

Awnings & Canopies



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Standard

Per SRC 230.040(k) replacement or installation of awnings and canopies on historic contributing buildings is allowed. Creative or unusually-shaped awnings should be designed with considerable care.

Design

Materials that are compatible with the character of the building's period and style shall be used. A standard street level awning should be mounted so the bottom of the valance is about 7 feet above the sidewalk and projects 4 to 7 feet from the building.



CORRECT
 INSTALLATION

An awning can be attached above the display windows and below the cornice or sign panel. Sometimes it is mounted between the transom and the display windows.



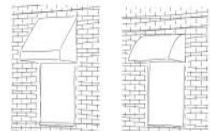
INCORRECT
 INSTALLATION

An awning should reinforce the frame of the storefront and not cover the piers or space between the second story window sills and the storefront cornice. Awnings should reflect the overall facade organization of the building.

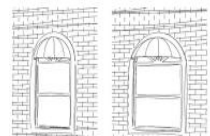
Important architectural details should not be concealed by awnings, canopies or marquees. Awnings on multiple storefront buildings should be consistent in character, scale, and location, but need not be identical.

For Successful Installation

- Use traditional sloped awnings (not umbrella, bubble, or domed awnings).
- Use awnings that are historically accurate in terms of size, shape, and color.
- Fit awning into the frame of the window, door, or storefront.
- Awnings shouldn't obscure architectural features or project too far from the building.
- Keep upper story awnings proportional to the size of the windows.
- Install awnings to ensure the least possible damage to the building.



CORRECT
 INSTALLATION



INCORRECT
 INSTALLATION

Maintenance

- Hose down fabrics every 2 months with clear water to reduce dirt buildup.

- Thoroughly clean awnings every 2 years using natural soap (not detergent) and a soft bristle brush. Allow fabric to air-dry.
- Stains such as mildew or roof run-off may be cleaned using a diluted chlorine bleach or soap mixture. Be sure to test the mixture on an obscure area first.
- Repair any tears to the fabric at first sight to prevent further damage.
- Perform annual checks to make sure the awning remains firmly attached.

History of Canvas Awnings

Canvas awnings were an important element of the traditional storefront. They provided cover from rain and sun, and added color to the facade. Historically, awnings were intended to be operable. They were extended by a hand crank or were attached to square metal loops that were dropped to open the awning. Modern awnings are typically mounted on fixed frames. Some companies still offer operable frames so the awning can be rolled out when needed.

History of Flat Canopies

Flat canopies were commonly attached to buildings in the 1920s and 1930s to replace canvas awnings. Historic canopies were usually constructed of wood, often with decorative metal ceilings below, and were supported by rods or chains hanging from hooks in the upper facade of a building. Modern versions are often produced in aluminum, but because of their simplified detail, can often detract from the historic character of the building.

Additional Reading

Randl, Chad. Preservation Brief #44: *The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement and New Design*. Washington D.C.: Preservation Assistance Division. National Park Service, US Department of the Interior. April 2005.

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Historic Landmarks
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