



Commercial
Corridor
Challenge

Storefront Improvement Design Guidelines



CitiCommunityDevelopment.com



careers
businesses
neighborhoods



The Commercial Corridor Challenge is a collaboration with LISC NYC, Citi Community Development, and the NYC Small Business Services' Neighborhood 360° program.

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INTRODUCTION

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) NYC, Citi Community Development, and the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) have partnered to support catalytic projects that strengthen commercial corridors and small businesses through the Commercial Corridor Challenge program (Corridor Challenge). The program is being conducted in collaboration with SBS's newly launched Neighborhood 360° initiative, which was created by SBS to identify, develop, and launch commercial revitalization projects in partnership with local stakeholders. Through proactive planning and targeted investments, Neighborhood 360° supports projects that strengthen and revitalize the streets, small businesses, and community-based organizations that anchor New York City neighborhoods.

The Corridor Challenge is working with three SBS local partners on corridors in NYC neighborhoods: Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation on Fulton Street in East New York, Brooklyn; the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce on Bay Street in Stapleton, Staten Island; and the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation on Southern Boulevard in Crotona Park East, the Bronx.

As part of the Corridor Challenge, local partners will provide technical and financial assistance to property owners or business tenants seeking to improve their storefronts. By increasing the transparency, lighting, and physical attractiveness of businesses, the program aims to enhance commercial corridors, boost foot traffic, and contribute to a greater sense of safety in target areas.

The purpose of these guidelines is:

- To inform Corridor Challenge participants about relevant New York City code and regulation requirements related to storefront improvements to existing buildings; and
- To provide recommendations from architectural experts about improvements that will provide lasting benefit to participating businesses and corridors.

This guide is for reference only and is not a complete representation of all applicable code regulations. It is specifically designed for C1 and C2 Zoning Districts.

The Commercial Corridor Challenge is a partnership of:



With expert technical assistance from:





Bay Street corridor in Stapleton, Staten Island.
Photo credit: Ricky Flores

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. All improvements must comply with applicable codes, permit requirements, and New York City Department of Buildings regulations, and New York City zoning codes, as outlined in this document.
2. All storefront improvements must be performed by licensed professionals.
3. To the extent possible, improvements should be designed to reveal the building's original architectural style, form and materials.
4. Materials used should be high-quality and durable. The use of traditional building materials, such as wood, metal, glass, canvas, stone, brick, etc., is encouraged.
5. It is highly recommended for participants to declutter their storefronts and leave clear lines of sight between the business and the sidewalk to enhance attractiveness of storefront, as well as improve safety for the business, customers, and pedestrians.
 - *This includes removing posters, stickers, and merchandise that take up space in storefront windows at pedestrian eye-level.*
6. To the extent possible, businesses are encouraged to use interior lighting after business hours to enliven the corridor and boost security on the street.
7. Whenever possible, it is recommended that businesses avoid the use of security gates. In most cases, security gates are not necessary for a secure storefront.
 - If a business has an existing gate and it is necessary for security purposes to retain it (for example, in the case of pharmacies, or liquor stores), only “open-mesh” type, also referred to as “see-through” link gates, gates are recommended.
 - *As per New York City regulations, all new roll-down security gates installed on storefronts are required to be 70% open-grille.*
 - *New roll-down gates should be installed in the store interior (in the ceiling, behind the glass).*
 - *Open-mesh security gates on the interior provide greater visual access for security (preferred by law enforcement) and will not be subject to alteration by graffiti.*

SIGNAGE

Code Regulations

- Signs can never rise more than 25 ft. above the sidewalk OR extend into any residential portion of a building (whichever is lower applies)
- Shingle-style, or “blade” signs may not project more than 18 inches.
- The bottom of non-illuminated signs or blade signs must be at least 10 feet above the existing sidewalk.
- A flat banner sign cannot project 12 inches or more from the building.
- Illuminated signs cannot be larger than 50 sq. feet or flashing.
- Non-illuminated signs cannot be more than 3 times the building’s street frontage.
- All signage must be installed by a NYC-licensed sign hanger.
- Window signage should be limited to covering no more than 20 percent of display windows.
- Primary signage cannot advertise national brands or logos.
- Signage cannot block doors or windows, attach to fire escapes, or obstruct required ventilation.

Permits

- A permit must be filed with the Department of Buildings for regular signage AND blade signs.
- A separate permit must be filed by the licensed sign hanger for installation.
- Signs painted onto walls and non-illuminated signs that are six square feet in total area or less do not require a permit.

Recommendations

All signs should be made of durable materials, such as exterior grade wood (fire retardant; carved and/or painted with fire-retardant paint) or metal, including aluminum, etc. Illuminated “box” signs or those made of plastic or vinyl are not recommended.

