
Chapter 7

Excavation



Although often not visible, excavation on landmark sites or in buildings can directly impact a building's physical integrity. Protecting historic buildings and sites is the basis for LPC's rules for excavation (see [LPC Rules](#), Section 2-16, available on our website, www.nyc.gov/landmarks).

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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: Excavation work must comply with Department of Buildings (DOB) requirements as well as with LPC criteria.

Note: If your excavation work is related to an addition or alteration in a yard or an areaway, refer to Chapters 6 and 8 for more information.

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 rules apply.

What type of building is it?

Search for the building on the **Discover NYC Landmarks map**.

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 the building look like?

Find **historic tax photos** from the 1940s and 1980s, available online 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 on our website at www.nyc.gov/landmarks.

See if Your Work Requires an LPC Permit

Maybe you don't need a permit.

LPC requires a permit for most excavation work, but a permit is **not required** for the following types of work:

Shallow regrading in yards to match or approximate existing grade

Minor excavation in yards for shallow trenches or post holes

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. A complete application requires all the materials listed below.

Required Application Materials

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> LPC permit application filed on Portico <input type="checkbox"/> Color photos of the entire building and close-ups of areas of exterior excavation work <input type="checkbox"/> Comparative drawings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Floor and / or site plans of existing conditions and locations of proposed excavation work – Section of existing conditions and locations of proposed excavation work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Structural conditions report that addresses the building's age, original construction type, condition of foundations and facades, plus relevant site information (adjoining buildings, walls, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> DOB Support of Excavation (SOE) filing drawings and other related filing drawings (Structural, Foundation, Demolition, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> In some cases, a facade monitoring plan (See <i>Section B</i> for more information.) |
|--|---|
- You must also submit the following materials, **unless the work requires only limited underpinning or no underpinning at all:**
- ☐ **Pre-construction site survey** to document existing adjacent conditions

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

Section B

LPC Rules and Criteria

→ In This Section:

Excavation Work

- Protecting Historic Buildings During Construction
- Facade Monitoring



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. 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 excavation work and how to protect your historic building during construction. See [LPC Rules, Section 2-16](#), for more information.

Excavation Work

Staff can issue permits approving the following types of excavation work if it meets the following criteria:

Lowering and replacing the lowest existing floor slab (e.g., basement or cellar) to increase floor-to-ceiling height to no more than ten feet.

Excavation to create a new crawlspace, cellar, or basement below an existing addition or new Commission-approved addition, if the depth does not exceed the lowest story of the original building.

Excavation for construction or repair of new structural elements, including footings, foundation walls, retaining walls, elevator and escalator pits, and other elements.

Excavation for construction or repair of new architectural elements, including light wells, stairwells, sunken terraces, in-ground pools, water features, planting beds, significant landscape features, significant regrading, and other elements, provided:

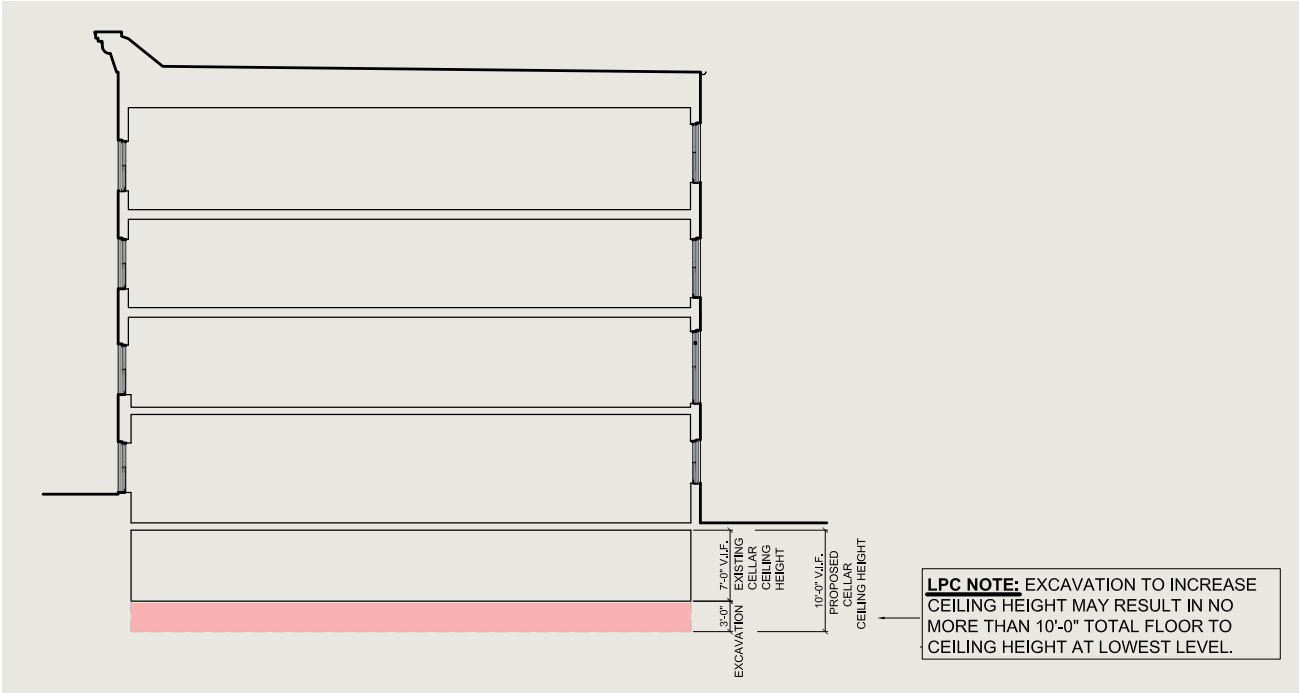
Work does not detract from the building or substantially eliminate the presence of a rear yard, and

At least a five-foot wide unexcavated planting area is maintained along the rear lot line.



Excavation can be approved in a rear yard to accommodate a sunken terrace.

A section drawing of a row house with an existing cellar floor-to-ceiling height of seven feet. The cellar floor slab may be lowed a maximum of three additional feet.



Protecting Historic Buildings During Construction

Your excavation work must be designed and executed in compliance with DOB regulations under the supervision of a licensed professional engineer. Application materials must include a structural conditions report that demonstrates you have examined structural conditions and considered how to protect both the building and neighboring buildings.

Facade Monitoring

For buildings **six stories or less**, you must include a plan for monitoring the facade of the building and adjacent buildings, if either of the buildings:

Were constructed before 1901;

Are constructed of wood;

Have an unreinforced masonry foundation, or

Have a stone or brick foundation affected by or adjacent to excavation.

If the work does not require underpinning or only requires limited underpinning and does not occur at or adjacent to designated buildings under the categories described above, facade monitoring is not required.

Enhanced Engineering Review

For proposals with major excavation, LPC staff in some situations will initiate enhanced engineering review of these documents with referrals to LPC's consulting structural engineer and/or the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB). See the "[Major Excavation and Structural Work](#)" fact sheet for more information.



Underpinning in progress at the foundation wall of a historic building.