

## Chapter 4

# Awnings and Sidewalk Canopies



Awnings and sidewalk canopies have a long history of use at various types of buildings found throughout New York City. Many historic buildings with storefronts had awnings installed as a climate control measure to keep the sun out. They also allowed businesses to advertise. Other buildings had awnings installed over windows, doors, and porches, or sidewalk canopies installed at the main entrance for practical and decorative purposes. The historic uses and appearance of awnings and canopies in New York City are the basis for LPC's rules for work involving these installations. (See **LPC Rules**, Section 2-12, available on our website at [www.nyc.gov/landmarks](http://www.nyc.gov/landmarks).)

# In This Chapter, You Will Find:



**This chapter** explains LPC’s rules for installation, replacement, and modification of awnings and sidewalk canopies. 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 (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. However, 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.).

<b>Section A</b>	<b>4.3</b>
How to Get Started	
<b>Section B</b>	<b>4.5</b>
LPC Rules and Criteria	
<b>Awnings</b>	<b>4.6</b>
– Installing Storefront Awnings	
<i>Historic Districts</i>	
<i>Individual Landmarks</i>	
– Installing Residential Awnings	
<b>Sidewalk Canopies</b>	<b>4.9</b>
– Installing Sidewalk Canopies	
<b>Section C</b>	<b>4.11</b>
Technical Guidance and Resources	
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>4.12</b>
<b>Master Plans</b>	<b>4.13</b>

# 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 the building look like?

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

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

### Check to See if the Work Requires a Permit

#### Maybe you don't need a permit.

A permit is **not required** for the following work types:

*Seasonal removal/reinstallation of awnings and sidewalk canopies*

*Patching awnings and canopies in a matching material*

*Maintaining/repairing hardware and frames*

*Cleaning awning and sidewalk canopy material*

#### Unsure whether your work requires a permit?

Contact LPC at 212-669-7817 or [info@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:info@lpc.nyc.gov).

### Consider Establishing a Master Plan

#### Is this going to be the first of many projects?

If your building has many storefronts, you might want to consider establishing an awning **master plan**, which will allow you to do repetitive awning work incrementally over time.

Once you have a master plan, future applications can be quickly reviewed since specific work standards are established and approved. This type of permit generally does not expire. See *Section C* for more information.

# 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. A complete application requires all the materials listed below.

## Required Application Materials

- ☐ **LPC permit application** filed on Portico
- ☐ **Color photos** of the entire building and close-ups of the storefront, entrance, window, or terrace that show the location of the proposed work and its context
- ☐ **Drawings:**
  - Elevation, section, and/or side elevation of proposed awning or sidewalk canopy, including full dimensions
  - Details of the awning or sidewalk canopy showing installation methods
  - Any signage proposed on awning
- ☐ **Material specifications/manufacturer cut sheets**
- ☐ **Department of Buildings (DOB) filing drawings** if the proposed work requires a DOB permit
  - All awnings and canopies must comply with the NYC Zoning Resolution, NYC Department of Transportation regulations, and the NYC Building Code.

*If LPC needs additional materials once your application is reviewed, you will receive a Materials Checklist from LPC staff.*

- ☐ **Color specifications / canvas samples**

# Section B

## LPC Rules and Criteria

### → In This Section:

#### Awnings

- Installing Storefront Awnings
  - Historic Districts
  - Individual Landmarks
- Installing Residential Awnings

#### Sidewalk Canopies

- Installing Sidewalk Canopies



**This is how the Landmarks Preservation Commission works:**

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### 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. Staff can guide you through this process. Visit [www.nyc.gov/landmarks](http://www.nyc.gov/landmarks) for more information.

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

# Awnings

Historically, awnings were typically made from cloth or canvas and featured a straight slope, a flexible skirt, and open sides. They were installed within a door, window opening, or storefront, depending on the type of building. The rules are different depending on whether you are installing an awning at a storefront or at a residential building, so be sure to read the appropriate section.

## Installing Storefront Awnings

Many 19th and 20th century storefronts had awnings installed at transoms, at the tops of openings, or built into the storefront itself. Staff can

issue permits approving awning installation at ground floor storefronts/display windows or second floor display windows. See *Section A* on how to determine landmark type.

