

1 7. Historical, Cultural, Archeological And 2 Scenic Resources

3 **A. Introduction**

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

9 **B. Historic Structures and Sites**

10 **Advantages of Historic Preservation**

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

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

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

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

28 The National Register and Programs for Historic Preservation

29 More than 30,000 of the Region’s historic structures have been documented by
30 the Agency of Commerce and Community Development’s Historic Division under
31 their program, the [Vermont Architectural Resource Inventory \(VARI\)](#)¹. VARI is a
32 collection of survey information that contain properties of historic or architectural
33 significance throughout Vermont.

34 To aid in the preservation of the most notable historic resources, Congress in 1966
35 created [The National Register](#)², which is a federally maintained list of culturally
36 important districts, sites, buildings, and structures worthy of preservation.

37 Historic districts are geographic locations that contain historically or
38 architecturally significant buildings, properties, or sites. Such structures or sites
39 are considered to be [contributing components](#), but an historic district may also
40 contain [non-contributing](#) (non-historically or architecturally significant) buildings,
41 structures, objects, or sites.

42 Inclusion in the Register offers a measure of protection against federally licensed
43 or funded construction projects because federal agencies are required to consider
44 the impact of their projects on properties included in or eligible for inclusion in

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45 the Register. Many of the buildings and structures included in the State Survey
46 are eligible for the National Register.

47 Under the provisions of [Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act](#)³,
48 prior to proceeding with a federally funded project affecting a historic structure,
49 the federal agency and the state historic preservation officer must attempt to
50 identify ways to avoid or minimize adverse effects One successful example in the
51 Region was the replacement of the Elm Street Bridge in Woodstock Village, which
52 is listed on the Register. In this case, the Vermont Agency of Transportation and
53 the Federal Highway Administration were forced to waive national bridge design
54 standards and to downsize the project to retain many of the elements and
55 components of the historic smaller and narrower bridge.

56 Another advantage of the National Register of Historic Places is that owners of
57 income producing buildings are eligible for tax credits on rehabilitation work,
58 provided such work meets 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](#)⁴
- 62 • [Division for Historic Preservation](#)⁵
- 63 • [Vermont Agency of Transportation](#)⁶
- 64 • [Vermont Downtown Program](#)⁷
- 65 • [Vermont Barn Preservation Grant Program](#)⁸
- 66 • [Vermont Historic Preservation Grant Program](#)⁹

67 Local Historic Preservation Methods

68 Under the provisions of the Vermont Municipal Planning and Development Act
69 (24 VSA §4414), municipalities can protect areas of [historical sites¹⁰](#) by
70 designating [historic overlay districts¹¹](#) as part of local zoning bylaws. Within such
71 overlay districts, prior to exterior modifications to a structure or the erection of a
72 new one, the local planning commission must first grant approval. In determining
73 whether to grant approval, the commission must evaluate whether the proposed
74 changes would not impair the special character or significance of its
75 surroundings.

76 For projects that fall under the jurisdiction of Act 250, [Criterion 8¹²](#) protects
77 historic sites along with other rare and irreplaceable natural resources. See the
78 [Historical Preservation project review flowchart¹³](#) for more information. Before
79 granting a permit, the District Commission or Environmental Court needs to find
80 that a subdivision or development will not have an undue adverse effect on
81 historic sites. Historic sites are defined as those included in the National Register
82 of Historic Places, the State Register, or other properties deemed historically
83 significant by the Division for Historic Preservation (10 VSA §6001(4)). In
84 approaching such a determination, the Act 250 review process can evaluate local
85 and Regional Plans to determine whether the proposed project complies with or
86 violates a community standard intended to preserve the historic qualities of the
87 site.

88 **Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Historic Structures and**
89 **Sites**

90 **Goals**

- 91 1. Historic structures and sites, where the public interest is clearly
92 benefited, are enhanced and preserved.
- 93 2. The renovation of existing or construction of new structures is
94 consistent and compatible with the historic character of the site or
95 area.
- 96 3. Sensitive economic development is promoted in areas of historic value
97 (such as in town centers, villages, and hamlets).
- 98 4.

