cracked. The patch must be tinted to match the color of the existing bluestone.



Heavily damaged or crushed bluestone pavers can be removed and replaced with new bluestone or tinted concrete to match.



A new bluestone sidewalk and curb in the Cobble Hill Historic District matches the adjacent historic bluestone pavers in dimension, color, and paving pattern.

Installing New Bluestone

Staff can issue permits approving the installation of new bluestone pavers if the work meets the following criteria:

New bluestone pavers can be installed if the existing sidewalk is missing one or more bluestone pavers or they are deteriorated beyond reasonable repair. New bluestone pavers can also be installed if the existing sidewalk is concrete but the historic district was historically characterized by bluestone sidewalks.

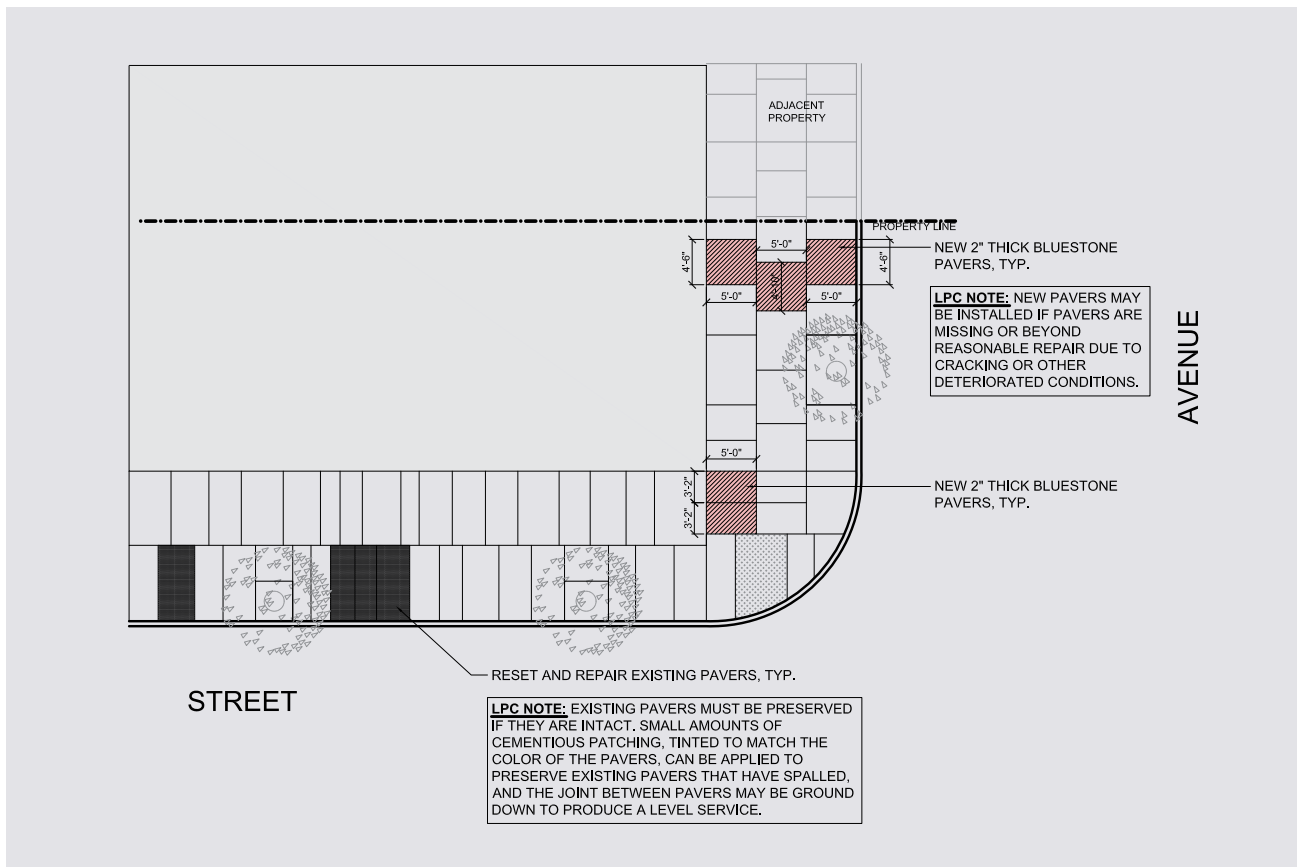
Bluestone pavers must be set on a level, non-cement base with very thin joints (1/8 to 3/16 inches wide).

