

# 1 7. Historical, Cultural, 2 Archeological and Scenic 3 Resources

## 4 A. Introduction

5 There are many examples of desirable development that have adapted very well to our  
6 historical landscapes and existing settlement patterns. Vermonters have a strong desire  
7 to conserve the Vermont landscape while accommodating growth. Growth provides  
8 significant advantages for Vermont and the TRO Region, particularly in the creation of  
9 employment opportunities and housing.

## 10 B. Historic Structures and Sites

### 11 Advantages of Historic Preservation

12 Historic preservation is a means to curb the decay of our traditional village centers. It is  
13 also a means to celebrating, appreciating, understanding, and protecting our heritage  
14 and built environment.

15 Preservation of historic buildings can increase the market value of property and increase  
16 tax revenues to towns. Buildings of architectural merit help shape community identity. In  
17 numerous settings throughout the Region, preservation of important landmarks such as  
18 the Strafford Meeting House, Bridgewater Woolen Mill, Bethel Town Hall, and Fairlee  
19 Town Hall, have contributed to sense of place and community pride. Once such work has  
20 begun in a community, other efforts follow, often heightening community betterment  
21 and identity. The combination of rural scenery and the attractive built environment is a

22 key reason why thousands come to the Region and contribute millions of dollars to our  
23 economy.

24 Beyond the practical and aesthetic, preservation is part of our ethic—do not throw  
25 something away if it is still useful. Instead, common sense and tradition seek to conserve,  
26 use, and improve what already exists.

27 And lastly, as eloquently stated by former Governor Hoff: “There’s no way you can  
28 understand the present unless you have a firm grounding in the past.”

## 29 [The National Register and Programs for Historic Preservation](#)

30 More than 30,000 of the Region’s historic structures have been documented by the  
31 Agency of Commerce and Community Development’s Historic Division under their  
32 program, the [Vermont Architectural Resource Inventory \(VARI\)](#). VARI is a collection  
33 of survey information that contain properties of historic or architectural significance  
34 throughout Vermont.

35 To aid in the preservation of the most notable historic resources, Congress in 1966  
36 created [The National Register](#), which is a federally maintained list of culturally  
37 important districts, sites, buildings, and structures worthy of preservation. Historic  
38 districts are geographic locations that contain historically or architecturally  
39 significant buildings, properties, or sites. Such structures or sites are considered to  
40 be [contributing components](#), but an historic district may also contain [non-](#)  
41 [contributing](#) (non-historically or architecturally significant) buildings, structures,  
42 objects, or sites.

43 Inclusion in the Register offers a measure of protection against federally licensed or  
44 funded construction projects because federal agencies are required to consider the  
45 impact of their projects on properties included in or eligible for inclusion in the  
46 Register. Many of the buildings and structures included in the State Survey are  
47 eligible for the National Register.

48 Under the provisions of [Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act](#), prior to  
49 proceeding with a federally funded project affecting a historic structure, the federal  
50 agency and the state historic preservation officer must attempt to identify ways to avoid  
51 or minimize adverse effects One successful example in the Region was the replacement of  
52 the Elm Street Bridge in Woodstock Village, which is listed on the Register. In this case, the  
53 Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration were forced  
54 to waive national bridge design standards and to downsize the project to retain many of  
55 the elements and components of the historic smaller and narrower bridge. Another  
56 advantage of the National Register of Historic Places is that owners of income producing  
57 buildings are eligible for tax credits on rehabilitation work, provided such work meets  
58 certain prescribed standards.

59 Several state organizations and agencies have been actively involved in historic  
60 preservation and community development:

- 61 • [Preservation Trust of Vermont](#)
- 62 • [Division for Historic Preservation](#)
- 63 • [Vermont Agency of Transportation](#)
- 64 • [Vermont Downtown Program](#)
- 65 • [Vermont Barn Preservation Grant Program](#)

- 66 • [Vermont Historic Preservation Grant Program](#)

## 67 Local Historic Preservation Methods

68 Under the provisions of the Vermont Municipal Planning and Development Act (24 VSA  
69 §4414), municipalities can protect areas of [historical sites](#) by designating [historic overlay](#)  
70 [districts](#) as part of local zoning bylaws. Within such overlay districts, prior to exterior  
71 modifications to a structure or the erection of a new one, the local planning commission  
72 must first grant approval. In determining whether to grant approval, the commission must  
73 evaluate whether the proposed changes would not impair the special character or  
74 significance of its surroundings.

