

SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS

# Awnings

## THE VICTORIAN TRADITION

Awnings are roof-like fabric coverings extending from the face of a building out over windows or doors. Skilled sail makers were readily available in the old port of Saint John so canvas awnings were commonplace in Victorian Trinity Royal. Their purpose was to shelter customers and shade merchandise, and their design was standard and functional – retractable and fabricated of unbleached cotton, sometimes woven with a stripe, sometimes painted, and always finished with a scalloped edge.

Awnings were large and roomy, extending well out over the sidewalk and across the full width of the storefront. The end panels and scalloped edges formed characteristic swags of drapery when the awnings were drawn up. Merchants often took advantage of the signable space offered by the end panels and front 'fringe' of awnings to obtain extra advertising space. These locations took the place of projecting signs, which were extremely rare.

Awnings became a major element on a building facade. The soft fabric and subdued colors of the original awnings ensured that they did not overpower the architecture.

Modern awnings have the potential to destroy the historic character of the area and must be introduced with great care. Some types of fixed awnings are no more than oversized, boxed-out fascias for the display of giant signs. Such structures ruin the appearance of their host building and spoil the streetscape.



SAINT JOHN

*Photos on this page are good examples of awnings in Trinity Royal.*





SAINT JOHN HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS **AWNINGS**

YES

NO

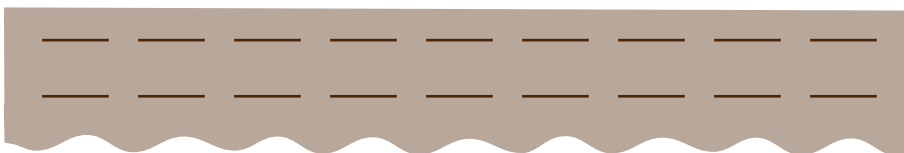
*Check the appropriate boxes in the various categories which apply to your awning.*

- Will your awnings provide rain shelter and shade, and reinforce the historic quality of Trinity Royal?
- Will your awnings be retractable? *Design fixed awnings with a simple standard profile and edges finished with a scallop or flaps. Fixed, round-headed awnings are acceptable over arched windows and doors.*
- Do your awnings extend well out over the sidewalk and along the full width of the door and storefront window?
- Have you used cotton canvas or a material with a similar texture ('sunbrella')? *Use plain or striped fabrics. Large areas of bright colors are inappropriate.*
- Have you used end panels and front 'fringes' for signage? *Use a lettering size in proportion to the available space.*
- Is your lettering on the front skirt only – not on the sloping face?
- Is the skirt at the front of your awning a maximum of 12" high?
- Is your lettering within the maximum 8" height limitation?
- Is your lettering of a traditional type face such as Times Roman, Century Schoolbook, Universe, etc.? *(See Typical Details for Signs)*
- Have you used a logo or graphic on the side panels?
- Do you plan to maintain and clean your awnings regularly? *Awnings collect dust and dirt quickly and are damaged easily.*

**SKETCH YOUR AWNING HERE**



**SKETCH YOUR LETTERS HERE**





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### References

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Practical Conservation Guidelines,  
application forms for Grants and Certificates  
of Appropriateness and other useful  
information for fixing up your older building  
is available from:

Heritage Staff | Planning & Development  
10th Floor, City Hall  
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**Property Owners!** Contact Heritage Staff  
before you begin to make any plan purchase  
supplies or hire contractors. Advice on ways  
to save you time, money and energy will be  
offered free of charge.