

Awnings



Most of the east-facing storefronts on Wilsey Square had awnings in the early 20th century. Detail from an early 20th century postcard.

Appropriately designed awnings add visual variety and protect pedestrians and storefronts from the elements, while enhancing the historic character of the Village Center Historic District. They may have a sign on the valance (the lower flap, lip, or vertical plane). In the early 20th century stores in Ridgewood, particularly those facing south and east, frequently had awnings to provide climate control and shelter to pedestrians. Awnings were and are an important character defining feature in the District. Variety in awning color is appropriate as historically awnings have featured a range of different stripe patterns and varied colors.

Guidelines

Choose an awning that complements the character of the building and reflect the shape of the storefront, window, or door opening it covers.

Break long expanses of awnings into segments to reflect the composition of the building and maintain pedestrian scale.

Use awnings to bring unity to a streetscape and to hide inappropriate alterations to a building.

Awnings must be retractable and cannot project more than 4 feet from the building over the public right-of-way and must be a minimum of 7 feet above sidewalk grade.

Do not use awnings to hide significant architectural features.

Awnings are not appropriate for all buildings in the historic district.

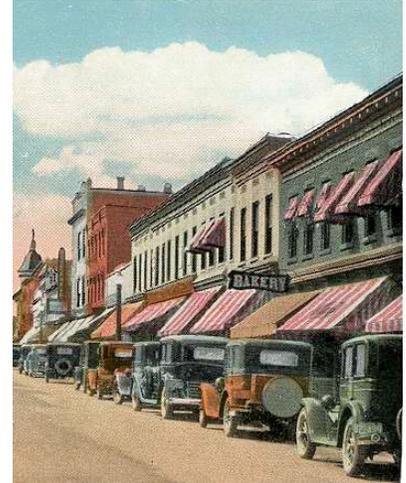
Awnings are regulated in Ridgewood Code (190-122E (2(f), 190-124K, and 249-7, http://www.e-codes.generalcode.com/codebook_frameset.asp?t=ws&cb=1200_A). Storeowners can use a sign running in a horizontal direction on the valance of any permitted awning instead on a sign on the building or display window. No signs are permitted on the main section of the awning.

Awnings

Recommended

For All Buildings

- Install a new awning where no awning previously existed only when it is compatible with the building and the streetscape.
- Use retractable or operable awnings.
- Use awning fabrics which are opaque and in colors compatible with the architecture of the building and with other awnings in the streetscape.
- Locate awnings within the building elements which frame storefronts or window openings. Usually an awning is attached below the storefront cornice or sign panel and does not cover side piers if they are present on either side of the storefront. However, if a storefront contains a transom area of architectural distinction and such installation is compatible with the rest of the streetscape, the awning should be located below the transom area. When possible, base the location of the awning on physical or documentary evidence.
- On a building with multiple storefronts, align the awning with other awnings on the building, unless to do so will continue an inappropriate condition.
- Within a streetscape of similar buildings and a building with multiple storefronts consider using similar awnings. Varied, but complementary colors or stripes may be used to distinguish the different retail establishments. If different designs are used, they should be consistent in character, scale, and location.
- Use awning coverings of durable, protective, and water repellent non-shiny material, preferably canvas or materials that resemble canvas in appearance and texture (canvas blends, solution-dyed acrylic, or acrylic-coated polyester-cotton).
- Install awnings whose shape complements the geometry of the façade design. While the traditional triangular shed frame shape with free-hanging valances or flaps is appropriate for many storefronts, arched awnings are appropriate for arched openings.
- Install awnings with a minimum height from sidewalk of 7' and with a projection of not more than 4'.
- Consider installing an awning to hide inappropriate previous storefront changes.



The south side of East Ridgewood Avenue in the early 20th century displayed both storefront and window awnings. Note how each storefront had its own awning contributing to the pedestrian scale of the streetscape.



Recommended: Install awnings whose shape responds to the shape of the opening.



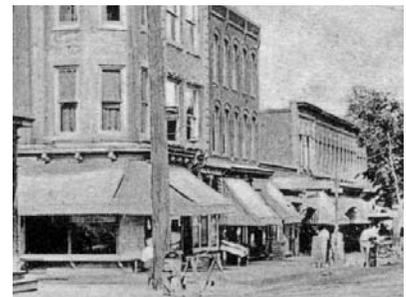
Recommended: For multiple storefronts or display windows in a building or row of buildings install similar awnings in segments within frames of the openings and align them horizontally.

Awnings

Recommended

For Contributing Historic Buildings

- Retain existing repairable awning frames and hardware that are appropriate to the age, style, and proportions of the building. Replace deteriorated fabric coverings with new ones of similar style.
- Install a new awning of similar design to historically appropriate deteriorated awning or install a new awning with a design based on physical or documentary evidence of what was on the building. When old photographs indicate that awnings were an important visual characteristic of a building, it is appropriate to replicate their appearance.
- Install new awning hardware so that it does not damage historic materials. Clamps and fasteners on masonry buildings should penetrate mortar joints rather than masonry surfaces.
- Install awnings whose proportions relate to the overall building façade and, on a wider building, break into segments that reflect the composition of the building's façade.



Early 20th century views document that awnings were an important visual characteristic of the District.

Not Recommended

For All Buildings

- Extending awnings into the second story of the building.
- Placing the awning on a contributing historic building so that it covers important architectural features, such as a decorative transom or original pent or canopy.
- Using shiny fabrics such as vinyl or plastic as awning materials.
- Backlighting or illuminating awnings.
- Generally, using awnings that simulate mansard roofs, umbrellas, or domes.
- Using unpainted raw metal awning frames.



Not Recommended: Extending awning into 2nd story; shiny fabric, logo or sign on the canopy, and letters higher than 8" and more than 1/3 the horizontal width of the awning.

Resources

National Park Service, *Preservation Brief 44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings*, <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief44.htm>