

# Awnings and Canopies

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE H-1 DISTRICT

CITY OF ROANOKE



*An attractive awning that complements a façade's design and color scheme can reinforce a building's character.*

Many downtown commercial buildings in Roanoke traditionally had canvas storefront awnings to shelter shoppers from the rain or hot sun, and as an attractive way to identify the ground-floor business. Each morning, awnings signaled that the business day had begun. Other civic or prominently located buildings had canopies—flat, roof-like structures that also provided protection from the weather—integrated into the building's architecture. Today, awnings made of durable synthetic fabrics provide an economical way to enhance the character of a commercial façade, while canopies provide a more permanent sheltering structure for buildings of special significance.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS...

*Over-reliance on canopies and awnings may disrupt the important visual relationship between the upper and lower facades of a building.*

*Architectural detailing may suggest motifs for awnings or canopies that relate to the building's overall character.*

## GUIDELINES FOR COMPATIBLE DESIGN

- **Recommended** actions or treatments are indicated by ✓.
- Actions or treatments **not recommended** are indicated by X.

### Appropriate Use

✓ Use awnings only in the following situations:

- to provide weather protection for pedestrians,
- to provide sun protection for display window merchandise,
- to enhance an unattractive or uninteresting storefront, and
- to provide business identification.



*This awning is appropriate for all of the reasons listed above: it protects pedestrians from weather, protects merchandise from sun, adds interest to the storefront, and identifies the business.*

✓ Use individual awnings on upper-story windows only in the following situations:

- to provide sun protection for upper-story spaces,
- to enhance an unattractive or uninteresting upper façade, and
- when awnings are used on a ground-floor storefront.

✓ Reserve the use of canopies for buildings of civic importance or for prominent locations, and limit their use to the ground floor.

X Do not use both awnings and canopies on the same building.

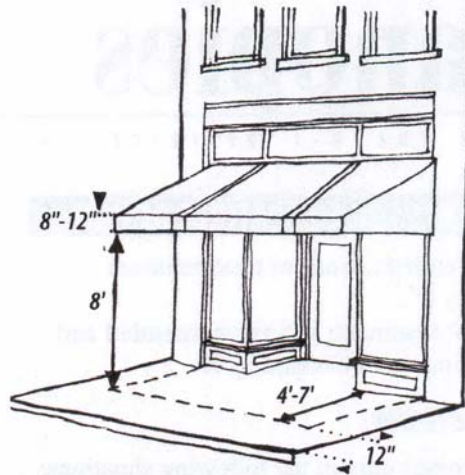
## Location, Size and Proportion

**X** Do not obscure or destroy decorative details of the façade, such as:

- ornamental ironwork,
- decorative brick or tile work,
- transoms,
- storefront cornices,
- storefront piers, and
- brick arches or pressed metal window hoods.

**✓** Proportion an awning so that it has:

- an 8-foot clearance to the sidewalk,
- a 4- to 7-foot projection over the sidewalk,



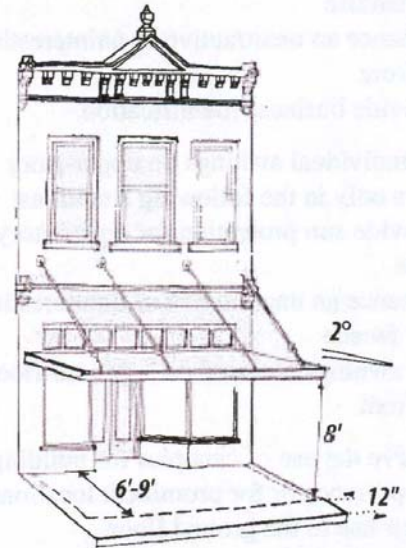
*A properly proportioned awning should be located, whenever possible, below the transom.*

- a 15° to 45° slope, and
- a valance width of 8 to 12 inches.

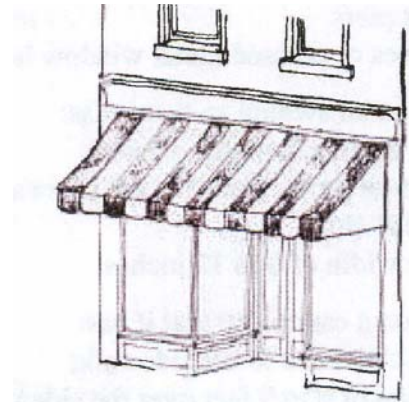
**✓** Proportion a canopy so that it has:

- an 8-foot clearance to the sidewalk,
- a projection of 6 to 9 feet over the sidewalk, and
- a slope to the top surface of no more than 2°.

**✓** Locate awnings or canopies on the transom bar—above the display windows but beneath the transom windows—whenever possible. When such location would prevent adequate clearance above the sidewalk, the awning or canopy may be located above the transom windows or immediately below the storefront lintel, sign panel, or storefront cornice.



*Canopies generally have somewhat larger proportions than awnings.*

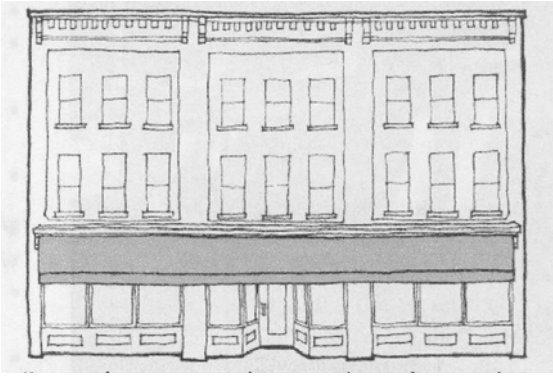


*Locating an awning below the storefront cornice but above the transom may be necessary for buildings with smaller-scale storefronts.*

**X** Avoid using posts or columns that interfere with pedestrians to support an awning or canopy.

**X** Do not permit water to drain off a canopy without a downspout. Runoff should be drained by downspouts located adjacent to the piers of the building.