Staff can issue permits approving storefront awnings that meet the following criteria:

### Operation

Awnings can be fixed or retractable, unless the storefront was designed with an integral retractable awning housing.

With an integral retractable awning housing, the housing and mechanism must be restored or retrofitted and a new awning installed.

At **individual landmarks**, a fixed awning must have a “lean-to” frame with no connection between the top bar and the side bar that is perpendicular to the facade. The side bar must be round; the frame must have a natural gray metal or gray painted finish.

### Installation

The awning must not obscure or damage significant building features, such as historic stained glass transoms or other decorative elements.

**The awning must be installed at the top of the storefront opening or at the transom.** If that is not possible, install it just above the opening.



Typical storefront awning location and dimensions.



**The awning can be installed slightly above the top of the opening if:**

*It would not obscure or detract from significant features.*

*Installing it lower would result in the lowest framed portion of the awning being less than eight feet above the sidewalk.*

*An existing roll-down security gate makes it impossible to install the awning at the top of the opening.*

**Awning framing must attach to the storefront framing or surround,** avoiding historic or decorative features, such as cast iron. Limit the number of framing elements and penetrations as much as possible.

### Design

The awning must project at an angle and be proportional to the length, size, and slope of the storefront's size and height. The length must not exceed the length of the storefront opening. Edges must closely align with the inside face of the storefront piers or wall. Changing the name or address on a pre-existing awning requires an LPC permit.

**The awning's underside must be open,** with minimal framing elements and no "ceiling."

**The lowest framed portion must be at least eight feet above the sidewalk;** the lowest unframed portion, typically the skirt, must be at least seven feet above the sidewalk.

**Any awning skirt must be unframed and be proportional to its height and size,** but not larger than 12 inches.

Lettering or graphics can be painted on the skirt only, not on the awning's sloped portion, and must be proportional to the skirt's height.

### Material

The awning can be clad with matte-finished canvas or fabric of a similar texture.

**Fabric must consist of a solid color or vertical stripes** that harmonize with the building's historic color palette. In most cases it is not required to match other awnings at the storefront. Avoid visually jarring colors and patterns.

**Awnings that were present when the building received designation** but do not meet LPC

Rules can be re-clad in matte-finished canvas or fabric of a similar texture, in a solid color or vertical stripes that harmonize with the historic color palette of the building.



A fixed storefront awning installed at the top of the projecting display window.



Awnings on second-story display windows are subject to the same criteria as awnings on ground-floor storefronts.



A retractable storefront awning installed at the top of the storefront infill within the opening.

## Installing Residential Awnings

Many row houses, apartment buildings, and freestanding houses built in the 19th and 20th centuries had canvas awnings installed over windows, doors, and porches. Awnings were usually retractable or designed to be installed seasonally. They were often decorative, with a wider variety of colors, patterns, and designs than storefront awnings. Staff can issue permits approving residential awnings that meet the following criteria:

### Operation

Awnings at windows, doors, and porches can be either fixed or retractable.

### Location

Awnings should be installed at the tops of openings and the length should fit within the window/door opening. Window awnings should cover more than one opening.

### Installation

Framing must attach to a window frame, door frame, or the porch, and avoid historic or decorative features. The number of framing elements and penetrations should be as limited as possible.

**Awnings installed at terraces and setbacks above the ground floor** can extend over more than one window or door opening as long as their depth does not exceed the depth of the terrace.

### Design

**The awning must project at an angle** and be proportional in length, size, and slope to the size and height of the window, door, or porch opening.



Before air conditioning was widely available, retractable window awnings were commonly found on residential buildings throughout New York City, as seen in this historic photo of a building on West End Avenue.

**The building's address number can be placed on an awning above the entrance**, with letters or numbers no taller than six inches. No other lettering or signage is permitted on residential awnings.

### Material

**The awning must be clad only with a matte canvas or similar fabric**, in a solid color or vertical stripes that harmonize with the building's historic color palette. Avoid visually jarring colors and patterns.

**Awning canopies that were present when the building received designation** but do not meet LPC Rules, or that were previously approved by the Commission, can be re-clad in matte-finished canvas or fabric of a similar texture, in a solid color or vertical stripes that harmonize with the historic color palette of the building.

