

Your first U.S. store.

The decisions behind the opening.

Two spaces can have the same rent and very different opening costs. A beautiful shoe display can hide a stockroom problem. An approved rendering can still leave a fabricator without the dimensions they need. This guide looks at the decisions behind those problems, with comparisons and examples you can use before committing to a store.



Adidas Y-3 / SoHo, New York

01 Choose the format

02 Compare properties

03 Build the full budget

04 Fit the assortment

05 Review the design

06 Check the sequence

07 Set up local operations

08 Check opening readiness

01 / CHOOSE THE FORMAT

What do you need the first store to tell you?

A launch, a market test and a permanent flagship ask different things of a location. Decide which question matters most before comparing spaces. Otherwise, a successful opening weekend can be mistaken for evidence that a long-term store will work.

Your priority	What the store needs	What to look at
Introduce the product	Space for trial, explanation and service; stock in the sizes or variants people will request.	Questions customers ask, products tried and reasons a visit ends without a purchase.
Test a neighborhood	Ordinary trading days beyond the launch, consistent hours and a usable stock position.	Sales alongside stock availability, promotions, opening hours and repeat visits.
Support a seasonal launch	An installation plan that fits the selling window; a destination for remaining stock and fixtures.	Trading during the intended season, plus the full cost of opening and closing.
Establish a flagship	A store team, replenishment, maintenance and a plan for future collections.	Ongoing sales and service, operating costs and the store's role alongside other channels.

A DISTINCTION WORTH MAKING

“Flagship” describes a role. It does not specify a lease term.

A brand may want its first store to be its main expression in the U.S. while still exploring the right commercial commitment. Compare the proposed term, investment and operating obligations separately from the name given to the format. There is no universal duration for mid-term retail.

Choose a review date and the evidence you will use before opening. A busy launch, a stockout and a quiet week each need context before they influence the next location.

Compare the space behind the storefront.

Ask for the same information on every shortlisted property. A strong address may justify difficult building work, but you need to see that trade-off before the storefront photograph dominates the discussion.

Compare	Bring to the review	What it could change
Usable space	A measured plan showing selling area, storage, staff space and fixed obstructions.	The assortment you can carry and how much of the advertised area can sell product.
Existing condition	Site photos and a specialist assessment of the services and work your proposed use needs.	Build scope, costs and the sequence of work before installation.
Deliveries	The route from vehicle to stockroom, access hours and lift or doorway dimensions.	Fixture sizes, delivery bookings, unpacking space and staffing.
Customer approach	Street views from both directions and visits during relevant trading hours.	Signage, window presentation and how customers find the entrance.
Property conditions	Landlord design rules, proposed terms and required reviews for your intended store.	What can be altered, when access begins and which decisions need approval.

ILLUSTRATIVE COMPARISON

The lower-rent unit may need more cash before opening.

Space A has a usable stockroom but needs lighting and cooling work. Space B has newer services but nowhere to receive a shipment. Price the required work in each, then draw the actual storage and receiving areas. Compare the revised layouts and total opening plans, not rent alone.

Keep an unresolved item visible until someone verifies it. Have the relevant property, legal and design specialists review the proposed use and terms before commitment; a broker’s tour is not a technical assessment.

03 / BUILD THE FULL BUDGET

The build quote is only part of the opening budget.

A store can be fully costed as a construction project and still have an incomplete opening budget. Separate the cost to secure and prepare the space from the cash needed to stock, staff and operate it. Record when each payment falls due.

Budget category	Include in the estimate	Check when comparing quotes
Property & advisers	Deposits, pre-opening occupancy costs and the professional reviews relevant to the project.	Which costs start before the store can trade?
Design & construction	Design, site preparation, building services, fixtures, graphics and installation.	What is excluded, assumed or awaiting a site check?
Getting goods to site	Freight, storage, receiving, installation access and import-related costs where applicable.	Does the price end at the supplier, the loading bay or the installed fixture?
Retail setup	Opening stock, packaging, payment equipment, connectivity, recruitment and training.	Which items come from the brand and are absent from the build quote?
Trading & later changes	Payroll, occupancy, replenishment, maintenance, marketing and eventual removal or relocation.	What remains payable if opening moves or sales build more slowly than planned?