75 For projects that fall under the jurisdiction of Act 250, [Criterion 8](#) protects historic sites  
76 along with other rare and irreplaceable natural resources. See the [Historical Preservation](#)  
77 [project review flowchart](#) for more information. Before granting a permit, the District  
78 Commission or Environmental Court needs to find that a subdivision or development will  
79 not have an undue adverse effect on historic sites. Historic sites are defined as those  
80 included in the National Register of Historic Places, the State Register, or other properties  
81 deemed historically significant by the Division for Historic Preservation (10 VSA  
82 §6001(4)). In approaching such a determination, the Act 250 review process can evaluate  
83 local and Regional Plans to determine whether the proposed project complies with or  
84 violates a community standard intended to preserve the historic qualities of the site.

## 85 **Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Historic Structures and Sites**

### 86 **Goals**

- 87 1. Historic structures and sites, where the public interest is clearly benefited, are  
88 enhanced and preserved.
- 89 2. The renovation of existing or construction of new structures is consistent and  
90 compatible with the historic character of the site or area.
- 91 3. Sensitive economic development is promoted in areas of historic value (such as in  
92 town centers, villages, and hamlets).

93 **Policies**

- 94 1. Land development or subdivision within or immediately adjacent to areas or sites of  
95 historic significance should take reasonable steps to ensure that the design of the  
96 project fits the historic context.
- 97 2. Restoration or rehabilitation of historic sites should not destroy or significantly alter  
98 their character and immediate environment.
- 99 3. Destruction of a historic site is discouraged.
- 100 4. Public improvements or structures such as bridge rehabilitation or replacement,  
101 street widening, roadway reconstruction, signage, utility distribution systems, and  
102 lighting must be designed to avoid unnecessary degradation of recognized historic  
103 sites or areas.
- 104 5. Public investments of regional or statewide significance must be planned in  
105 consultation with local and state officials and the Division for Historic Preservation.
- 106 6. Improvements to historical transportation facilities, instead of replacement, are  
107 promoted.

108 **Recommendations**

- 109 1. TRORC will continue to support efforts to designate National Historic Register Districts  
110 and Sites. In so doing, TRORC will coordinate with the State and affected municipalities.
- 111 2. TRORC will work with the Agency of Transportation, town officials, its Transportation  
112 Advisory Committee, and other groups and organizations to ensure that design  
113 standards and plans for proposed transportation projects are reasonably compatible  
114 with historic resource needs and values.
- 115 3. Towns are encouraged to outline in their town plans historic resources deemed worthy  
116 of protection. Town officials can then use this to participate in the Act 250 process,  
117 thus influencing decisions affecting historic sites in their community. Local historical  
118 societies should continue research, documentation, education, and advocacy efforts.
- 119 4. Developers should incorporate historic structures and important architectural details  
120 into their project planning.

121 **C. Archeological Resources**

122 **Background**

123 Archeological evidence found throughout the State depicts a history of human occupation  
124 that dates back 9,000 years. Most Native American populations in the Northeast lived in  
125 small groups that subsisted by following a seasonal cycle of resource availability. Rivers  
126 provided an important transportation network, water supply, and fishing grounds.

127 The archeological record provides the only physical remnants of pre-European human  
128 occupation. In addition, the record can provide information about past environments,

129 climate, and landscape changes. Although only a few archeological sites in the Region  
130 have been designated on the Vermont Archeological Inventory, there are many areas  
131 whose topography and proximity to natural resources indicate a likelihood of pre-  
132 European habitation. Most prehistoric sites are located within 300 to 500 feet of an  
133 existing or relic water source, on slopes of eight percent or less, and often have a  
134 southern exposure. Criterion 8 of the Act 250 requires that a development [“will not have](#)  
135 [an undue adverse effect”](#) on historic sites and sites of archeological importance;  
136 however, Act 250 only covers larger developments, and many archeological sites may be  
137 located on private land. For areas of potential archeological significance, private  
138 landowners need to know how best to preserve important resources on their land. Since  
139 many archeological resources are located in areas such as river corridors and prime  
140 agricultural land, preservation and conscientious management will serve multiple  
141 purposes.

142 Public awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the Region’s archeological  
143 resources is limited. This is due partly to incomplete documentation of the resources, and  
144 partly to a narrow perception of what constitutes archeological resources. Lack of  
145 recognition and appreciation can result in missed opportunities for stewardship. These  
146 resources are not easily identified and are often subject to accidental destruction.  
147 Additionally, there is a perception by landowners that the protection of archeological  
148 resources invariably means more restriction on the use of their property without much  
149 benefit.

## 150 **Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Archeological Resources**

### 151 **Goals**

- 152 1. Archeological resources within the Region are preserved, and an appreciation of  
153 their value as a vital aspect of the Region’s historic and cultural past is promoted.
- 154 2. Comprehensive planning and land use development are better integrated with  
155 archeological resource protection at the federal, state, regional, and local levels.

