



DESIGN REVIEW GUIDE

Design Review

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 its 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 Design Advisory Board and the 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.

WHAT IS DESIGN REVIEW?

Design Review is a part of the zoning permit process that focuses on areas within the city that have historical, architectural or cultural merit. Burlington has used Design Review since 1978 as a tool for maintaining the city's special character and appeal, and high quality of life.

The purpose of Design Review is to protect the character of these special places, and to ensure that new development, or changes to existing development, are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Design Review works to keep Burlington from looking and feeling like "Anywhere, USA."

The Design Review process considers a wide range of design issues.

These include such things as open space and natural features, pedestrian and traffic circulation, building scale and massing, architectural history and details, signs and advertising features, landscaping, site lighting, utility connections and stormwater runoff. Each issue considered may appear individually small. However, in combination, they can make the difference between a bad project and a good project.



Burlington City Hall

HOW DOES DESIGN REVIEW BENEFIT THE CITY?

Design Review is a very important tool for protecting community character and revitalizing areas targeted for development. It allows the City to look beyond the specifics of a proposed development, and consider its context and how a project will fit and benefit its surroundings. Design Review benefits the community, and individual property owners, in many important ways.

Reinforce Community Identity

Burlington clearly has a special character. Think about your neighborhood, the waterfront or downtown – if you saw a photograph of one of these places, could you tell it was Burlington, or does it just look like any other place? A great many communities across the country are struggling to regain their identity. We all want to improve our quality of life and make our city more attractive for investment. Burlington already has a strong character and high quality of life. Design Review helps protect this asset for future generations.

Enhance and Protect Property Values

Design Review helps assure property owners that their investment will be protected. Just like traditional zoning prevents landfills from locating in a residential neighborhood, Design Review tries to ensure that the character of the neighborhood is



Historic Renovation

maintained. Improvements in the quality of design stabilize, and in some cases enhance, the value of private property. This in turn makes property more attractive for investment and benefits the overall character of the neighborhood and city.

Promote Economic Development

Design Review is an especially important tool for commercial districts where increased private investment and maintaining an image of vitality is the goal. Places like the Church Street Marketplace and the Downtown Waterfront rely heavily on Design Review to protect and enhance public and private investments, and to support and encourage new development. The same is true for many other places around the country and abroad that are striving to protect their vitality and character.



Church Street Marketplace

HOW DO I KNOW IF DESIGN REVIEW APPLIES TO ME?

The *Burlington Zoning Ordinance* identifies several areas within the city that are subject to Design Review. These areas include the downtown, the Intervale, Old North End, University Campus, waterfronts and major street corridors. Additionally, any major development project or property that is over 50 years old is likely to be considered under the Design Review criteria.

Staff in the Department of Planning and Zoning can tell you if your property or proposed development project will be considered under Design Review.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM THE PROCESS?

Projects going through Design Review may be examined by two separate panels. The Design Advisory Board advises the Development Review Board on design issues, and meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month. The Development Review Board makes the final decision, and meets on the 1st and 2nd Tuesday. The public has an opportunity to review and comment on all development projects requiring a permit, and there is an appeal period after the application is approved or denied.



Follett House

Projects are evaluated in three basic stages: (1) Staff reviews the application and provides comments to the Design Advisory Board; (2) the Design Advisory Board meets with the applicant and forwards comments to the Development Review Board; and, (3) the Development Review Board considers comments provided by staff, the Design Advisory Board, and testimony from the applicant and the public, before rendering a final decision.

It is often best if you can meet with the Planning Department staff before completing the plans for your proposal. They can offer ideas about particular concerns or issues that may arise during the review of your project. By meeting with staff early, these points can be incorporated into your project before you have made a significant investment of time and money.

In some cases, staff can approve small projects in a few weeks. Others may take two months or more depending on the complexity of the project. By law, a decision must be made within 60 days of a hearing.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

city zoning permits & general information

- **Burlington Department of Planning & Zoning**

149 Church St, Burlington, VT 05401

802.865.7188

www.burlingtonvt.gov/pz

city building permits & general information

- **Burlington Department of Public Works**

645 Pine St, Burlington, VT 05401

802.863.9094

www.burlingtonvt.gov/dpw

historic preservation and rehabilitation tax credits

- **Vermont Division for Historic Preservation**

National Life Bldg. Drawer 20.,

Montpelier, VT 05620-0501

802.828.3211

www.historicvermont.org

historic rehabilitation and preservation

- **Preservation Trust of Vermont**

104 Church Street

Burlington, VT 05401

802.658.6647

www.ptvermont.org



Residential Infill

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