QUOTE COMPARISON

Ask both bidders to price the same finished result.

One fixture quote includes delivery and installation; another covers fabrication only. Put freight, site handling and installation beside the second quote before comparing totals. For each allowance, record what is still unknown and when it can be confirmed. Keep a separate, agreed contingency for uncertainty.

Review one-time and recurring costs with your finance team, including payment timing and currency assumptions. A total without exclusions or due dates is difficult to use for an opening decision.

04 / FIT THE ASSORTMENT

Count the stock before approving the floor plan.

A rendering usually shows the display quantity. The store must also hold sizes, replenishment, packaging, deliveries and returns. Give the designer the assortment in units and dimensions, as well as product photographs.

Plan for	Test with the actual product	Look for
Display capacity	Place the intended range on one full-size sample shelf, rail or table.	Crowding, hidden labels and products that need more space than the image suggests.
Supporting stock	Translate styles, colors, sizes and depth into boxes, cartons or hanging lengths.	Whether the stockroom holds the range with space to retrieve it.
Service	Walk through a request for another size while a second customer needs help.	Where staff leave the floor, customers wait and tried items go.
Replenishment	Trace a delivery through receiving, unpacking, storage and display.	A place for cartons and packaging that does not obstruct service.
The next collection	Repeat the layout with bulkier products or a different category mix.	Which fixtures adjust and which need replacement.

WORKED EXAMPLE / HYPOTHETICAL FOOTWEAR STORE

24 display shoes can represent 288 pairs of stock.

Assume 24 style-color combinations, six sizes and two pairs per size: $24 \times 6 \times 2 = 288$ pairs. That is an illustrative assortment, not a stocking recommendation. Measure the shoe boxes and lay out shelving, access and receiving space. The display wall alone cannot tell you whether this range fits.

Ask for two quantities on the plan: what is displayed and what is held behind it. Include the receiving space needed when new stock arrives before existing stock has sold.

05 / REVIEW THE DESIGN

Know what you are approving when you approve a design.

“Design approved” can mean the room looks right, the dimensions are agreed or production can begin. Those are different decisions. Ask for each review to state what is ready to approve and what information is still being developed.

Review	What you should see	What it helps you decide
Brand & concept	The layout, visual direction and how the product and service shape the space.	Whether the proposed store represents the brand and supports the customer visit.
Materials & light	Physical finish samples, fixture details and lighting beside the merchandise.	How colors, textures and product presentation work together.
Dimensions & capacity	Measured plans and fixture drawings with intended product quantities.	Whether display, storage and service areas fit the brief.
Production	Fabrication drawings, specifications, installation details and required technical approvals.	Whether the people making and installing the work have the information they need.
Changes	The proposed substitution beside the approved item, with cost and timing effects.	Whether a change preserves the intended appearance and use.

FROM OUR DESIGN WORK

Kallu: the shoe is a reference for the room.

The proposed Kallu flagship at The Palazzo Shops uses the curve of a shoe sole in arches, portals and fixtures. Its study also includes seating, service and stock storage, so the brand can review the visual idea and how the store could work. Kallu is in development, with opening planned for Q4 2026.

For a remote review, give headquarters a specific decision, the current revision and the date an answer is needed. Confirm who can approve it; silence should not be treated as permission to manufacture.

06 / CHECK THE SEQUENCE

What has to happen before the opening date can hold?

Work backward from a target opening, then check the dependencies forward. The date needs to account for access, design decisions, required approvals, manufacture, deliveries and a store team ready to trade.

Before this happens	Confirm this first	If it is unresolved
Detailed site design	Dimensions, existing conditions, landlord requirements and the proposed assortment.	Keep affected drawings provisional; do not hide assumptions in the plan.
Orders & fabrication	Approved dimensions, finishes, supplier lead times and required technical approvals.	Identify which orders depend on the decision and what a delay affects.
Installation	Site access, readiness of preceding work, delivery arrangements and installation sequence.	Check storage and rescheduling costs before goods leave the supplier.
Merchandising & training	Usable fixtures, stock received, systems configured and staff available.	Separate work possible off-site from training that needs the finished store.
Public opening	Applicable opening requirements confirmed, routines tested and critical issues resolved.	Review the opening commitment with those responsible for outstanding items.