**At primary or visible secondary facades**, the new awning must match the fabric color and pattern of existing awnings.



# Sidewalk Canopies

Many larger residential buildings built in the 19th and 20th centuries had canvas sidewalk canopies installed at the main entrance. These canopies were usually installed after the building was built, and typically constructed of light-gauge metal tubing with canvas cladding that was removed seasonally or when not needed.

## Installing Sidewalk Canopies

Staff can issue permits approving sidewalk canopies at apartment buildings, hotels, and buildings historically constructed with an accessory residential component, such as private clubs. Historic precedent may exist for a sidewalk canopy at your building or buildings of a similar type within the historic district. Staff can issue permits approving sidewalk canopies that meet the following criteria:

### Installation

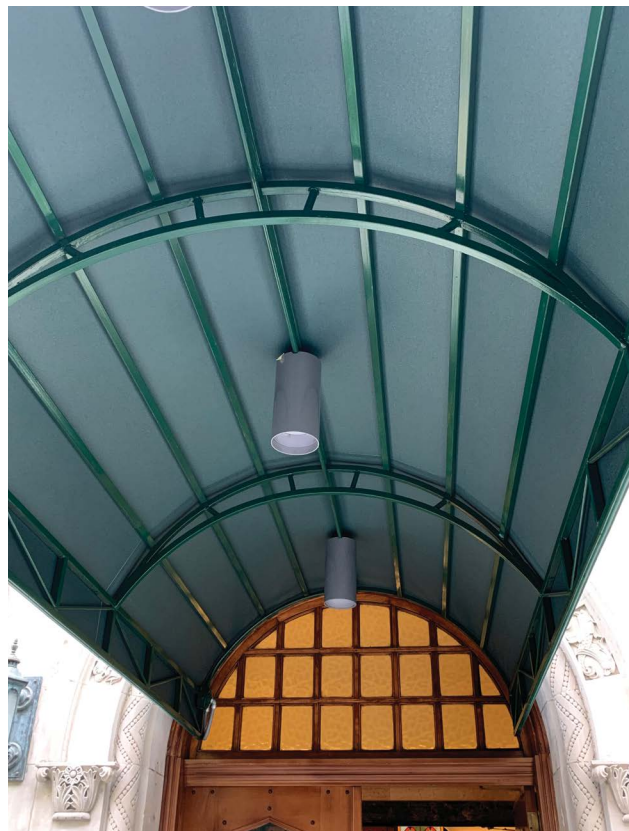
The canopy must not obscure or damage significant features.

**The canopy frame can attach to the facade at mortar joints or plain masonry.** Limit penetrations as much as possible.

**The canopy must be installed within architectural features and frame the opening,** except where installation within the opening would result in the lowest portion of the canopy being less than eight feet above the sidewalk or operation of the door would be impeded. Overlap at the opening must be avoided, as possible.



This sidewalk canopy has a design consistent with a typical historic canopy. The installation fits within the opening and does not obscure or damage significant features.



Looking up at the open underside of the canopy, showing simply designed light fixtures attached to the framing.

**Canopy poles** must attach to non-historic paving when possible.

### Design

Size and design must be consistent with canopies historically found at buildings of the same type.

