



**Statutory Authorization:** 22 V.S.A. Chapter 14 (Vermont Historic Preservation Act), 24 V.S.A. §§4414(F), 4433(3), & the National Historic Preservation Act / **Type:** NONREGULATORY & REGULATORY

**Related Topic Areas:** Community & Economic Development; Design Review; Downtown Revitalization; Open Space & Resource Protection Programs; Open Space & Resource Protection Regulations

# Historic Preservation

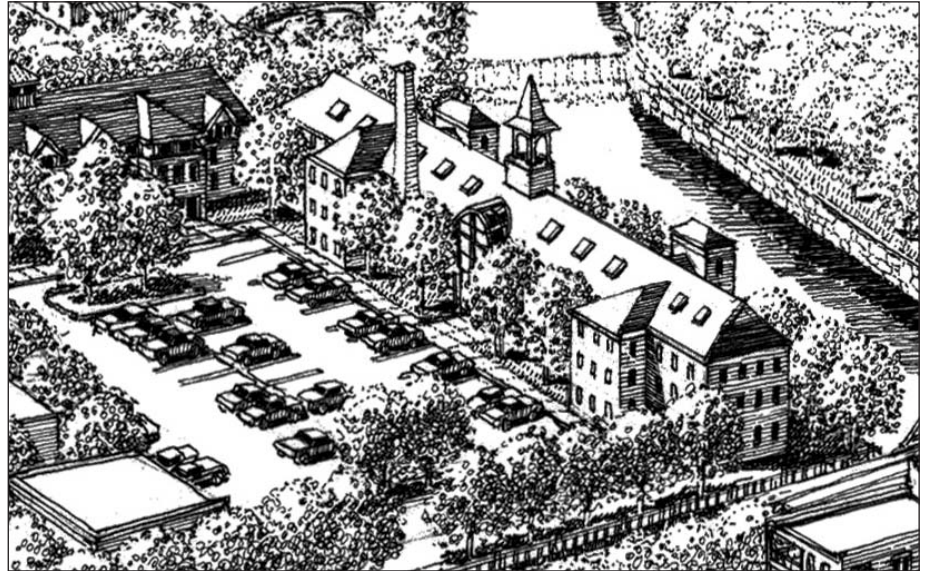
11

## Overview

Vermonters have been practicing historic preservation—the active, continued use of old buildings and traditional downtown and village centers—for generations. We often live in, work in, worship in, do business in, and even shop in historic buildings. It is the Vermont way. A homeowner fixing his or her roof or windows or a developer converting an old brick mill to affordable housing units is practicing historic preservation. An entrepreneur choosing to locate a new business in an old downtown building or a community deciding to use a historic village school instead of constructing a new building is also practicing historic preservation.

Historic preservation is based on recognizing the historic, architectural, and/or archeological significance of buildings, sites, and places. It provides continuity with the past, while not freezing history in time. Maintaining a connection with the past helps people to feel grounded in the present. Maintaining the physical aspects of a community—the village school, the general store, the local post office, the town hall, the church, the fraternal hall, or the downtown center—connects people to each other and strengthens community. It reinforces the idea that over time and through common experience we connect with others and create a community, a place where we belong.

Historic preservation often begins with a survey, or inventory, of historic resources that identifies what is worthy of preservation. Sometimes you can easily see the value of a historic building or place: for instance, when a building has intricate architec-



**Historic mill building, barns, and other older structures have a unique character and have the potential for public uses, such as schools and libraries, as well as for private development. But reuse can be more expensive than building new. Municipalities can promote restoration by documenting and celebrating historic resources and by establishing local regulations and incentives that reward those willing to reuse historic buildings.**

tural detail and high-quality materials. Other times, the value may be less readily apparent. A row of houses built by a railroad company for its employees may be architecturally undistinguished but valuable for the history it embodies of the growth and development of a town. Archeological resources are less visible than historic buildings and structures but provide powerful links to a community's history and sense of place. Archeological sites are tangible clues to Vermont's distant, and not-so-distant, past and serve as important educational, recreational, and spiritual assets to a community and region.

