



DECORATIVE
WINDOW FILM

Endless Design
Options

DECORATIVE WINDOW FILM | Overview

Types of Decorative Window Film & When to Spec Them

Glass has become increasingly prominent in new buildings and retrofit projects, bringing natural light inside, encouraging collaboration and productivity, and providing the sense of more space. But plain glass can be just that – plain. Glass is used in every building, so how can you make it stand out in your projects?

Often overlooked as a fixed element that can't be changed or altered, glass in a building can actually be used to evoke feelings among employees, visitors, or whoever passes through a space.

When it comes to reinventing the look of glass, architects typically have two options: etch the glass surface or apply decorative window film to the glass.

Comparing Etched Glass to Decorative Window Film

Etching, cutting, sandblasting, or texturing glass have long been options to create designs that increase privacy while looking sophisticated and unique. This type of decorative glass, however, is expensive and permanent. Due to the chemical treatment involved in the etching process, decorative glass may not qualify for recycling at the end of its lifecycle; it's also pricey to replace (and potentially dangerous) if accidentally broken.

Decorative window film costs a fraction of etched glass, and can easily be removed without impacting the glass if design tastes change or tenants turn over. The entire decorative film process – from design to installation – can also be completed in a much shorter amount of time than designing and ordering etched glass.

This quick turnaround provides more time for design, and a very short delivery time once the design is approved. Labor and material costs are significantly less as well. Unlike etched glass, decorative window film doesn't need to be ordered months in advance; modifications can also be made along the way if client preferences change or inspiration sparks a new design idea. For large jobs if you want to see a design up close before making a final decision, it's simple to request installation of a full-size sample of the decorative film option(s).

Where Decorative Film Is Used

A quick way to cost-effectively improve the design of a space, decorative window film is applied directly to glass already in place. Once installed, the decorative film is virtually indistinguishable from the glass itself.

In recent years, decorative film options have expanded. Today, high-definition graphics with impressive detail can be printed directly onto window film, letting architects incorporate texture, color and patterns into new or existing buildings for one-of-a-kind designs with minimal cleanup or disruption. Hundreds of transparency and light-transmission options provide varying degrees of privacy and light filtering.

Decorative window film serves many functional and aesthetic purposes:

- Control light transmission
- Enhance visual appeal
- Improve visibility of glass to help improve safety
- Help hold glass together in the event of breakage
- Convey a message
- Partition and separation
- Privacy
- Wayfinding



DECORATIVE WINDOW FILM | Overview

Decorative films are installed on the inside surfaces of glass and resist scratches. They allow glass to serve as a barrier that maintains an open feeling without sacrificing confidentiality, privacy or visual separation.

Remember: The use of decorative film is limited only by your imagination. If you're working with a smooth glass surface, then decorative film is an optimal design option. Below are examples of applications in various settings.

Banks

- Conference rooms
- Entrances
- Private offices
- Signage on windows and walls
- Stairways
- Tabletops
- Teller partitions

Health Care

- Cafeterias
- Chapel spaces
- Children's play areas
- Family resting spaces
- Hallways
- Lobbies
- Pharmacy pickup areas
- Registration areas
- Restrooms
- Waiting rooms

Hotels

- Ballrooms
- Bars/restaurants
- Conference/business spaces
- Corporate offices
- Elevator lobbies
- Entrances
- Foyers
- Interior balconies
- Pool areas
- Private dining spaces
- Registration desk areas
- Showers
- Signage on windows and walls
- Spa rooms
- Workout spaces

Offices

- Cafeterias
- Conference rooms
- Copy rooms
- Cubicle walls
- Hallways
- Huddle spaces
- Kitchenettes
- Partitions
- Private offices
- Restrooms
- Storage areas
- Stairways

Restaurants

- Bars
- Booth partitions
- Cooking areas
- Entrances
- Private party rooms
- Restrooms
- Signage on windows and walls
- Storage areas

Retail

- Department zones
- Dressing rooms
- Offices
- Payment lanes
- Restrooms
- Storefronts

Schools

- Auditoriums
- Cafeterias
- Classrooms
- Entrances
- Hallways
- Libraries
- Locker rooms
- Music rooms
- Private reading areas
- Stairways
- Study spaces

Spas/Health Clubs

- Locker rooms
- Showers
- Signage on windows and walls
- Skylights

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Weigh Your Options: Types of Decorative Film

Consider this your primer on different types of decorative window film – frosts, graphic patterns, gradients, textures, colors and custom designs – and when and where they can be used.

Frosts

Frosted decorative film provides a classic, etched-glass look at less than one-third the cost of real etched glass. Similar to frosted or etched glass, decorative window film with a frost finish helps ensure visual privacy without completely blocking light transmission or darkening a room.

Choose from a wide variety of frosted decorative film that can also reduce glare from other light sources entering through the glass, diffusing it to a comfortable level. This helps occupants receive the benefits of lighting exposure while reducing visual discomfort.

Use frosted decorative film for:

- Conference rooms
- Copy/work rooms
- Exterior windows and doors
- Partitions
- Private offices
- Restrooms
- Shower facilities
- Street-level glass

Frosted Film in Action: Connecting businesses globally to stimulate trade and investment, the World Trade Center Atlanta is frequently used by business professionals from around the world. Private meetings and events are often hosted here, but the lounge area set aside for this function didn't provide privacy through the glass entryway. Frosted decorative film with a customized linear design was installed in less than one day – without disrupting occupants – to provide visually private meeting space without a major financial investment from World Trade Center Atlanta.