99 **Policies**

- 100 1. Land development or subdivision within or immediately adjacent to
101 areas or sites of historic significance should take reasonable steps to
102 ensure that the design of the project fits the historic context.
- 103 2. Restoration or rehabilitation of historic sites should not destroy or
104 significantly alter their character and immediate environment.
- 105 3. Destruction of a historic site is discouraged.
- 106 4. Public improvements or structures such as bridge rehabilitation or
107 replacement, street widening, roadway reconstruction, signage, utility
108 distribution systems, and lighting must be designed to avoid
109 unnecessary degradation of recognized historic sites or areas.

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110 5. Public investments of regional or statewide significance must be
111 planned in consultation with local and state officials and the Division
112 for Historic Preservation.

113 5. Improvements to historical transportation facilities, instead of
114 replacement, are promoted.

115 **Recommendations**

116 1. TRORC will continue to support efforts to designate National Historic
117 Register Districts and Sites. In so doing, TRORC will coordinate with
118 the State and affected municipalities.

119 2. TRORC will work with the Agency of Transportation, town officials, its
120 Transportation Advisory Committee, and other groups and
121 organizations to ensure that design standards and plans for proposed
122 transportation projects are reasonably compatible with historic
123 resource needs and values.

124 3. Towns are encouraged to outline in their town plans historic resources
125 deemed worthy of protection. Town officials can then use this to
126 participate in the Act 250 process, thus influencing decisions affecting
127 historic sites in their community. Local historical societies should
128 continue research, documentation, education, and advocacy efforts.

129 4. Developers should incorporate historic structures and important
130 architectural details into their project planning.

131 **C. Archeological Resources**

132 **Background**

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

138 The archeological record provides the only physical remnants of pre-European
139 human occupation. In addition, the record can provide information about past
140 environments, climate, and landscape changes. Although only a few archeological
141 sites in the Region have been designated on the Vermont Archeological Inventory,
142 there are many areas whose topography and proximity to natural resources
143 indicate a likelihood of pre-European habitation. Most prehistoric sites are located
144 within 300 to 500 feet of an existing or relic water source, on slopes of eight
145 percent or less, and often have a southern exposure. Criterion 8 of the Act 250
146 requires that a development “will not have an undue adverse effect” on historic
147 sites and sites of archeological importance; however, Act 250 only covers larger
148 developments, and many archeological sites may be located on private land. For
149 areas of potential archeological significance, private landowners need to know
150 how best to preserve important resources on their land. Since many archeological
151 resources are located in areas such as river corridors and prime agricultural land,
152 preservation and conscientious management will serve multiple purposes.

153 Public awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the Region’s archeological
154 resources is limited. This is due partly to incomplete documentation of the
155 resources, and partly to a narrow perception of what constitutes archeological
156 resources. Lack of recognition and appreciation can result in missed opportunities
157 for stewardship. These resources are not easily identified and are often subject to
158 accidental destruction. Additionally, there is a perception by landowners that the
159 protection of archeological resources invariably means more restriction on the use
160 of their property without much benefit.

161 **Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Archeological**
162 **Resources**

163 **Goals**

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

170 **Policies**

- 171 1. Existing archeological resources must be protected where public
172 interest is demonstrated. No land development should be permitted
173 when it results in unnecessary loss of an archeological resource at the
174 state or federal level.

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175 2. Within archeologically sensitive areas, planning should consider the
176 impacts a project may have on the resource. If warranted, a site
177 inventory should be conducted as part of project planning. Projects
178 that have undue adverse impacts on these resources must be
179 discouraged or redesigned to mitigate the impact. Project planners
180 are encouraged to contact the state archeologist for further
181 information.