Work on historic buildings generally follows some simple guidelines to maximize their continued value.

- Preserve and retain the historic features and materials of a building whenever possible.
- If it is not possible to preserve fea-

tures and materials, replace them with features and materials that match.

- When building an addition, distinguish it slightly from the old part of the building and construct it so that the original building can still be easily seen.
- Preserve the information in a potential archeological site by protecting rather than disturbing it.

## Application

In Vermont, municipal plans are required to include “a statement of policies on the preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources.” This statement is an opportunity to summarize the history and development of a community, to highlight its historic areas and important buildings (perhaps with a map of state-

registered sites and/or an archeological sensitivity map), and to state the community's goals for preserving those resources. It is a place to describe what needs to be done to preserve historic resources and to outline ways to implement those goals. Perhaps a community wants to expand or update its inventory of historic buildings, or to work with the Division for Historic Preservation to develop an archeological sensitivity map of the town. Maybe the town wants to explore the possibility of becoming a Certified Local Government. The following implementation tools include the most common actions municipalities can take to further historic preservation goals.

## Local Historic Preservation Commissions

Some Vermont municipalities have created local historic preservation commissions to encourage preservation activities in their communities. They can be educational, advisory, regulatory, or some combination, depending on what the community needs. One type is the Certified Local Government (CLG) commission. Set up as a partnership with the state's Division for Historic Preservation, a CLG is created by a municipal government following federal guidelines, and it may apply for matching grants to carry out local preservation activities. Up to about \$50,000 is allocated each year from a National Park Service grant to the state, and most of the grants are for small, phased projects. The CLG commission sets its own priorities, which may include education, survey of buildings or archeological sites, and registration of historic buildings, planning, and/or restoration/rehabilitation projects. In 2006, Vermont CLGs included Bennington, Brandon, Burlington, Calais, Hartford, Montpelier, Rockingham, Shelburne, Stowe, Waterville, Williston, Windsor, and the Mad River

### Criteria for Historic Register Evaluation

The National Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Places use the following criteria.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contri-

bution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

C. That 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

D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Valley Planning District (a planning municipality for the towns of Fayston, Waitsfield, and Warren).

Municipalities may also authorize local historic preservation commissions to review changes to historic buildings in a designated area. Sometimes the CLG commission takes on that added responsibility. (See the section Historic Districts and Design Control Districts in Local Zoning on page 11-3, as well as the topic paper, Design Review.)

## Historic Building Survey and Registration

Identifying and evaluating the condition of the historic resources in a community is a major component of local historic preservation. The following sources of information about historic resources can provide a starting place for making a local inventory.

The state's Division for Historic Preservation has been inventorying historic buildings in Vermont since the 1970s, and the results are gathered in the Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey. Each entry includes a photograph, architectural and historic information, and a map location. In areas of concentrated development, such as village centers, residential neighborhoods, and downtowns, resources are generally recorded in

groups; these areas are identified as historic districts, with additional information about a district's overall character and development provided.

Extensive statewide historic contexts about various themes in Vermont history and various types of historic buildings are also available. The survey, organized by town, is available at the division's office in Montpelier and on CDs, which can be purchased for a nominal amount. Rutland and Addison counties have published survey volumes, and libraries and town clerks often have photocopies of local surveys. The division is currently working on a project to make the information available on the Internet by the end of 2008. The Division for Historic Preservation supports towns that want to expand or update survey coverage by providing technical assistance and sharing GIS-based survey software and equipment for new survey projects.

About 30,000 of buildings in the survey are also listed on the State Register of Historic Places, a designation given after review by the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The state register designation is mainly an honorific status, although under Act 250 review, listed sites are presumed to meet the definition of "historic site" under Criterion 8 for review of development applications and are thus considered in the decision of whether to issue a

permit. Many towns have highlighted their historic resources by including a map or list of local state register sites in their municipal plan.