New bluestone pavers must match existing or adjacent historic bluestone pavers in terms of dimension, color, and paving pattern. Most bluestone sidewalks with two rows typically had staggered joints along the center line, as opposed to a uniform grid.

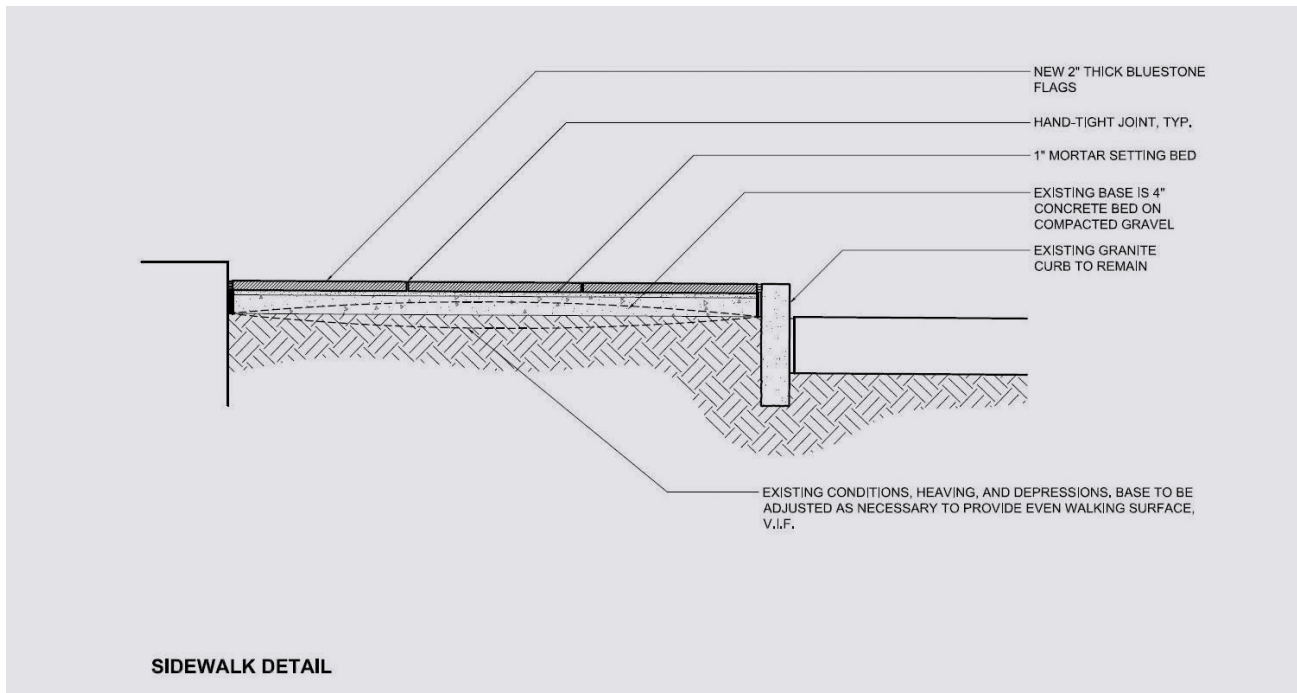


See Concrete Sidewalks

for situations in which concrete pavers tinted to look like bluestone can be installed.



A plan drawing showing the location and dimensions of new bluestone pavers in relation to existing bluestone.



A section drawing showing new bluestone pavers set on a level, non-cement base.

Granite Sidewalks

Staff can issue permits approving granite repairs and installing new granite pavers that meet the following criteria. When working on granite sidewalks, reserve or consolidate as many intact granite pavers as possible.

Removing Granite

Staff can issue permits approving the removal of portions of granite sidewalks if the maximum number of intact granite pavers will be maintained or consolidated within the property lines.

