

SIGNS & AWNINGS *for* DOWNTOWN



A Workbook for Business and Property Owners

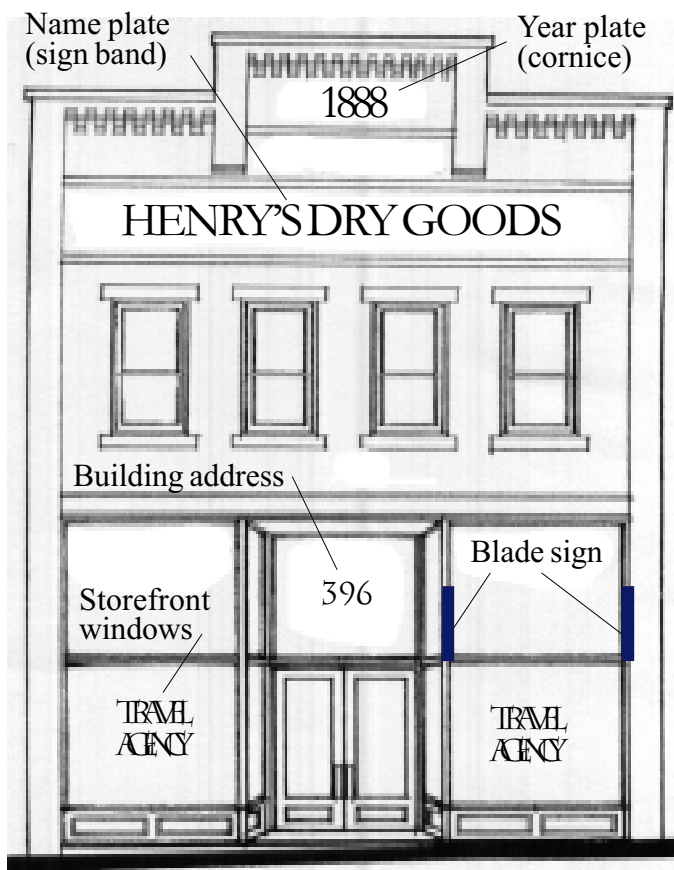
May 1999



WHY ARE APPROPRIATE SIGNS AND AWNINGS IMPORTANT?

The commercial success of downtown businesses depends on the extent to which they distinguish themselves from the competition. Signs and awnings that are appropriate for downtown:

- Communicate a distinctive commercial identity for individual businesses.
- Reinforce downtown's unique historic character.
- Enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Wear well over time.



Traditional Areas for Signage

General Signage Guidelines:

- Simple and effective way to advertise type of business in keeping with historic elements.
- Limit number of signs.
- Place signs in appropriate areas, including the sign band and storefront cornice.
- Light and highlight surface mounted or painted signs with indirect lighting, such as "goose neck" lights or remote spot lights.
- Don't obscure display windows or building's ornamentation.
- Don't use internally lit can signs - too modern.
- Make sure signs or logos are not out of scale with facade.
- Don't use neon or flashing signs unless historically appropriate.
- Don't create a sign that projects out over the sidewalk, unless historically characteristic of the building.

INAPPROPRIATE SIGNS:

Many of downtown's signs have been "modernized" to imitate those of large retailers (e.g., Wal Mart), shopping malls, and strip centers. Using large lettering, gaudy colors, and glossy materials, they create the perception that downtown is simply another strip mall.

Typical examples include:



Brightly colored plastic or vinyl awnings.



Plastic or vinyl signs that are incompatible with downtown's historic character.



Signs that are out of scale with the facade.



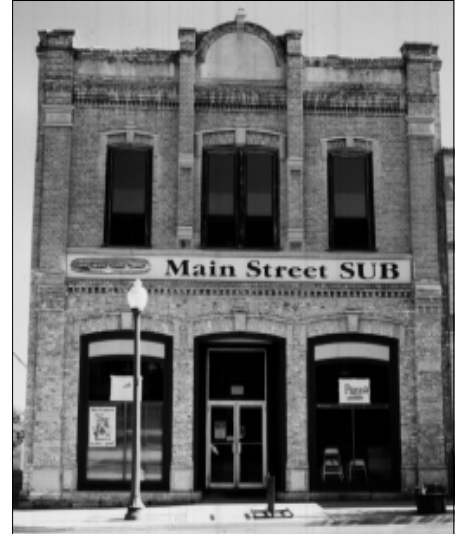
Banners that suggest a business is only temporary.

APPROPRIATE SIGNS:



Neon blade sign.