Textures

To touch a textured decorative window film, you'd think you were touching etched glass – it involves the same types of gradients and patterns, whether pebbled, crackled, waved, rippled, etc. This type of decorative film repeats a specific pattern from left to right and top to bottom, offering some level of privacy by distorting images seen from the opposite side of the glass. Colors are still visible, but shapes and forms may not be, depending on the texture you choose. Textured film can be designed and installed vertically or horizontally.

The textured surface also allows a substantial amount of light to pass through. As the day progresses, light filtering through the textured film changes when the sun hits different film texture components. By interacting with light to create a 3D prismatic effect, textured films can be more visually stimulating than other decorative films.

Use textured decorative film for:

- Glass doors
- Payment lanes
- Reception areas
- Sidelights
- Statement walls
- Study spaces

Textured Film in Action: Textured film can refract light and simulate the sparkle and clarity of etched glass at a fraction of the price. Textured decorative window film creates an upscale look for medical and high-end offices. Used in spas, it can cultivate ambiance and serenity for an ideal setting. In conference rooms textured decorative window film helps reduce distractions while allowing natural light to come through.



DECORATIVE WINDOW FILM | Options

Gradients

Gradient films offer the best of both worlds: They transition from opaque to clear (using patterns or colors, or both), allowing an unobstructed view through glass in both directions. Views are partially blocked behind the opaque component of the gradient, which adds an exciting design element or selectively hides messy areas.

This graduated, semi-private option provides excellent light transmission, and lets you dictate where and how the gradient transition occurs: from left to right, right to left, top to bottom, bottom to top and the list goes on. Reveal as little or as much as you want with gradient decorative window film.

Use gradient decorative film for:

- Conference and study rooms
- Locker rooms
- Partitions
- Private offices
- Sidelights
- Stairways
- Street-level glass
- Workout areas

Gradient Film in Action: The kitchen and copy area at St. Louis-based Sandberg Phoenix & Von Gontard law firm happen to be located near the library and conference lounge, frequently used as working space by lawyers. Steady foot traffic through the copy area and kitchen – not to mention the clutter – were distracting, but Sandberg Phoenix & Von Gontard wanted to maintain a level of visibility from the library into the corridor. To reduce visual distractions, the law firm chose a gradient film installed horizontally in one afternoon to camouflage the copy area and kitchen. The gradient transitions to clear, still allowing library users to see into the adjacent corridor.



Patterns

Dots, stripes of various thicknesses, geometric patterns, logos, nature designs – whatever shape you can dream, you can include on a patterned decorative window film. These patterns help a building design stand out, turning ordinary glass into a work of art that matches the feel and purpose of a space.

Depending on the pattern frequency, this option can provide varying degrees of visual privacy and light transmission.

Use patterned decorative film for:

- Conference rooms
- Foyers
- Interior balconies
- Lobbies
- Pool areas
- Private offices
- Stairways
- Storefronts
- Wayfinding

Patterned Film in Action: Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's design aesthetic, the Georgia Power Company headquarters in Atlanta is a mix of glass throughout: cubicles, conference rooms, suites and common areas. This vast amount of glass offers an open ambiance and provides ample natural light, but also decreases privacy. Georgia Power Company didn't want to give up daylight exposure, but the staff wanted more seclusion. To achieve this, various types of decorative film – including patterned designs – were used to maintain exposure to natural light while increasing visual privacy and adding a punch of personality.



DECORATIVE WINDOW FILM | Options

Colors

Besides adding pops of color to a space, window film with a color tint can help visitors or customers move in the right direction, funnel clients to the appropriate floor, create unique identities for specific areas, reinforce branding, capture attention and promote creativity.

Use colored decorative film for:

- Bar/dining spaces
- Brand reinforcement
- Children's spaces
- Distraction markers
- Retail storefronts
- Signage on windows and walls
- Wayfinding

Colored Film in Action: Morton's of Chicago features plain glass doors and walls at street level, but the steakhouse wanted to increase privacy for diners inside the upscale eating space. A mix of decorative film was used, including colored film and white frost film. Black decorative film was used to recreate Morton's logo at the street-level entrance; white frosted film with an intricate pattern visually shields diners from street activity.

Custom Designs

The newest and most innovative decorative film is also the most exciting for architects. Customized – decorative film lets you create the decorative film design you want for matchless, one-of-a-kind designs. You decide on pattern, color, opacity, images, pattern size and texture. Choose from landscapes, geometric patterns, cityscapes, global scenes or illustrations that you create. Your crafted design may mimic a decorative film that looks like wood, marble, stained glass, a snowstorm or even a flower garden.

Use custom decorative film for:

- Bar/restaurant spaces
- Conference rooms
- Cubicle walls
- Entrances
- Foyers
- Hallways
- Lobbies
- Pool areas
- Signage on windows and walls

Custom Film in Action: When guests at Waikiki Beach Marriott stepped into the main lobby corridor, the view wasn't exactly desirable. Instead of an aesthetically pleasing space, guests saw through a glass wall into an outdoor area where potting sheds, equipment, and other gardening clutter was kept. After installing a custom-designed decorative film, the potting sheds are now hidden behind the glass wall that showcases a unique, one-of-a-kind palm tree film design reflecting the property's personality.



DECORATIVE WINDOW FILM | Summary



Get Creative with Decorative Window Film

Decorative window film turns nearly any smooth glass surface – walls, windows, partitions, desktops, doors, panels bordering elevators and escalators – into a blank canvas. And it serves as much more than a retrofit solution for existing buildings; it's a design tool that can be used to achieve a desired look, evoke desired emotions or convey a specific message.

It offers all the benefits of etched or decorative glass, but without the potential problems and added costs: special maintenance, high manufacturing and shipping expenses, inordinate labor charges, long lead times and potential inability to recycle. Decorative film lets you add your style to glass in your projects that make them uniquely yours.

[See how it looks now](#) or [find a dealer near you](#).

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