156 **Policies**

- 157 1. Existing archeological resources must be protected where public interest is  
158 demonstrated. No land development should be permitted when it results in  
159 unnecessary loss of an archeological resource at the state or federal level.
- 160 2. Within archeologically sensitive areas, planning should consider the impacts a  
161 project may have on the resource. If warranted, a site inventory should be  
162 conducted as part of project planning. Projects that have undue adverse impacts  
163 on these resources must be discouraged or redesigned to mitigate the impact.  
164 Project planners are encouraged to contact the state archeologist for further  
165 information.
- 166 3. To preserve significant archeological sites, purchase of land or development rights  
167 is encouraged when such actions are compatible with local plans and this Plan.  
168 Because these sites are often farmland, floodplains, wetland margins, and other  
169 similar low-lying land, priority should be given to projects that serve multiple  
170 preservation purposes.

171 **Recommendations**

- 172 1. To increase public awareness of archeological resources, TRORC encourages  
173 archeologists, local and regional groups, towns, and landowners to organize



174 educational programs focused on Vermont’s history. Such a program could be made  
175 a part of an overall cultural heritage program through public schools.

176 2. Local planning commissions, conservation commissions, historical societies, and  
177 other interested groups are encouraged to incorporate an archeological plan for  
178 their community in their town plan. Such a plan could be an important step in  
179 planning future development in identified areas.

## 180 D. Scenic Resources

### 181 Background

182 In Vermont, the economic value of scenic resources to tourism cannot be brushed aside.  
183 The landscape of the Region is an economic asset. It represents some of the finest  
184 examples of townscapes and rural scenic character in the world, and it has tangible  
185 economic value. Tourists spend money in the Region because they are attracted to the  
186 scenery, values, and quality of rural life. Tourism is a significant industry in Vermont’s  
187 economy. The public’s commitment to the preservation of our visual resources can be  
188 traced to the late 1960s with the passage of Vermont’s anti-billboard legislation. All  
189 municipal plans prepared and adopted by member towns in the Region consistently  
190 stress the goal of maintenance of rural character.

### 191 Patterns for Development: A Community Standard

192 The inherent beauty of the Region is tied to the visual relationship between buildings,  
193 the working landscape, and mountains and river valleys. Over the past fifty years,  
194 development patterns have emerged that propagate highway strip development. Certain  
195 areas immediately adjacent to major highways are examples of development sprawl. In

196 some instances, these areas adversely affect the value of scenic resources for travelers.  
197 Such a land use pattern will serve, amongst other factors, to destroy the transition  
198 between town village centers and the countryside.

199 The Region’s landscape is also changing due to a gradual reforestation and loss of fields  
200 and meadows due to a reduction in agriculture. The resultant land use pattern is a  
201 product of economic forces that can permanently alter or pressure that landscape.

202 Determining scenic significance of resources and evaluating the probable impacts of land  
203 development or subdivision on the resource and the recommended measures that may  
204 be desirable to mitigate visual impacts is a complex matter.

## 205 **Prominent Scenic Landscapes**

206 The following areas are likely to be areas of scenic significance:

- 207 1. Shorelands immediate to public lakes, rivers, or ponds;
- 208 2. Areas immediately adjacent to scenic corridors;
- 209 3. Prominent ridgelines, mountaintops, or excessively steep slopes that can be readily  
210 viewed from public corridors;
- 211 4. Exceptional agricultural and historic areas;
- 212 5. Areas within or immediately adjacent to natural areas (i.e., wetlands) designated by  
213 the State; and
- 214 6. Areas of high scenic quality that are publicly recognized as exceptionally unique or  
215 are noted examples of the dominant characteristics of an area in the Region.

216 Examples of prominent scenic areas within the TRO Region include designated  
217 byways.

- 218 • Connecticut River Byway (a National Scenic Byway): Route 5, Hartland to Newbury
- 219 • Crossroads of Vermont Byway: Route 4, Bridgewater to Hartford
- 220 • Scenic Route 100 Byway: Plymouth to Granville

## 221 **Policies: Scenic Resources**

### 222 **Goal**

- 223 1. The natural and scenic resources of the Region are protected and preserved.