Signage should be located in the traditional section of the building façade, designated as the historic “signage band,” to be architecturally appropriate.

Whenever possible, signage should be illuminated by a separate light fixture.

SIGNAGE

Option A

Non- illuminated sign



Option B

Blade Sign



Option C

Window signage



Renderings of potential storefronts on Bay Street in Stapleton, Staten Island and Fulton Street in East New York, Brooklyn.
Credit: Dadras Architects



AWNINGS

Code Regulations

- Awnings should be attached to and supported solely by the building.
- Only the name and address of the business are permitted to be printed on the awning. Digitally-printed images or logos on the awning fabric are not compliant.
- Awnings cannot project more than 4 feet from the building.
- Awnings must be 8 feet above the sidewalk (7 feet for a loose skirt).
- Lettering on awnings cannot be more than 12 inches high.
- Lettering cannot cover more than 12 square feet in space.
- Awnings cannot be illuminated.
- Like signage, an awning cannot block doors or windows, attach to fire escapes, or obstruct required ventilation.

Permits

- Awnings require permits from the Department of Buildings before installation.

Recommendations

Retractable canvas awnings are highly recommended because they get less dirty and damaged, and last longer than fixed awnings. “Waterfall”-style awnings are not recommended.

Retractable awnings should have an aluminum frame construction and canvas fabric, as manufactured by Durasol and Sunbrella. Awnings should always be properly cleaned and maintained.

Awnings should not “wrap” around corners of buildings, but should be properly placed within the architectural structure of each building storefront.

Finally, where possible, important architectural details should not be concealed by awnings.

AWNINGS

Option A

Retractable Awning



Photo credit: Larisa Ortiz Associates

Option B

Retractable Awning - incl. store name



Photo credit: Larisa Ortiz Associates

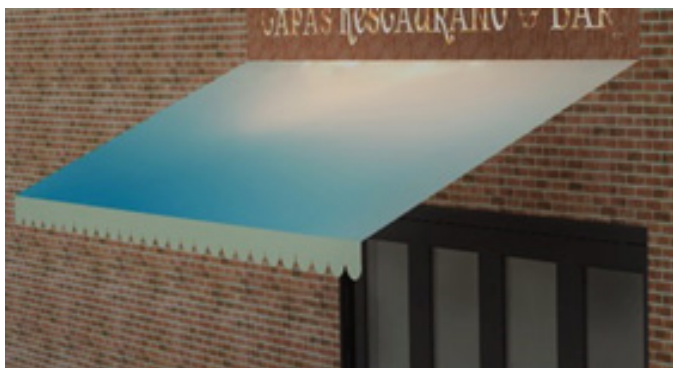
Don't Use

Waterfall Awning



Photo credit: Larisa Ortiz Associates

Renderings of potential awnings on Bay Street in Stapleton, Staten Island and Fulton Street in East New York, Brooklyn.
Credit: Dadras Architects.



LIGHTING

Code Regulations

- All electrical work, including all lighting, must be done by a licensed electrician.
- Light fixtures attached to a storefront cannot project more than two feet from the building or be less than eight feet above the sidewalk.

Permits

- Lighting permits should be filed with the Department of Buildings by a licensed electrician.

Recommendations

To the extent possible, businesses should illuminate the street through interior and exterior lighting. Adequate lighting is a proven crime deterrent.

Lighting that illuminates signage or the sidewalk is encouraged and lighting should be installed thoughtfully to avoid creating shadowed or dark spots.

“Goose-neck” exterior wall fixtures such as the following are recommended:

a) “Abolite RLM Series - RLM Angled Reflector: AD 150” -incandescent 150W; and

b) “Abolite RLM Series - RLM Radial Wave -incandescent; as manufactured by LSI Industries shown in Fig 1.

Building lighting should also provide an even illumination level. Flashing, pulsating, or similar dynamic lighting can pose hazards to motorists and should not be used.

ABOLITE ANGLED REFLECTOR

FINISH - Available in either Architectural Textured, High Gloss, or Galvanized finish.

LAMP OPTIONS - Designed to accommodate Incandescent, Compact Fluorescent, and HID lamps. CFL and HID lamps available -- order separately; Incandescent lamps by others.

BALLAST - CFL and HID require a Wall, Ceiling, or Remote Ballast. See Accessories page.

MOUNTING - Fixed hub tapped for 3/4" NPT conduit. Choose from a wide variety of wall and gooseneck brackets (see accessory section).

REFLECTOR - Heavy-duty, spun Galvanized steel construction.

SOCKETS - Incandescent (rated 660 Watt/600 Volt) and HID fixtures (4KV pulse rated) are medium base porcelain. Compact Fluorescent sockets feature smart push-pull thermoplastic design for ease of lamping.