The Division for Historic Preservation also administers the National Register of Historic Places in Vermont. The national register is the nation's list of historic and archeological properties worthy of preservation. These properties can be significant at the national, state, or local level. The vast majority have state or local significance, with the understanding that the history of the nation is made up of the history of its states and local communities.

The national and state registers use the same criteria for inclusion, although more documentation (usually prepared by a consultant) is required for national register designation, as well as approval by the National Park Service. About 10,000 properties in Vermont are currently listed on the national register. National register designation makes properties eligible for federal and state tax credits and offers some protection from federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects that would harm them. However, it does not restrict what an owner may do to his or her property, including tearing it down. When sites are listed on the national register they are automatically listed on the state register.

## Preservation Standards

There are ten professional standards that offer guidance on how to appropriately treat historic buildings. They are known as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and they are used as guidelines in many federal, state, and local programs. The standards promote the retention of historic features and materials, including later historic layers of a building's history, and encourage new construction that defers to and respects the old. In applying

them, economic and technical feasibility need to be taken into account. Each building and situation is unique. Historic preservation professionals can help interpret the standards as part of a planning or design team on major projects.

## Historic Districts and Design Control Districts

Vermont law authorizes two types of districts that can protect historic buildings and areas through local land use regulations. A Design Control District is a zoning overlay district that creates planning and design criteria to protect historic or other valued resources in a designated area. A Local Historic District, also known as a Design Review District, is an ordinance that specifies certain design review criteria and a commission to review projects. Local regulations of this kind are by far the best way to ensure protection of historic resources in a community. (For more information, see topic paper, *Design Review*. See also *Making Defensible Decisions: A Manual for Local Historic Preservation Commissions and Design Review Boards* [2002], available from the Division for Historic Preservation.)

## Archeological Information and Maps

Evidence of human settlement in Vermont reaches back 12,000 years to the end of the last ice age. The only way to learn more about the ways people lived in and adapted to the environment over the whole period of human settlement is through the fragile archeological remains in and over the landscape—and sometimes under water.

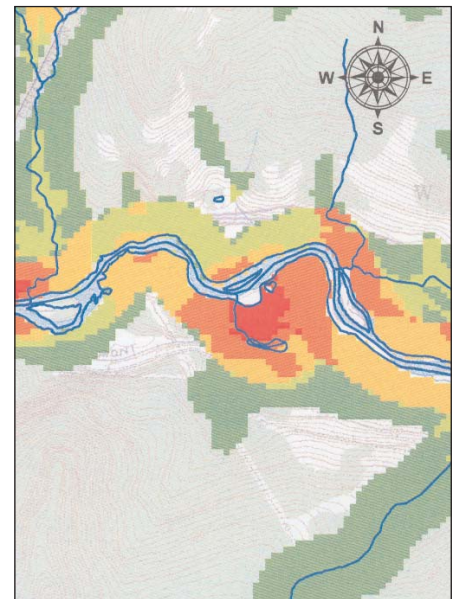
These sites represent places occupied and used by 500 generations of Native Americans and 16 generations

### Division for Historic Preservation

Contact information for the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, including access to the publications listed in this paper and web links to more information, can be found at [www.historicvermont.org](http://www.historicvermont.org) or by calling the division at the Department of Housing and Community Affairs at 800-622-0501 or [www.historicvermont.org](http://www.historicvermont.org).

of Euro-Americans who lived, hunted, fished, gathered foods, farmed, homesteaded, fought, traded, manufactured, mined, and died on this land. Many of these places represent aspects of Vermont history that have no counterparts in modern life. While the Vermont Archeological Inventory currently records over 5,000 archeological sites, most sites have yet to be discovered and documented.

