

SECTION 17 STOWE HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT and HISTORIC BUILDINGS

17.1 Purpose

The purpose of these design review regulations is to promote development in Stowe Village and the Lower Village that is aesthetically compatible with the existing historic character of these significant village areas, while allowing for flexibility in design and evolution of architectural styles. Although not all buildings within this design review district are of equal historic and aesthetic significance, these regulations serve to promote Stowe’s “Sense of Place” as identified in the Stowe Town Plan, by guiding the development of all properties within the district. In addition, these regulations are intended to guide alterations to existing historic buildings throughout the Town of Stowe in such manner as to preserve their historic and architectural integrity.

17.2 Authority

These regulations are enacted under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. Sections 4414(1)(E) and (F).

17.3 Applicability and Scope

1. These regulations shall apply to all lands and structures in the Town of Stowe designated by the map entitled “Stowe Historic Overlay District 2005”. They shall also apply to any Historic Building in the Town of Stowe located outside the overlay district. The overlay district includes the Stowe Village Historic District, listed in the National Register.
2. Within the Stowe Historic Overlay District and for Historic Buildings outside the district, no structure may be erected, reconstructed, substantially altered as indicated in Section 17.5, moved, or demolished without review of the plans by the Stowe Historic Preservation Commission (SHPC) and approval of the application by the DRB. The SHPC shall serve as the Design Review Commission in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Section 4433(4).
3. After meeting with the applicant, the SHPC will make a recommendation in writing to the DRB within 15 days of the completed presentation. A copy will be sent to the applicant. The DRB shall consider this recommendation in making a decision.

17.4 Activities That Do Not Require Design Review

Design Review is not required for:

- a. Changes in use that do not cause any exterior changes in appearance of the building or lot; (Conditional use review may be required for a change in use)
- b. The maintenance, repair or replacement of architectural features using materials of similar composition, type and appearance as the prevailing historic style of the structure (including doors, windows and siding);
- c. Replacement of doors and windows using the existing opening. The preservation of window patterns, sizes and proportions, as well as original window features such as trim, sash and moldings, is encouraged.
- d. Replacement of roofing keeping the same roofline.
- e. Construction of an accessory building with a floor area no more than 100 square feet.
- f. Painting of exterior walls and trim.
- g. