

THREE WEEKS

THE ROADMAP

What three weeks leave you with.

A US specialty apparel brand with twelve stores asks how to open thirty more in three years, and its first store in London, without the new ones turning into a cheaper copy of the first. This is what its three weeks with us would leave on the table.

Every benchmark here is published and numbered to its source. Every figure about the brand is invented for this example. A real roadmap uses your numbers.

0 · THE BRIEF

TODAY

12 stores in 12 US cities

THE PLAN

30 more in three years

ABROAD

A first store in London, year two

WHERE IT HURTS

Each new store costs more and feels less like the first

1 · WEEK 1: THE READ

We walked four of the twelve stores, chosen with the brand's team to cover every format, at a busy time and a quiet one, with the operations lead and each store manager. The other eight we read from plans, photos and sales, so their feel is left blank. Six things, store by store.

			LAYOUT	FIXTURES	MATERIALS	FITTING ROOMS	BACK OF HOUSE	FEEL OF THE FIRST STORES
01	Austin	STREET	●	●	●	●	—	●
02	Denver	STREET	●	—	●	●	●	
03	Nashville	STREET	●	●	—	●	○	
04	Chicago	STREET	●	—	●	●	○	
05	Dallas	CENTRE	—	○	—	—	○	—
06	Houston	CENTRE	—	○	—	○	○	—
07	Atlanta	CENTRE	—	○	○	—	○	
08	Scottsdale	CENTRE	—	○	—	—	○	
09	Charlotte	CENTRE	○	○	—	○	○	
10	Boston	STREET	●	—	●	—	○	
11	Los Angeles	STREET	●	—	●	—	○	
12	New York	FLAGSHIP	—	○	●	—	○	—

● WORKS ○ FAILS IN DAILY USE — MIXED NAME IN BLACK: WALKED. IN GREY: READ FROM PLANS

EXAMPLE: THE BRAND AND ITS STORES ARE INVENTED

WHAT WORKS

- 01 The first table inside the door. In every store it is where customers stop and touch before they look, and the store managers say it sells more than any wall.
- 02 The fitting rooms in the first four stores: daylight or near it, a full-length mirror, a seat, a hook at the right height. Staff call them the place a sale closes.
- 03 Oak, linen and limewash. The palette carries the brand in every format and holds up in photographs and on the phone.
- 04 The street stores under 2,600 square feet. They feel full with half the stock of the centre stores.
- 05 The makers’ wall in the street stores, changed each season. Customers mention it without being asked.

WHAT FAILS IN DAILY USE, AND WHY

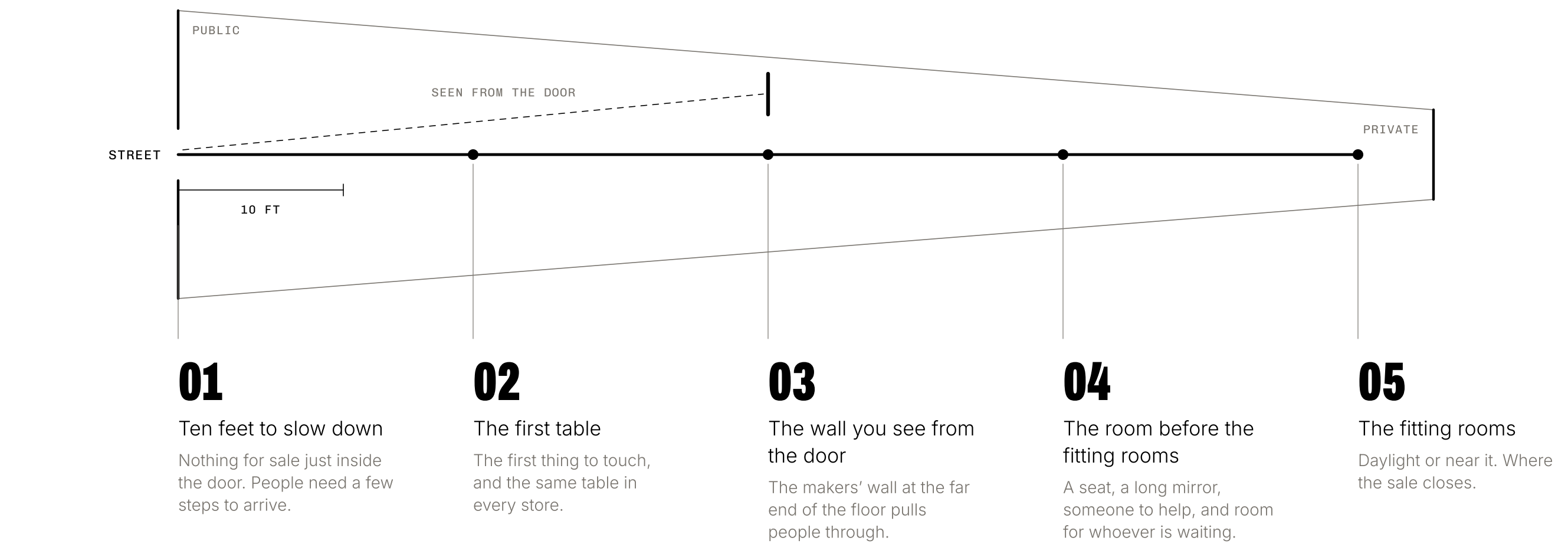
- 01 The cash counter: custom walnut, fourteen weeks to make, cracked in three stores where the air is dry. It is also where staff stand with their backs to the floor.
- 02 Fitting rooms: four in every store whatever its size. Queues on weekends in the busy stores; empty rooms in the quiet ones.
- 03 Lighting: three track systems across twelve stores. Lamps can’t move between stores and the white light drifts from warm to cold.
- 04 Deliveries come through the front door in seven of twelve stores, so the floor is restocked while customers shop.
- 05 Walls are built in. Every display change needs a contractor, so the centre stores stopped changing them.

KEEP	CHANGE	DROP
The first table. Same size and height everywhere; the one piece every store gets first.	The cash counter. Smaller, freestanding, oak on a steel frame, made in batches; staff face the door.	Walnut. It cracks and takes fourteen weeks. Oak does the same job.
The palette. Oak, linen, limewash, unlacquered brass. Specified once, sourced to the same samples.	Fitting rooms. Number set by the store's trade, not by habit: three to six.	Built-in display walls. They stop the stores changing.
The makers' wall. One per store, on a system the team can change in an hour.	Walls. Freestanding bays on one slotted standard, shipped flat, moved by staff.	Front-door deliveries. A lease requirement from now on: a rear or side door, or a delivery window before opening.
The fitting room as a room. Daylight or near it, full-length mirror, a seat, a hook.	Lighting. One track, one lamp family, one colour temperature, ordered centrally.	

Two ideas were tried in the stores during Week 2, by watching shoppers, and the cost target was checked with makers. Two more were set up in Week 2 to run in the first month after, each with a stop line agreed before anything is built.

ELEMENT	WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE	BUILD	TEST	STOP IF
01 The counter	A smaller counter can take a busy Saturday without a queue.	■ ■ □ ADAPTED	Week 2: a plywood mock-up in the Austin store for the weekend; every purchase timed.	the queue at peak is longer than with the old counter.
02 Fitting rooms by trade	Rooms sized to trade cut the weekend queue without empty rooms on weekdays.	■ ■ □ ADAPTED	Week 2: queues and empty rooms counted in Dallas and Denver over the weekend, set against a year of the brand's traffic.	the model saves no more than one room in the busy stores.
03 The cost target	The kit can be built for the target in a street store and a centre store.	■ ■ □ ADAPTED	Week 2: the kit checked with two fixture makers and one contractor from our network. Firm numbers come with drawings.	the makers judge the target out of reach.
04 Freestanding bays	Staff can change a wall in an hour with one key, and a bay can't tip.	■ ■ ■ NEW	Set up in Week 2: a sample bay ordered. Month one: two staff change it in Chicago, timed.	a change takes longer than ninety minutes or needs a contractor.
05 One lighting system	One track and lamp family can light all three formats at the same colour.	□ □ □ OFF THE SHELF	Set up in Week 2: lamps ordered. Month one: swapped into two stores and measured with a meter.	the measured colour varies more than the old stores did.

The idea for the store to build next, in one line: the same five steps from the street to the fitting room, in every store, each a little quieter and more personal than the last. The plan changes with the site; the order does not.



STREET	01 02 03 04 05	Under 2,600 sq ft. The steps sit close together.
CENTRE	01 02 03 04 05	The same steps, further apart.
FLAGSHIP	01 02 03 04 05 UP	Two floors. The fitting rooms go up a level; the order stays.

The store to build next, as a kit of parts. Heavy pieces are made once and shipped, so every store gets the same thing. The rest is sourced in each market to one specification, so the cost can follow the market without losing the look.

PART	WHAT IT IS	MADE ONCE AND SHIPPED, OR SOURCED IN EACH MARKET	WHY
The first table	Solid oak top on a steel base, one size	Made once and shipped	The piece every store has to get right.
The counter	Oak on steel, freestanding, staff face the door	Made once and shipped	Replaces the walnut counter; made in batches of six.
Wall bays	Freestanding, on one slotted standard; shelves, rails and the makers’ wall all hang from it	Made once, shipped flat	Staff change the store without a contractor. Each bay is restrained against tipping, and anchored for earthquakes in California.
Fitting room fronts	Oak frame, linen curtain or door, mirror, seat, hook	Frame made once; mirror and seat sourced	Three to six per store, set by trade.
Lighting	One track, one lamp family, one colour temperature	Ordered centrally from one supplier	The same light in every store. Specified to the strictest energy code it has to meet: California’s Title 24, and Part L in the UK.
Floor, walls, ceiling	Oak floor or polished concrete; limewash walls	Sourced in each market to the same samples	Cost follows the market; the samples hold the look.
Signs	Brass letters, one size family	Made once and shipped	Sized to each landlord’s and city’s rules.
6 · WEEK 3: THREE FORMATS FROM ONE KIT		One kit, three formats. The plan for each is drawn from the kit before a site is chosen, so real estate knows what each kind of site has to give.	

FORMAT	SIZE	WHERE	WHAT CHANGES
Street	2,000 to 2,600 sq ft	High streets and neighbourhoods	Makers’ wall at the front; three or four fitting rooms.
Centre	2,600 to 3,200 sq ft	Lifestyle and regional centres	Wider first table; five or six fitting rooms; a rear service door written into the lease; the landlord’s design criteria and two-stage drawing review planned in.
London	About 2,500 sq ft on two floors	Ground and lower ground, central London	Counter and one fitting room on the ground floor, the rest below; every lit piece fitted for 230 volts.

THE BRAND’S LAST FOUR STORES

\$245

PER SQUARE FOOT · EXAMPLE

THE TARGET FOR THE NEXT STORE

\$210

PER SQUARE FOOT · EXAMPLE

Across thirty new stores of about 2,600 square feet, \$35 per square foot comes to about \$2.7 million, in this example. The roadmap sets a separate target for street and centre stores; one is shown here.

For scale: US in-line shop fit-out averaged \$157 per square foot in 2026, from \$120 in the Midwest to \$217 in Northern California and \$181 in New York City.¹ That benchmark leaves out fixtures, furniture and equipment, which come on top.² There is no London benchmark directly comparable to the US figure, so a UK cost consultant and two London shopfitters quote the UK version of the kit before the lease is signed.

A cost target for the next store, set before anything is drawn and checked with two fixture makers and a contractor in Week 2. Construction and fixtures only, before any landlord allowance. The brand’s figures are invented; the benchmarks are published.

WHERE THE DIFFERENCE COMES FROM

Walls. Bays shipped flat and stood up by the contractor, instead of built-in joinery made on site.

The counter. Oak made in batches of six instead of one walnut counter at a time, on a fourteen-week lead.

Lighting. One system ordered centrally instead of three, specified store by store.

Fitting rooms. Three to six, set by trade, instead of four everywhere.

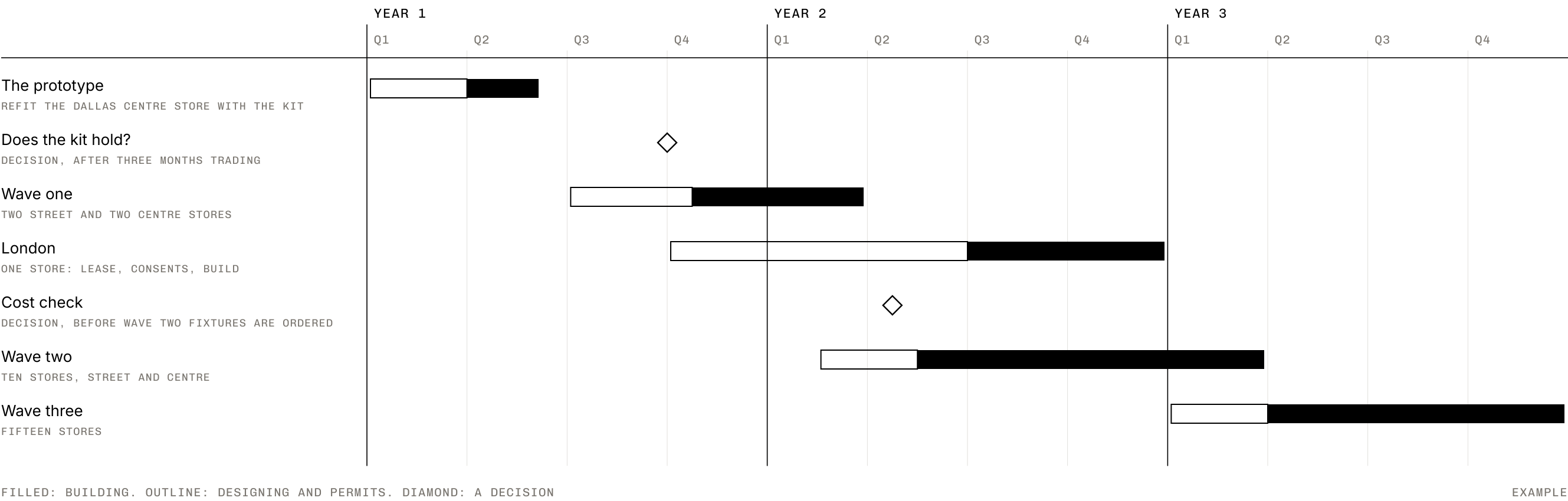
The rest stays. The palette, the first table and the makers’ wall are where the money still goes.

The target is held store by store through the rollout. If two of the first four new stores come in over it, the kit is redrawn before the fixtures for wave two are ordered.

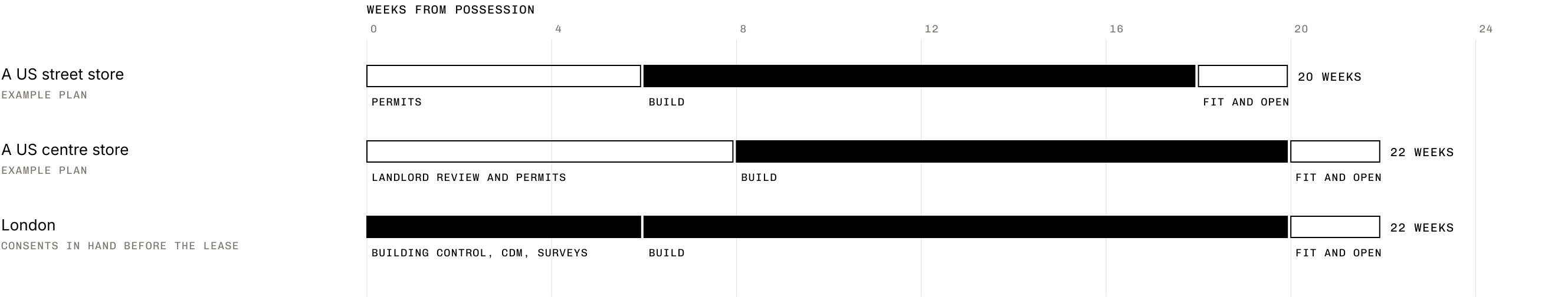
Who builds it, by role. In a real roadmap these are suggested firms: some the brand already uses, some from our network, each met with the brand before they are chosen.

ROLE	IN THE US	IN LONDON	HOW WE BRIEF THEM
Architect of record	One firm licensed in each state where stores open, working from the store book	A UK practice that knows the landlord's estate and the borough	The store book, the kit drawings and the cost target, before they draw anything
Permit expediter	In cities where permits run long	A planning consultant for signs and any listed building	The opening date and what the lease allows
General contractor	Two or three, bid against each other per region	One London shopfitter with retail experience in the centre	A fixed scope from the kit; the fixtures arrive from the maker
Fixture maker	One maker for the made-once pieces, in batches	The same maker, with UK-compliant electrics fitted before shipping	Batch sizes, finishes to the samples, lead time to each opening
Lighting supplier	One supplier, ordered centrally	The same family in UK versions	One lamp, one colour temperature, every store
Cost consultant	The contractors' bids checked against the target	A UK quantity surveyor, from the first sketch	The cost target and the kit's quantities
The landlord's side	Centre landlords' designated trades for sprinkler and fire alarm tie-ins	The landlord's surveyor, who approves the drawings	Early, with drawings for each review stage

Which stores come first and what each one needs. The prototype is a refit of a centre store, where the read found the most to fix, so the kit is tested on a trading floor before thirty new stores depend on it. For scale, in 2025 Reformation opened 15 stores⁹ and Warby Parker 47 net new ones.¹⁰



Planned weeks from possession to opening for one store in each market. Design starts at the letter of intent, so the drawings are ready when the keys are. Published guidance puts a full in-line buildout at 24 to 50 weeks or more.³ New York building applications took 25 days on average from filing to approval in 2026, across all application types;⁴ Los Angeles quotes 15 to 30 business days for plan check.⁵ In London, a planning or advertisement consent decision is due in 8 weeks.⁶ The fixtures are made in parallel, ordered when the lease is signed.



What changes for the first store in London, checked in the extra week a first store abroad gets. Published rules carry the number of their source; the rest is standard UK practice we plan for.

	IN THE US	IN LONDON	WHAT WE DO ABOUT IT
Power	120 volts	230 volts ¹¹	Every lit piece fitted with UK electrics at the maker, before it ships.
Marking	Fixtures listed by UL or ETL; retail displays to UL 970 since July 2024 ¹²	UKCA or CE marking ¹³	The maker supplies the declaration and the marking for each lit piece.
Finishes	Walls and ceilings tested to ASTM E84; hung fabric to NFPA 701	Euroclass to BS EN 13501-1: C-s3,d2 in the shop, B-s3,d2 in circulation ¹⁴	The oak, linen and limewash samples retested; oak linings treated where the class requires it; curtain linen to BS 5867-2 Type B.
Fitting rooms	At least 5% of each cluster accessible, never fewer than one; a 60-inch turning space and a 42-inch bench ¹⁵	A self-contained accessible changing cubicle; no set percentage ¹⁶	One accessible room in every cluster, on both sides of the Atlantic.
Counters	A section no higher than 36 inches ¹⁵	A section 1,500 mm wide, no higher than 760 mm, with knee space ¹⁶	The oak counter gets one lowered end that meets both.
Signs and shopfront	A city sign permit	Advertisement consent, decided in 8 weeks and stricter in conservation areas; ⁷ planning permission for a new shopfront	Both checked for the chosen site before the lease is signed.
The landlord	Landlord approval of the drawings	A licence for alterations, inside an agreement for lease that waits on the consents	Lease signed only once the consents are in.
On site	Building permit and inspections	Building Regulations approval; principal designer and principal contractor under CDM 2015; an asbestos survey before strip-out; a fire risk assessment	Each one in the London programme from the first week.
Shipping	Fixtures by truck	Fixtures by sea, with import duty, VAT and weeks of freight	Ordered earlier, and in the cost target.
Handover	Often a “vanilla box”: heating and cooling, walls, floors, basic power and plumbing ⁸	Usually a shell; “Cat A” and “Cat B” are office terms with no fixed meaning ¹⁷	The London build assumes a shell, so services are in the cost from the start.

Each decision has a date, the evidence it rests on, and what would make us stop or change course.

WHEN	THE DECISION	WHAT IT RESTS ON	STOP OR CHANGE IF
Each new site	Sign the lease	The site’s sales forecast and its cost target give a payback inside the brand’s own target. For scale, Reformation reports its stores paying back in under 24 months on average. ⁹	the payback runs past the brand’s target.
End of month nine	Roll out the kit	The prototype’s first three months against the same months last year, with the first month’s novelty discounted	it sells less per square foot than last year, or staff can’t change the walls themselves.
Before the London lease	Sign in London	The UK version of the kit quoted; consents checked for the chosen site	the UK build runs more than a quarter over the target, or the consents are refused.
Before wave two fixtures are ordered	Order wave two’s fixtures	The four wave-one stores built against the cost target	two of the four come in over the target: the kit is redrawn first.
Each new store	Open	The store checked against the prototype before the doors open	anything on the store book’s list is missing.

We can stay on beside your team as a monthly retainer, as often as your team wants us: through the next store, the next format or the whole rollout. The roadmap becomes the first months’ plan.

	WHAT CARRIES OVER	WHAT THE ROLLOUT DOES WITH IT
The store	The store to build next	The prototype designed and built; the fixture family; the store book every new store follows
The build	The cost target, checked with the makers in Week 2	The kit made in batches; a cost target for every store, held through the build
The rollout	The partners and the order	Partners lined up in each market, from the first site visit to opening day
Your team	Your people who sat at the table	We work alongside them and leave them with everything we learned

SOURCES

Benchmarks only. Nothing about the example brand comes from a source; it is invented.

- 1

[Cushman & Wakefield, U.S. Retail Fit Out Cost Guide, 2026](#)
- 2

[ICSC on the 2024 guide's scope, 2 February 2024](#)
- 3

[Brookfield Properties, The Store Buildout Blueprint, 2026](#)
- 4

[NYC Mayor's Management Report, Department of Buildings, fiscal 2026](#)
- 5

[LADBS, regular plan check](#)
- 6

[GOV.UK, Determining a planning application, 2026](#)
- 7

[DCLG, Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers](#)
- 8

[American Bar Association, on construction terms in leases](#)
- 9

[Reformation, Form S-1, 2026](#)

- 10

[Warby Parker, fourth quarter and full year 2025 results](#)
- 11

[Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002, regulation 27](#)
- 12

[Intertek, UL 970 superseding UL 962, July 2024](#)
- 13

[GOV.UK, Using the UKCA marking, 2026](#)
- 14

[Approved Document B, volume 2, table 6.1](#)
- 15

[2010 ADA Standards, sections 222, 227, 803, 903 and 904](#)
- 16

[Approved Document M, volume 2, paragraphs 3.6 and 5.17](#)
- 17

[Designing Buildings, Fit out of buildings](#)