**The canopy must be at least eight feet above the sidewalk,** with an open underside and no “ceiling.”

**The canopy must have a bowed profile,** or, if precedent exists, a profile that relates to the shape of the opening.

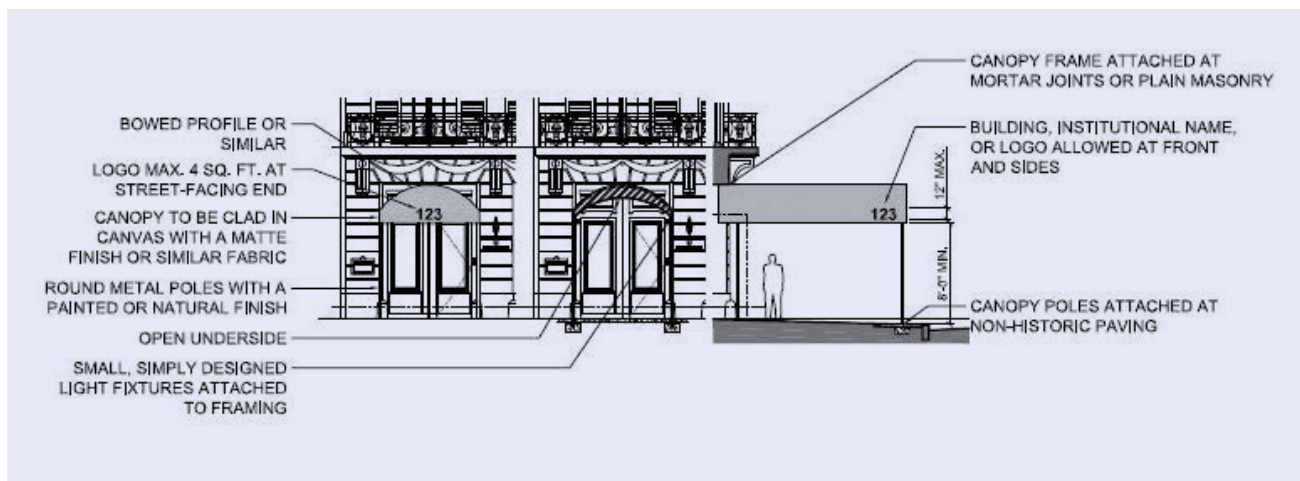
**The canopy’s front and sides can note the building or institutional name and address in numbers and letters less than 12 inches high,** plus a logo—provided the logo appears on the street-facing end of the canopy and is no more than four square feet.

### Material

The canopy must be clad in matte canvas in a color that matches the historic color or does not detract from the building. It must have round metal poles with a painted or natural finish that is in keeping with the style and age of the building.

### Fixtures

Small, simply designed light fixtures can be attached to the framing underneath the canopy. Cameras and heat lamps can also be installed, as long as they are only visible from directly beneath the canopy.



Elevation and sections of a typical sidewalk canopy installation.

# Section C

## Technical Guidance and Resources

→ In This Section:

[Glossary](#)

[Master Plans](#)

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

# Glossary

**Awning**

is a metal frame clad with fabric attached above or within an opening, or within an integral housing, at a window, door, porch, or storefront to provide protection from the weather.

**Bulkhead**

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

**Canopy**

is a metal frame clad with fabric that extends from a building entrance over the sidewalk to the curb, where it is supported on vertical posts.

**Display Window**

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

**Facade**

is the entire exterior face of a building.

**Fixed Awning**

is an awning with a non-retractable metal frame clad with fabric.

**Historic Fabric**

is a building's original or significant historic facade construction material or ornament, or fragments thereof.

**Lintel**

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

**Pier**

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

**Residential Awning**

is any awning on a residential building and any awning on a commercial or mixed-use building except for storefront awnings.

**Retractable Awning**

is an awning attached to a frame which allows it to be extended out or folded or rolled back tight against the building facade.

**Skirt**

is a bottom finishing piece of fabric that hangs from the lower edge of an awning.

**Storefront**

is the first or second story area of the facade that provides access or natural illumination into a space used for retail or other commercial purposes.

**Storefront Bay**

is the area of a storefront defined by and spanning two piers.

**Storefront Infill**

is the framing, glazing, and cladding contained within a storefront opening in the facade,

including but not limited to display windows, bulkheads, and entranceways.

**Storefront Opening**

is the area of the facade between the piers and lintel which contains storefront infill. Steps and platforms in front of, and leading up to, an entry door are not part of the storefront opening.

**Storefront Surround**

is decorative elements or treatment on the facade around the storefront opening.

**Transom**

is the glazed area above a display window or door separated from the display window or door by a horizontal framing member ("the transom bar"). The glazing in the transom may be fixed or operable.

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# Master Plans

Master plans, which generally do not have an expiration date, allow you to perform repetitive awning work over time as finances or vacancies permit (See Section 2-02 of the LPC Rules). Master plans are more efficient because once approved, applications can be processed more quickly.

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

**Once established,** you can move forward with work covered by the master plan by submitting a completed application to the Commission through Portico, LPC's web-based permit portal, describing the scope of work and stating that it conforms to master plan drawings and other documents.

**Staff reviews the application** and will issue the applicable permit.