### 224 **Policies**

- 225 1. Where development is proposed in areas of scenic value (examples listed under  
226 “Prominent Scenic Landscapes”), design plans must:
  - 227 a. Maintain the prominent natural feature of the developed area;
  - 228 b. Work toward enhancing or retaining views;
  - 229 c. Minimize adverse impact on views and areas of historic significance;
  - 230 d. Minimize contrasts with areas of historic significance; and
  - 231 e. Reflect traditional settlement patterns.
- 232 2. Projects must minimize the adverse effects of strip development on existing scenic  
233 resources through the following design principles:
  - 234 a. Integrate landscaping into parking areas;
  - 235 b. Encourage compact and densely developed projects;

- 236 c. Place street trees as buffers between traffic arteries and internal drives;
  - 237 d. Use unobtrusive signage;
  - 238 e. Vary the pattern, number, size, and location of structures within the site;
  - 239 f. Employ screening plans for visually objectionable features on the site; and
  - 240 g. Minimize access roads or curb cuts onto public highways and use of common
  - 241 access drives.
- 242 3. Roads with scenic and cultural values, and determined to be of local or state
- 243 significance, must be constructed or improved with due concern for the special
- 244 scenic qualities inherent to the roadway and roadway fringe. Substantial
- 245 modifications or off-alignment options that unnecessarily destroy the special
- 246 characteristics of such roadways are not consistent with this Plan.

247 **Recommendation**

- 248 1. TRORC should employ a process for evaluating impacts to scenic resources in the
- 249 development proposals.

250 **E. Outdoor Lighting Design and Management**

251 **Issues and Opportunities**

252 Increased development in the Region in recent decades brings a corresponding increase in

253 the use of outdoor lighting. However, such lighting does not need to lead to impacts if

254 done properly. Improper lighting contributes to “light pollution”, and affects our ability to

255 view the night landscape, as well as creating an adverse impact on the character of our

256 historic villages.

257 In May 1996, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission published [Outdoor](#)  
258 [Lighting Manual for Vermont Municipalities](#). The suggestions and recommendations  
259 contained in the Manual form the basis of many of the design principles and issues  
260 reflected in this section of the Plan.

261 Choosing appropriate light sources and intensity makes good economic and  
262 environmental sense. By selecting a lighting design that enhances nighttime comfort, our  
263 town centers and other areas planned for concentrated mixed use will be better served.

264 Using a large quantity of light does not guarantee good visibility. Overlighting can cause  
265 problems that hinder good vision. Using the minimal amount of light necessary to allow  
266 adequate visibility for a site decreases sky glow and avoids escalation of light levels. Glare  
267 is another lighting issue facing growing communities in the Region. Sky glow, or reflected  
268 light from surfaces, is visible in the night sky over towns or large commercial or industrial  
269 complexes and is a form of light pollution that contributes to a loss of our ability to see  
270 stars.

## 271 **Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Outdoor Lighting Design and** 272 **Management**

### 273 274 **Goals**

- 275 1. Lighting provides for safety and convenience in ways that enhances qualities of  
276 streets, architecture, and public spaces, while preserving dark skies and avoiding  
277 light pollution.
- 278 2. Outdoor lighting systems designed to conserve energy and minimize life cycle costs  
279 are used.

### 280 **Policies**

- 281 1. Lighting plans will be compatible with the character of the neighborhood.
- 282 2. New lighting installations shall be designed to minimize glare from nearby surfaces,  
283 to not directly light beyond the boundaries of the area to be illuminated or onto  
284 adjacent properties, and to not result in excessive lighting levels.
- 285 3. For larger projects, lighting professionals should follow lighting design guidelines  
286 and other technical information established by the Illuminating Engineering  
287 Society of North America (IESNA). Additionally, project planners should give due  
288 consideration to the guidelines set forth in the Outdoor Lighting Manual for  
289 Vermont Municipalities.
- 290 4. Light sources shall use cut-off or shielded fixtures to direct light downward and  
291 prevent the light source from being seen on an adjacent property.
- 292 5. Lighting levels shall use the minimum necessary to achieve safety and security  
293 concerns.
- 294 6. Lighting schemes that serve as advertising or to attract attention are discouraged.
- 295 7. Illuminated signs that are excessively bright, causing glare and illuminating  
296 surrounding areas, are prohibited.
- 297 8. Lighting designs shall avoid sky glow through lighting plans that direct luminaries  
298 downwards and turn off unneeded lights after hours.

299 **Recommendations**

- 300 1. TRORC should provide technical guidance and support to municipalities and others  
301 on lighting trends, needs, and opportunities.

- 302 2. TRORC should assist local and state policymakers in evaluating lighting options.  
303 TRORC will consider sponsorship of educational workshops for planning  
304 commissions, design professionals, and others to acquaint them with the  
305 principles of good lighting design.
- 306 3. Towns interested in planning for outdoor lighting in their communities should  
307 consider using their municipal plans to establish goals and objectives for lighting.  
308 Additionally, consideration should be given to incorporating a lighting section into  
309 a town’s zoning ordinance or a separate ordinance to cover lighting installations in  
310 all or parts of the town.
- 311 4. TRORC staff should continue to work with Vermont’s public utilities and design  
312 professionals to evaluate lighting technologies and efficiencies.