A DEPENDENCY TO WATCH

A late counter decision can affect more than the counter.

Changing its size may alter power locations, payment equipment, packaging storage and the installation sequence. Ask the project team to show those effects before approving the revision. A change record should tell you what has to move and what it costs, as well as which drawing changed.

Keep a target opening and a confirmed opening distinct. Ask which unresolved decisions could still move the date before announcing it to customers or booking activity around it.

Who answers when headquarters is asleep?

The first U.S. team will need decisions while the home office is closed. Agree which questions staff can answer, which need a local manager and which must go back to the brand. Use actual store situations to settle the boundaries.

Situation	Agree before opening	Give the local team
A service exception	Who can approve returns or exceptions under the brand's local policy.	The policy, an escalation contact and a way to record the resolution.
A size runs out	Who tracks availability, requests stock and approves transfers or substitutions.	Stock visibility and a confirmed route for replenishment.
A fixture or system fails	Who calls the supplier, approves repairs and decides whether an area can be used.	Supplier contacts, equipment details and a local decision-maker.
A campaign changes	Who approves messaging and updates the window, signage and store team.	Current assets, instructions and an effective date.
The store needs support	Who manages shifts, training and unresolved customer requests each day.	A named manager and a shared record the next shift can act on.

FROM OUR OPERATING WORK

CandyKing has a local team running the store.

At 306 Bleecker Street, Retail by PopUp manages staffing, training, customer service, merchandising and replenishment. Marketing is coordinated with CandyKing’s global team. The New York store has day-to-day support while the brand retains product and global brand decisions.

International entry also involves entity setup, tax, employment and, where relevant, importing. Arrange those services with the appropriate advisers. Store design or management services should not be assumed to include them.

08 / CHECK OPENING READINESS

Rehearse a sale, a stock delivery and a problem.

A finished room is ready to photograph. A store is ready to open when the team can use it. Run these checks with the actual stock, equipment and people, leaving time to correct and repeat anything that does not work.

Rehearse	Watch what happens	Resolve before opening
A complete purchase	Find a product, answer a question, retrieve another variant, take payment and pack it.	Missing product information, equipment access, packaging or unclear steps.
Two customers at once	Help one visitor while another needs assistance and stock is being retrieved.	Uncovered areas, awkward waiting points and staffing needs.
A delivery	Receive, count and unpack cartons; store the product and remove packaging.	Blocked routes, missing labels and responsibility for discrepancies.
A service issue	Handle a return, unavailable item or question beyond the team's product knowledge.	The approved response and a reachable person who can make the decision.
Closing & reopening	Reset displays, secure stock and prepare unresolved requests for the next shift.	Instructions, access or supplies that depend on one person being present.

AFTER THE OPENING

Read sales alongside what customers could actually buy.

If a style sells less in week two, check size availability before treating it as a loss of interest. Record recurring questions, stock gaps, trading hours and promotions beside sales. Choose a specific correction, such as a clearer size sign or a revised replenishment routine, and review what happens next.

Separate issues that prevent safe or permitted trading from finishing details that can be scheduled later. Have the responsible specialists and store lead confirm readiness; a photo shoot or launch booking cannot make that decision.

Bring the difficult part to the first conversation.

You may already have a lease, a global design partner or a clear idea of the store you want. Tell us what is settled and where you need help: location search, identity and store design, build delivery or the team that will run the store.

01 / The commercial question

Why this store, why this market and what would make a second location worth considering? Share any existing U.S. customer or sales information.

02 / The actual product

An assortment list, size or variant range, packaging dimensions and representative product images help us discuss display, service and stock needs.

03 / The property, if you have one

Bring the address, plans, photos, known conditions and proposed access date. Flag unverified dimensions or unresolved landlord questions.

04 / The decisions already made

Brand guidelines, design work, opening window, investment parameters and existing partners. Tell us which approvals sit with headquarters.

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FURTHER READING

Examples are identified as illustrative or drawn from the named PopUp projects. Property, technical and commercial requirements depend on the location and scope; these resources can help you prepare for the relevant specialist reviews.

SBA: Business planning and startup costs

NYC: Business licenses, permits and requirements

U.S. Customs and Border Protection: Importing requirements