Inventorying archeological resources requires different strategies than survey of historic structures.



**General information about the potential locations of prehistoric Native American archeological sites anywhere in Vermont are available through the Division for Historic Preservation's interactive GIS-based information system, available at [www.historicvermont.org](http://www.historicvermont.org).** Map from Division for Historic Preservation.

Community members can compile preliminary site inventories, documenting and mapping sites based on historic maps, oral histories, and documentation of artifact collections and “find spots.” Archeological surveys conducted by professional archeologists result in yet more detailed levels of information.

The Division for Historic Preservation has created GIS-based maps, available through the website, [www.historicvermont.org](http://www.historicvermont.org), that display preliminary information about the potential locations of prehistoric Native American archeological sites across the state. The resulting maps from this powerful new tool can be included in municipal plans and can provide early notification of potential archeological sites on parcels proposed for development. With early planning, developers may avoid site disturbance and preserve important archeological resources by staying clear of archeologically sensitive locations in a project area. Develop-

ment projects that are subject to Act 250 or recipients of federal funding are required to address the development project’s impacts on archeological resources.

## Financial Assistance

Every spring, the Division for Historic Preservation produces a comprehensive funding directory for Historic Preservation Projects in Vermont. It includes public and private grant sources and tax credits, with information on personnel to contact, application deadlines, amounts awarded, criteria, and so on. (Links are available at [www.vpic.info](http://www.vpic.info); or go directly to [www.historicvermont.org](http://www.historicvermont.org); or call the division for a copy.)

In addition to the historic preservation programs described above, eligible municipalities can seek downtown district or village center designation to further boost opportunities for historic preservation. Through these designation programs, owners renovating

historic buildings are eligible for significant tax benefits, and designated municipalities are given priority in a number of state grant programs. (For more information, see topic paper, *Downtown Revitalization*.)

### Ancient Roads Offer Clues to Archeological Sites

Ancient roads from the eighteenth and nineteenth century offer clues to many archeological sites from these time periods since former settlements, cemeteries, taverns, military camps, animal pounds, and other sites are located adjacent to these abandoned roadways. In some cases, the roads themselves are significant archeological resources, such as the Crown Point Military Road. Archeology professionals can offer expertise in researching and mapping ancient roads and associated archeological sites. (See topic paper, *Roads & Highways*, for more information.)

### Archeological Resources: Windows to Vermont’s Long and Unrecorded Past

Archeological sites are the most important means of understanding the 12,000 years of Vermont history that predated Euro-American settlement. These resources also inform us about many segments of Vermont history since 1609 since much was unrecorded: most people did not write about their lives, and most historians were selective about what they wrote.

Some examples include:

**10,000- to 12,000-year-old Paleo-Indian sites** in Highgate, Milton, Williston, Ludlow, Derby, and elsewhere

**6,000-year-old Native American campsites** (statewide)

**Ancient Native American stone quarry sites used for thousands of years** in St. Albans, Wallingford, Orwell, and elsewhere

**Native American farming and village sites** in Winooski, Spring-

field, Burlington, and elsewhere  
**Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French military and settlement sites** in Isle La Motte, Panton, Addison, Bridport, and elsewhere in the Champlain Valley

**Revolutionary War sites** in Orwell, Shoreham, West Haven, Poultney, Castleton, and elsewhere

**Nineteenth-century blast furnaces** in Bennington, Brandon, Dorset, Troy, and statewide

**Nineteenth-century shipwrecks** of horse ferries, canal boats, and steamboats in Burlington, Colchester, Shelburne, and elsewhere in Lake Champlain and other inland lakes and ponds

**Nineteenth-century glass factories** in Burlington, Salisbury, and elsewhere

**Twentieth-century Civilian Conservation Corps camps** in Waterbury, Groton, Burke, and elsewhere

**Abandoned mining settlements and industrial complexes** in Vershire, Strafford, Corinth, Plymouth, and elsewhere