Repairing Granite

Small amounts of cementitious patching, tinted to match the color of existing granite, can be installed at voids or other areas that have cracked.

Existing granite pavers can be horizontally sliced to a minimum three- to four-inch thickness if the footprint of each is maintained and the paver reinstalled in approximately the same location.



A new granite sidewalk installed next to cast iron vault lights.

Installing Granite

New granite pavers can be installed if the existing sidewalk is missing one or more granite pavers or they are deteriorated beyond reasonable repair.

New granite pavers must match existing or adjacent granite pavers in terms of dimension, color, and edge treatment, and must have a slip-resistant finish.



See Concrete Sidewalks for situations in which concrete pavers tinted to look like granite can be installed.

Concrete Sidewalks

Staff can issue permits approving the installation of concrete sidewalks that meet the following criteria:

Material

If no bluestone or granite exists at the sidewalk or the sidewalk was historically paved in concrete, the new sidewalk can be paved in concrete.

Color

If the sidewalk **is adjacent to** bluestone, granite, or concrete tinted to match the historic stone **on either side of the property**, new concrete pavers must be tinted to match the historic stone.

If the sidewalk **is not adjacent to** historic paving, it can be either untinted concrete to match adjacent sidewalks or tinted concrete to match the historic stone, consistent with the character of historic sidewalks in the historic district.

Scoring

Concrete pavers must be scored to match the size of pavers on adjacent sidewalks, with saw-cut joints that give the appearance of bluestone or granite flags if they are matching those materials.

If the concrete sidewalk at the building once had a decorative scoring pattern or this feature is characteristic of buildings of the same type, e.g., hotels, large apartment buildings, or club buildings, staff can issue permits approving a new scoring pattern – if it does not detract from significant architectural features of the building or streetscape.



A decorative terrazzo (concrete and marble chips) sidewalk designed by artist Alexander Calder in the Metropolitan Museum Historic District.



An example of concrete pavers with a decorative scoring pattern.



A new concrete sidewalk with saw-cut joints, tinted to match the adjacent historic bluestone.

Repairing or Replacing Other Sidewalk Materials

Staff can issue permits approving repairing or replacing sidewalks and curbs in-kind that are made of materials other than bluestone, granite, or concrete, such as Belgian block, brick, or special concrete aggregates, provided the material is typically found in the district or represents a significant historic alteration or feature, e.g., brick pavers in front of a carriage house entrance.

All existing bluestone and granite curbs must be retained whenever possible. If necessary, curbs can be replaced with bluestone, granite, or tinted or untinted concrete to match adjacent curbing or replaced in-kind to match existing curbing.



A sidewalk with a variety of paving materials.



An intersection with tinted concrete paving, granite curbs and detectable warning units next to Belgian block streets.

Accessibility Work

Staff can issue permits approving accessibility work on sidewalks that meets the following criteria. All accessible sidewalk work must comply with applicable federal, state, and city codes and requirements. See *Chapter 9* for more information on barrier-free access installations.

On concrete sidewalks, pedestrian ramps at sidewalk intersections must be made of concrete tinted to match the color, texture, and scoring of adjacent or predominant sidewalk paving.

On bluestone or granite sidewalks, pedestrian ramps can have pavers cut to form the slope and flared sides of a ramp or be replaced in-kind to accommodate a ramp.

Detectable warning units, designed to alert people who are vision impaired, can be embedded or applied on top of concrete or stone paving at intersections.

A portion of the sidewalk can be sloped to make a store or space accessible. Change in grade must not damage historic paving or result in concealment of any significant architectural features of the base of the building.



Detectable warning units embedded in a concrete pedestrian ramp.



This concrete sidewalk has been sloped towards the storefront to make it accessible.

Vault Lights

Vault lights are cast iron panels perforated with circular glass lights, historically designed as skylights for spaces beneath the sidewalk. These elements are significant features of districts that were historically manufacturing or industrial in character, such as the SoHo, NoHo, and Tribeca Historic Districts.

Installing New Vault Lights

Staff can issue permits approving the installation of new vault lights if the work meets the following criteria:

Installation

If existing vault lights (uncovered or covered by diamond plate steel or concrete) are beyond reasonable repair, they can be replaced with new vault lights.

