



# • DESIGN • REVIEW • GUIDE •

## What makes it “Historic”?

Burlington is well known as a community with a high quality of life, small and cohesive neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown and waterfront – all within a spectacular setting on the shores of Lake Champlain. This deserving reputation is due in part to the City’s small size, entrepreneurial spirit, civic-minded citizens and activist government. One of the many factors that makes Burlington such a great place to live, work and visit is the community’s attention to detail, and respect for it’s setting, heritage and quality urban design.

Burlington’s Design Review process strives to protect the city’s unique qualities and strong sense of place by carrying out citywide development and design objectives. The purpose of this *Design Review Guide* is to help applicants in preparing projects to be reviewed by the City’s Design Advisory Board and Development Review Board. Through materials such as this, the Department of Planning & Zoning seeks to make information available well before the final design of a project saving the applicant, and the city, time and money.

Burlington’s rich heritage is highlighted by the many archeological, historic, and architecturally significant places found throughout the city. Included are structures, districts, corridors, landscapes, sites, and many other unique places that add to the city’s character, and sense of place and time. Burlington has a tradition of protecting and celebrating historic and architecturally significant resources, and is committed to conserving and protecting older buildings through planning and design review.



The process for identifying and describing historic resources is based on a long record of academic research, professional practice, and legal precedent. Uniform standards are used across the country for the identification of historic resources. They are the same as those used to identify properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places - the Nation’s “official” list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. While not all properties are eligible for listing on the National Register, the criteria provide a consistent and tested guide for evaluating historic significance.



Historic properties typically fall into one of two categories - historic buildings or historic districts. Historic buildings possess important architectural, engineering or historic merit in their own right. Examples include the Follett House and Grassmount. Districts represent a collection of buildings whose design qualities, relationships, and history illustrate an important cultural

pattern, historic event, architectural characteristics, or scenic quality as a whole. Examples include the UVM Green and the Ethan Allen Homestead.

Historic significance is a relative thing, and not all historic buildings are created equal. Historic districts landscapes, sites, buildings, structures, and objects can all be listed on the National Register; however buildings that are individually listed are considered to be of greater significance than those listed as part of a district.



### WHAT MAKES IT “HISTORIC”?

In order to be considered "historic," a property must meet three tests: **Age** - it must be at least 50 years old (with certain exceptions); **Integrity** - of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; and **Merit** - it must:

- be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- be associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

An historic evaluation must be carried out by a preservation professional trained and qualified to evaluate historic resources. Criteria for meeting these qualifications also come from the National Register and are based on educational background. Once identified and evaluated, a property is nominated for listing on a local, state, or a national register depending on its level of significance. The nomination is finally evaluated by a reviewing body to determine if the property meets the criteria and should be placed on the register.

### **Categories of Historic Significance**

- § National Historic Landmarks
- § National Register Buildings
- § National Register Districts
- § State Register Buildings
- § State Register Districts
- § Local Register Buildings
- § Local Register Districts
- § Historic Building Survey

### **Implications of Historic Designation**

Understanding the implications of historic designation can be confusing. The term "historic" can refer to a property that is found on a local inventory or "survey," or listed on a local, state or National Register. All are correct, but the implications of each are vastly different.



There is often a misperception that identifying a property as "historic" means it can't be changed and it is subject to many regulatory restrictions. This is not always the case.

When a property is listed on the State or National Register, additional regulations are triggered only when state or federal funds or programs are involved. For example, changes to a property listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register must meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* only when a federal program is involved (e.g.. through a grant, loan, or tax credit). Properties listed on the State Register are protected when the project triggers Act 250, or state grants and other state programs are involved. City zoning only applies to those historic buildings and districts specifically listed in the *Burlington Zoning Ordinance* (Article 8), or for a property already located in a Design Control District (Article 6).

### **BENEFITS OF HISTORIC DESIGNATION**

Just as people are fascinated by family genealogy, learning the history of your property can be an interesting and rewarding process. For more information, see the "Historic Building Research" edition of the *Burlington Design Guides*. Listing your property on the State or National Register may make it eligible for certain tax benefits, loans and grants, and sources of technical assistance. Currently many of these benefits are limited to income-producing properties such as stores and rental properties. In this way historic designation serves to enhance the viability of commercial areas, and many businesses use their historic designation as part of their marketing strategy.



Many of Burlington's most complex and noteworthy preservation projects were made possible by using the Reinvestment Tax Credit Program administered by the State for the National Park Service. Additionally, the Vermont Downtown Program offers financial incentives such as state tax credits and loans for development in historic downtowns that have been designated "Downtown Development Districts" including Burlington.

### **WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?**

*general information and local permits*

- **Burlington Dept. of Planning & Zoning**

149 Church St.

Burlington, VT 05401

802.865.7188 [www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/index.html](http://www.ci.burlington.vt.us/planning/index.html)

*statewide information, technical assistance*

- **Preservation Trust of Vermont**

104 Church St.

Burlington, VT 05401

802.658.6647 [www.ptvermont.org/](http://www.ptvermont.org/)

*tax credits, State and National Register listing*

- **VT Division for Historic Preservation**

National Life Bldg., Drawer 20

Montpelier, VT 05620-0501

800.622.4553 [www.uvm.edu/~vhnet/hpres/org/vdhp/vdhp1](http://www.uvm.edu/~vhnet/hpres/org/vdhp/vdhp1)

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