GOOD
signage should
enhance and
welcome.



Signs that don't overpower.



Signage that is well lit (gooseneck lamps).



Hanging blade sign.



Original painted sign.



Hanging blade sign.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR AWNINGS:



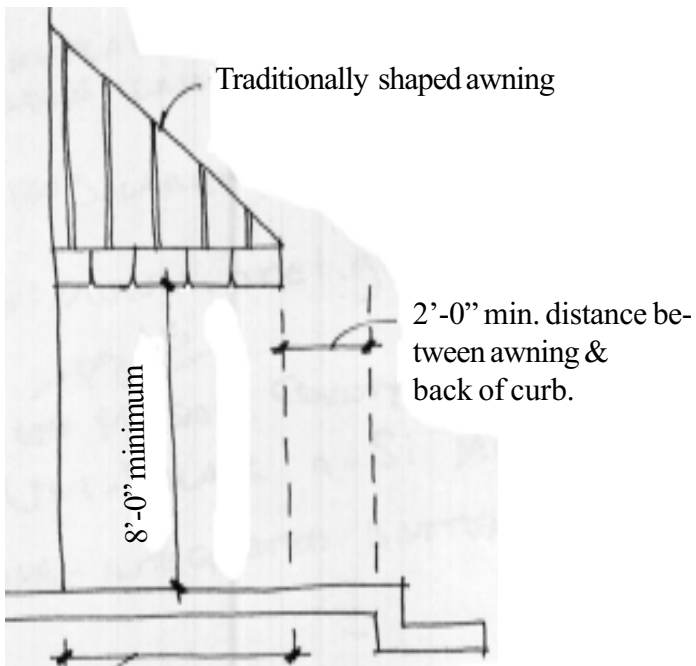
Richfield, Utah

Awnings:

- Fabric awnings or horizontal rigid canopies were used historically on commercial buildings to provide shelter and sun protection. The use of awnings should be encouraged.
- Where original canopies survive, they should be preserved.
- Appropriate for use on most storefronts and on upper story windows, awnings can reinforce the color scheme of the facade.
- Awnings can create a unifying pattern when repeated along the block and should match the width of the storefront without obscuring important details. Awnings provide an opportunity to apply signage.
- Operable fabric awnings can be rolled up during winter storms to protect and extend the life of the material.

Awnings or canopies:

Try to find historic photos of the buildings in your downtown district, such as Tax Photos or archival photos from the Historical Society library, or from private collections, etc. Are there any awnings or rigid metal canopies that survive today in your downtown?



Typical Awning Clearance & Projection Standards

- Use traditional sloped awnings (don't use crown, umbrella, bubble or domed awnings).
- Use traditional awnings to control heat gain, lighting, protect from rain (can use as signage, also), and to compliment the architecture of the building.
- Make them out of fabric (not plastic, vinyl or aluminum).
- Use colors that compliment the colors or materials of the storefront neighboring buildings and streetscape.
- Use awnings that are the right size, shape and color used historically.
- Fit awning into the frame of the window, door or storefront.
- Awnings shouldn't obscure architectural features.
- Keep upper story awnings proportional to size of windows.
- Install to make least damage to building.
- Don't let it project too far out from building.

INAPPROPRIATE AWNINGS:



Internally lit plastic or vinyl awnings.



Plastic "bubble" awnings.

APPROPRIATE AWNINGS:

USE awnings as signage, as well as sun and weather protection.



Awning used for signage.



Awning used for signage.

R E S O U R C E S :

(Most publications are available for public use at the *Utah Division of State History / 300 Rio Grande, Salt Lake City, Utah 84101-1182 / 801-533-3500.*)

Publications:

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Kramer, George H. "Preserving Historic Signs in the Commercial Landscape: The Impact of Regulation." (Unpublished Masters Thesis: University of Oregon, 1989), p. 15. This section on sign regulation is heavily indebted to this work. See especially Chapter 2, History of Sign Regulation and Chapter 3, Mechanics of Sign Regulation, pp. 7-60.

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Stern, Rudi. *Let There Be Neon*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1979. (Rev. 1988).

Tymoski, John. "Porcelain Enamel: The Sign Industry's Most Durable Material," *Signs of the Times*, December 1990, pp. 6671. For goldleaf, see October 1984 and November 1990 special issues of *Signs of the Times*. An excellent short "course" in neon evaluation is offered in "Neon: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," by Paul R. Davis, *Identity*, Spring 1991, pp. 5659.

Venturi, Robert; Denise Scott Brown; and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*. Rev. ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977.

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