If no vault lights currently exist, new vault lights can be installed to restore missing vault lights.

If no vault lights exist under existing diamond plate steel, diamond plate steel can be replaced in-kind or replaced with new cast iron vault lights.

Design

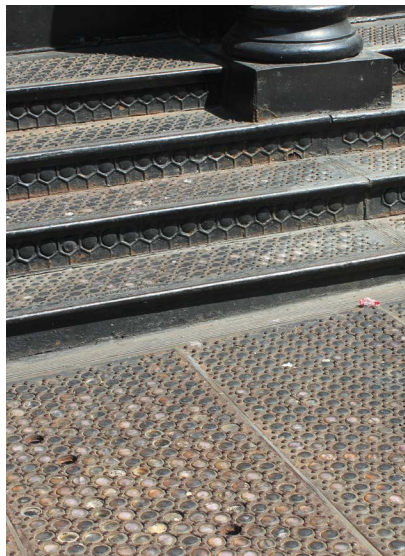
Design of new vault lights must be based on photographic or physical evidence of previous vault lights at the building or adjacent buildings, or buildings of similar age, style, and type.

Design must match the approximate panel size and overall footprint, material, finish, and details of existing or historic vault lights.

New vault lights can either be set flush with the existing sidewalk over metal framing or concrete substrate, or be on a metal platform if the historic condition was raised above grade.



Staff can issue permits approving the installation of new vault lights in a sidewalk that had them historically.



Vaults lights, seen here, on steel risers and at grade, are a significant feature of districts historically manufacturing or industrial in character.

Required Application Materials

- ☐ **Photos** of overall sidewalks
- ☐ **Photos of specific cast iron vault lights to be replaced**, including underside of vault lights as seen from within the vault
- ☐ **Historic 1940s tax photos**, if available (See *Section A* for more on how to obtain tax photos.)
- ☐ **Comparative drawings:**
 - Plan of existing and proposed vault light panel and joint pattern, including borders and steps, and / or existing diamond plate cladding
- ☐ **Comparative sidewalk section drawings**, showing existing and proposed conditions
- ☐ **Material and color specifications on drawings**
- ☐ **Conditions assessment** for historic cast iron vault lights being replaced

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

Protecting and Covering Existing Vault Lights

Existing uncovered vault lights that are deteriorated and no longer watertight can be protected by covering them with steel diamond plate with a dark painted finish. Existing vault lights at vertical surfaces and lower traffic areas, such as steps and landings, must remain uncovered whenever possible.

If the historic district is not characterized by vault lights and/or steel diamond plate, staff can issue permits approving the replacement of steel diamond plate with concrete to match adjacent concrete.



Deteriorated historic vault lights can be covered and protected by steel diamond plate with a dark painted finish, as seen here.

Street Trees, Sidewalk Planting Beds, and Bioswales at All Sidewalks

The presence of street trees and their associated planting pits is commonplace in historically residential areas, and in some cases commercial areas, and has existed since the blocks were developed or shortly thereafter. Street trees, sidewalk planting beds, and bioswales provide important environmental and social benefits, including providing shade and cooling, cleaning the air, and absorbing rainwater and runoff, which have important functions in addressing climate change impacts in urban and suburban settings.

LPC does not typically regulate the trees or plantings, only the physical change to the sidewalk to accommodate them. Every application to expand or install a new tree pit or planting area in the sidewalk area must also be approved by the New York City Parks Department.



Two tree pits combined into one continuous tree pit.

Staff can issue permits approving enlarging existing tree pits and sidewalk planting beds, or installing new tree pits, sidewalk planting beds, and bioswales, that meet the following criteria:

Existing tree pits or planting beds abutting the street curb may be enlarged by the minimum amount necessary as determined by an arborist, to accommodate tree roots or otherwise provide additional area for planting beds and bioswales.

Up to two (2) tree pits, planting beds, and bioswales can be joined or connected continuously across adjacent properties.

The enlargements should be limited to the area of paving parallel to and bordering the sidewalk curb and street.