182 3. To preserve significant archeological sites, purchase of land or
183 development rights is encouraged when such actions are compatible
184 with local plans and this Plan. Because these sites are often farmland,
185 floodplains, wetland margins, and other similar low-lying land, priority
186 should be given to projects that serve multiple preservation purposes.

187 **Recommendations**

188 1. To increase public awareness of archeological resources, TRORC
189 encourages archeologists, local and regional groups, towns, and
190 landowners to organize educational programs focused on Vermont's
191 history. Such a program could be made a part of an overall cultural
192 heritage program through public schools.

193 2. Local planning commissions, conservation commissions, historical
194 societies, and other interested groups are encouraged to incorporate
195 an archeological plan for their community in their town plan. Such a
196 plan could be an important step in planning future development in
197 identified areas.

198 **D. Scenic Resources**

199 **Background**

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

209 **Patterns for Development: A Community Standard**

210 The inherent beauty of the Region is tied to the visual relationship between
211 buildings, the working landscape, and mountains and river valleys. Over the past
212 fifty years, development patterns have emerged that propagate highway strip
213 development. Certain areas immediately adjacent to major highways are
214 examples of development sprawl. In some instances, these areas adversely affect
215 the value of scenic resources for travelers. Such a land use pattern will serve,
216 amongst other factors, to destroy the transition between town village centers and
217 the countryside.

218 The Region’s landscape is also changing due to a gradual reforestation and loss of
219 fields and meadows due to a reduction in agriculture. The resultant land use

220 pattern is a product of economic forces that can permanently alter or pressure
221 that landscape.

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

225 **Prominent Scenic Landscapes**

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

- 227 1. Shorelands immediate to public lakes,
- 228 2. rivers, or ponds;
- 229 3. Areas immediately adjacent to scenic corridors;
- 230 4. Prominent ridgelines, mountaintops, or excessively steep slopes that can
231 be readily viewed from public corridors;
- 232 5. Exceptional agricultural and historic areas;
- 233 6. Areas within or immediately adjacent to natural areas (i.e., wetlands)
234 designated by the State; and
- 235 7. Areas of high scenic quality that are publicly recognized as exceptionally
236 unique or are noted examples of the dominant characteristics of an area
237 in the Region. Examples of prominent scenic areas within the TRO Region
238 include designated byways.
 - 239 • Connecticut River Byway (a National Scenic Byway): Route 5, Hartland
240 to Newbury
 - 241 • Crossroads of Vermont Byway: Route 4, Bridgewater to Hartford
 - 242 • Scenic Route 100 Byway: Plymouth to Granville

243 **Goal, Policies, and Recommendation: Scenic Resources**

244 **Goal**

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

247 **Policies**

- 248 1. Where development is proposed in areas of scenic value (examples
249 listed under “Prominent Scenic Landscapes”), design plans must:
- 250 a. Maintain the prominent natural feature of the developed area;
 - 251 b. Work toward enhancing or retaining views;
 - 252 c. Minimize adverse impact on views and areas of historic significance;
 - 253 d. Minimize contrasts with areas of historic significance; and
 - 254 e. Reflect traditional settlement patterns.
- 255 2. Projects must minimize the adverse effects of strip development on
256 existing scenic resources through the following design principles:
- 257 a. Integrate landscaping into parking areas;
 - 258 b. Encourage compact and densely developed projects;
 - 259 c. Place street trees as buffers between traffic arteries and internal
260 drives;
 - 261 d. Use unobtrusive signage;
 - 262 e. Vary the pattern, number, size, and location of structures within the
263 site;
 - 264 f. Employ screening plans for visually objectionable features on the site;
265 and

266 g. Minimize access roads or curb cuts onto public highways and use of
267 common access drives.

268 3. Roads with scenic and cultural values, and determined to be of local or
269 state significance, must be constructed or improved with due concern
270 for the special scenic qualities inherent to the roadway and roadway
271 fringe. Substantial modifications or off-alignment options that
272 unnecessarily destroy the special characteristics of such roadways are
273 not consistent with this Plan.

