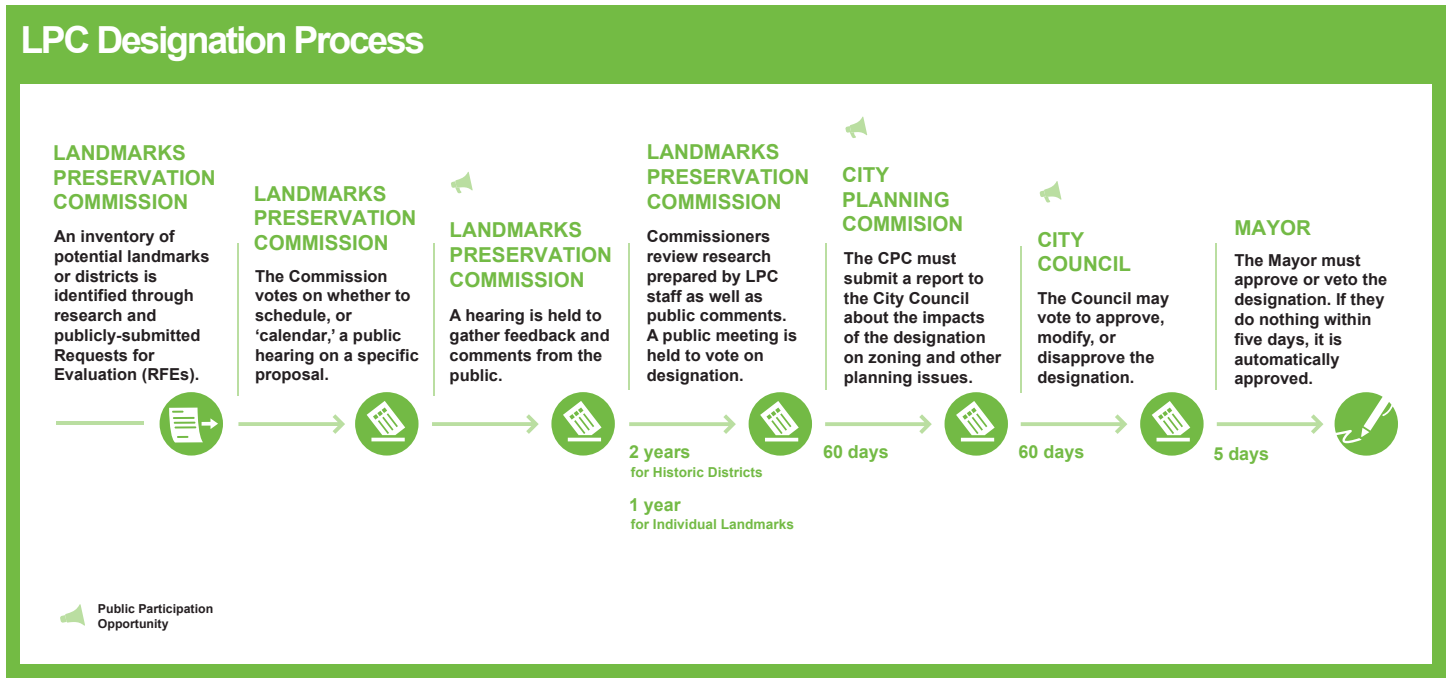


Historic Preservation and Landmark Designation Processes in New York City

The built environment—which includes buildings, parks, monuments, and public spaces—provides physical evidence of a city’s shared cultural, social, and architectural history. Historic preservation is a movement that seeks to protect these places and structures so that present and future generations can take part in shaping the built environment while understanding its context. The National Park Service defines historic preservation as “a conversation with our past about our future.”

In New York City, historic preservation efforts were spurred by the 1963 demolition of the original Pennsylvania Station. In 1965, Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr. established the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) as an authority to oversee historic sites in New York City and prevent the demolition of significant structures. Currently, LPC consists of 11 commissioners appointed by the Mayor, which must include at least three architects, one urban planner or landscape architect, one historian, and one realtor. Additionally, LPC must have one commissioner from each borough.



Designating Landmarks in New York City

When a building is given Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) landmark status, it means it has special historical, cultural, or aesthetic value to the City of New York and is granted some legal protections. Historic districts are designated areas that hold a distinct sense of place through their architectural significance. The designation process, shown above, is the same for historic districts and individual landmarks. (Landmarks and districts can also be designated on the State and Federal levels, which each have their own respective agencies and processes.)

The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) does not prevent owners from making changes to their properties; rather, they work to ensure that changes are appropriate through the issuance of certain permits or certificates. The type of permit required and associated costs are determined based on the level of proposed alteration to a property, the cost of the project, and whether it also requires a permit from the Department of Buildings.

Ordinary repairs for a property do not require an owner to go through the LPC, but more involved restoration measures, such as window or awning replacement, may require a Permit for Minor Work (PMW). PMWs do not require fees and are approved or denied within 10 days. Some complex interior alterations, like the installation of a new boiler or plumbing equipment, may require a Certificate of No Effect (CNE) to demonstrate that the change will not impact the landmark’s exterior. LPC must respond to CNE applications in 30 days or less. Proposed work that does affect significant architectural features requires a Certificate of Appropriateness (‘C of A’), which requires a multi-step review process (shown below).

Certificate of Appropriateness (‘C of A’) process