Modification of curbs for bioswales

If the work affects existing curbs, they should be replaced in-kind or retained where feasible, except that a portion of the curb can be removed or lowered if it is necessary for the installation or operation of a bioswale.

What is a bioswale?

Bioswales, or “rain gardens”, are small natural areas, typically located in a sidewalk near a stormwater catch basin. They utilize extremely porous engineered soil, a variety of plants chosen for their ability to absorb water and thrive in an urban environment, as well as porous concrete to divert stormwater from streets and draw it into the ground.

Section C

Technical Guidance and Resources

→ In This Section:

Historic Districts with
Sidewalks Regulated by LPC

Concrete Tint Specifications

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.

Historic Districts with Sidewalks Regulated by LPC

LPC regulates sidewalks repair/ replacement in the following historic districts:

Addisleigh Park Historic District	Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic District	Sniffen Court Historic District
African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District	Fort Greene Historic District	SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District
Audubon Terrace Historic District	Gansevoort Market Historic District	SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension
Bedford Historic District	Governors Island Historic District	South Street Seaport Historic District
Bedford Stuyvesant/Expanded Stuyvesant Heights Historic District	Gramercy Park Historic District	South Street Seaport Historic District Extension
Boerum Hill Historic District	Gramercy Park Historic District Extension	South Village Historic District
Boerum Hill Historic District Extension	Greenpoint Historic District	St. George/New Brighton Historic District
Brooklyn Academy of Music Historic District	Greenwich Village Historic District	St. Mark's Historic District
Brooklyn Heights Historic District	Hunters Point Historic District	St. Mark's Historic District Extension
Carroll Gardens Historic District	Jumel Terrace Historic District	St. Nicholas Historic District
Charlton-King-Vandam Historic District	Ladies' Mile Historic District	St. Paul's Avenue-Stapleton Heights Historic District
Chelsea Historic District	Manhattan Avenue Historic District	Stone Street Historic District
Chelsea Historic District Extension	Metropolitan Museum Historic District	Stuyvesant Heights Historic District
Clinton Hill Historic District	NoHo East Historic District	Stuyvesant Square Historic District
Cobble Hill Historic District	NoHo Historic District	Tribeca East Historic District
Cobble Hill Historic District Extension (three buildings)	NoHo Historic District Extension	Tribeca North Historic District
Ditmas Park Historic District	Park Slope Historic District	Tribeca South Historic District
Douglaston Historic District	Park Slope Historic District Extension	Tribeca South Historic District Extension
DUMBO Historic District	Park Slope Historic District Extension II	Tribeca West Historic District
Fieldston Historic District	Park Terrace-West 217th Street Historic District	Vinegar Hill Historic District
	Prospect Park South Historic District	Wallabout Historic District
	Riverdale Historic District	

Concrete Tint Specifications

The following list of concrete tint specifications can be approved at the staff level. When proposing concrete replacement, provide concrete tint specifications as a part of your application. Please note that these formulas are approximations. For exact color matches, other tints and/or mixed tints can be tested and used pending approval of the sample by LPC staff.

To simulate the color of light- to medium-gray granite:

- DAVIS Color No. 884: 1 lb. per 100 lbs. Light Gray Portland Cement and sand, *or*
- LANSCO Color No. 437 “Strong Black”: 2.5 lbs. per 94 lbs. Light Gray Portland Cement and 3 parts sand, *or*
- SCOFIELD Chromic Admixture “Cool Black” No. I: 1 5-sack-mix bag per 5 94-lb. bags Medium Gray Portland Cement and sand, *or*
- Other equal sample provided for approval.

To simulate the color of dark gray bluestone:

- DAVIS Color No. 884: 3 lbs. per 100 lbs. Light Gray Portland Cement and sand, *or*
- LANSCO Color No. 437 “Strong Black”: 5 lbs. per 94 lbs. Light Gray Portland Cement and 3 parts sand, *or*
- SCOFIELD Chromic Admixture “Cool Black” No. 4: 1 5-sack-mix bag per 5 94-lb. bags Medium Gray Portland Cement and sand, *or*
- SCOFIELD “Landmarks Gray” K-157-4, *or*
- Other equal sample provided for approval.