274 **Recommendation**

275 1. TRORC should employ a process for evaluating impacts to scenic
276 resources in the development proposals.

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

278 **Issues and Opportunities**

279 Increased development in the Region in recent decades brings a corresponding
280 increase in the use of outdoor lighting. However, such lighting does not need to
281 lead to impacts if done properly. Improper lighting contributes to “light pollution,”
282 and affects our ability to view the night landscape, as well as creating an adverse
283 impact on the character of our historic villages.

284 In May 1996, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission published
285 [Outdoor Lighting Manual for Vermont Municipalities¹⁴](#). The suggestions and
286 recommendations contained in the Manual form the basis of many of the design
287 principles and issues reflected in this section of the Plan.

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

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

299 **Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Outdoor Lighting Design** 300 **and Management**

301 **Goals**

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

307 **Policies**

- 308 1. Lighting plans will be compatible with the character of the
309 neighborhood. New lighting installations shall be designed to minimize
310 glare from nearby surfaces, to not directly light beyond the boundaries

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311 of the area to be illuminated or onto adjacent properties, and to not
312 result in excessive lighting levels.

313 2. For larger projects, lighting professionals should follow lighting design
314 guidelines and other technical information established by the
315 Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA).

316 Additionally, project planners should give due consideration to the
317 guidelines set forth in the *Outdoor Lighting Manual for Vermont*
318 *Municipalities*.

319 3. Light sources shall use cut-off or shielded fixtures to direct light
320 downward and prevent the light source from being seen on an adjacent
321 property.

322 4. Excessively high lighting levels for uses in rural or very low residential
323 areas are inappropriate.

324 5. Lighting levels shall use the minimum necessary to achieve safety and
325 security concerns.

326 6. Lighting schemes that serve as advertising or to attract attention are
327 discouraged.

328 7. Illuminated signs that are excessively bright, causing glare and
329 illuminating surrounding areas, are prohibited.

330 8. Lighting designs shall avoid sky glow through lighting plans that direct
331 luminaries downwards and turn off unneeded lights after hours.

332 **Recommendations**

333 1. TRORC should provide technical guidance and support to
334 municipalities and others on lighting trends, needs, and opportunities

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- 335 2. TRORC should assist local and state policymakers in evaluating lighting
336 options. TRORC will consider sponsorship of educational workshops
337 for planning commissions, design professionals, and others to
338 acquaint them with the principles of good lighting design.
- 339 3. Towns interested in planning for outdoor lighting in their communities
340 should consider using their municipal plans to establish goals and
341 objectives for lighting. Additionally, consideration should be given to
342 incorporating a lighting section into a town’s zoning ordinance or a
343 separate ordinance to cover lighting installations in all or parts of the
344 town.
- 345 4. TRORC staff should continue to work with Vermont’s public utilities
346 and design professionals to evaluate lighting technologies and
347 efficiencies.

348 *Historical, Cultural, Archeological and Scenic Resources Endnotes*

¹ <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/identifying-resources/VARI>

² <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>

³ <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/historic-preservation/historic-preservation-policy-tools/legislation-policy-and-reports/section-106-of-the-national-historic-preservation-act>

⁴ <https://www.ptvermont.org/>

⁵ <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>

⁶ <https://vttrans.vermont.gov/planning/maps/historic>

⁷ https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Annual-Report.pdf

⁸ <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/barn-grants>

⁹ <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>

¹⁰ <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/10/151/06001>

¹¹ <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04414>

¹² <https://nrb.vermont.gov/sites/nrb/files/documents/8aestheticsfinal.pdf>

¹³

https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/HP/Review_%26_Compliance/2018_Permitting_Flow_Chart-v1-2-WEB.pdf

¹⁴ https://studiesandreports.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/vt_outdoor_lighting_manual_1996.pdf