Shown with Gooseneck Bracket Accessory

DIMENSIONS

Fig 1

LIGHTING

Option A

Interior Lighting



Option B

Exterior Lighting - goose-neck



Photo credit: Larisa Ortiz Associates

Option C

Exterior Lighting - sconce



Photo credit: Larisa Ortiz Associates

Renderings of potential storefront on Bay Street in Stapleton, Staten Island.
Credit: Dadras Architects.



Façade

Code Regulations

- New York City zoning requires that a minimum of 50 percent of a storefront between sidewalk grade and 10 feet above grade must be transparent glass.
- Window signage must be limited to covering no more than 20 percent of available window space.
- Safety glass is required when windows are 18" or less from the ground.

Permits

- Permits for façade improvements should be filed with the Department of Buildings, based on the scope of work.

Recommendations

Whenever possible, a building's original window pattern should be retained.

Avoid blocking, reducing the size, or changing the design of the window.

Ensure at least 70% storefront transparency to enhance attractiveness of the store to pedestrians and to promote security.

Replacing clear glass windows with opaque panels such as metal, wood and/or other materials should be avoided.

Paper signage in windows should be avoided. This obscures the business activity from potential customers on the street and detracts from the overall appearance of the business.

Broken windows should be fixed immediately. Broken or boarded windows negatively impact the overall commercial corridor and may be considered a code violation.

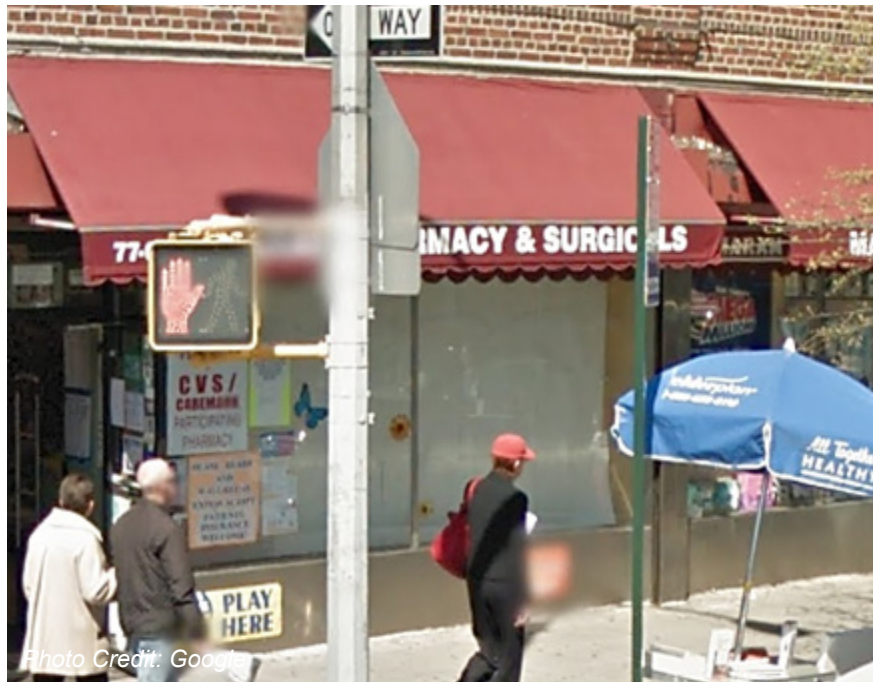
New architectural storefront & entry systems are recommended to be Series 4500 Storefront, as manufactured by Tubelite Inc., Reed City, MI, and others.

Storefront & entry system framing should be aluminum (medium stile) in "factory color" (electrolytic, or fluoropolymer painted).

Façade

BEFORE - Covered up storefront

Maram Pharmacy, Jackson Heights NY



AFTER- Maximum transparency, curated window display

Frank's Pharmacy, Jackson Heights NY



Renderings of potential storefronts on Southern Boulevard in Crotona Park East, Bronx and on Bay Street in Stapleton, Staten Island. Credit: Dadras Architects



Other Improvements

Painting and Color

Whenever possible, strategically use color and painting to differentiate a business from the rest of the corridor. This is one of the most cost-effective ways to dramatically improve the appearance of a storefront.

Colors of exterior materials, signs, window frames, storefronts and other buildings' features should be coordinated.

For historic buildings, consider exterior colors that are in line with historic character. Benjamin Moore, Pittsburgh Paint, Pratt & Lambert, and other major paint manufacturers have very good examples of “historic color palettes” within their product lines.

All wood surfaces should be painted with fire-retardant paint.





Southern Boulevard corridor in Crotona Park East, the Bronx.
Photo credit: Michael Young



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Fulton Street corridor in East New York, Brooklyn.
Photo credit: Charles Chessler