**✓** Make the width of an awning or canopy somewhat greater than that of a storefront, overlapping slightly but not extending across the outermost structural piers. It may extend across one or more intermediate piers to unify several storefront openings for a single tenant, but only if it does not obscure significant features or details of the façade.



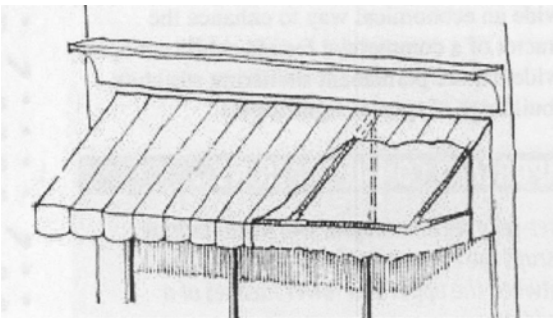
Keep awnings—even continuous awnings—from covering the outermost piers of a building façade to avoid giving a building a fragmented appearance.

- ✓ Proportion upper-floor awnings so that:
  - their slope is somewhat steeper than that of the storefront awning,
  - they extend between one-third and one-half of the way down the window, and
  - their projection is not more than 3 feet.

### Materials, Design, and Details

✓ Choose appropriate awning fabrics such as cotton duck, polyester, or acrylic. Awnings made of aluminum or vinyl are not appropriate.

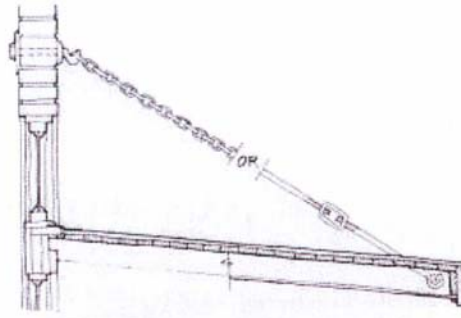
✓ Secure an awning firmly without causing damage to the structure or materials of the



Most awnings are of a structural steel design, using steel structural members of at least 1" in diameter for stability.

façade.

✓ Construct canopies of substantial materials, such as wood or metal, anchored to the facade with chains or tie rods with turnbuckles, and covered with an impervious material such as sheet metal. They may be open underneath or,



Canopies require substantial construction that should be integrated into the architectural design of a building's façade.

preferably, have a finished soffit.

✓ Keep awnings fairly restrained in design and pattern for buildings with highly detailed façades—preferably by using a solid fabric. Striped fabrics and other patterns are better suited to plainer



While patterned awnings may enhance a plain façade, solid colored awnings are better suited for buildings with elaborate detailing.

buildings.

✓ Use appropriately scaled patterns for awnings. Consider larger-scaled patterns for long expanses, and narrower or more repetitious designs for smaller areas.

✓ Choose an awning shape that is appropriate for a particular storefront. The familiar, straight-sloped awning is generally best for most storefronts. Awnings with rounded tops or curved profiles should not be used unless justified by the shape of the storefront or its window or door openings.

✓ Select awning colors that reinforce the overall color scheme of the building.



✓ Make individual awnings for upper-story windows compatible with the design and materials of the storefront awning, and in most cases use the same color and pattern.



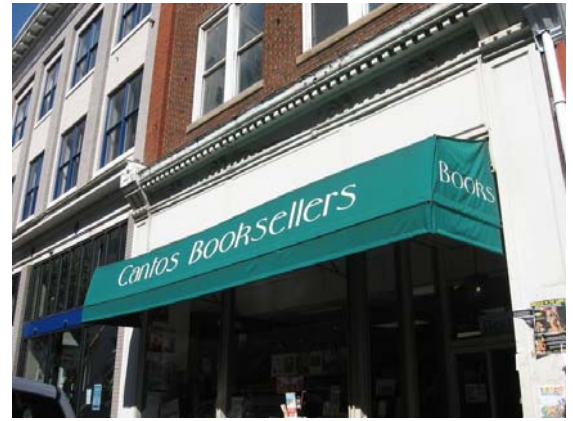
*When upper and lower story awnings are used, their design, materials, color, and pattern should be the same as shown here.*

✓ Use the same style and proportions when choosing awnings for different storefronts or upper-story windows within the same building. Different colors or patterns may be used for adjacent storefronts and upper-floor spaces, but they should be compatible with each other.

✓ Consider awning details, such as the style of the valance (scalloped, notched, straight) as a way of making the awning compatible with the character of a particular building façade.

✓ Make the materials, colors, and details of a canopy and its exposed structural elements compatible with the overall design and color scheme of the building. The canopy's soffit should be painted white or a suitable light color.

✓ Consider using the valance of an awning as a sign panel, provided it is not over 12" in height and that the range of lettering styles used is the same as that for other signs on the storefront. Such lettering may be either silkscreened or sewn onto the valance.



*Awning valances provide a location for signage.*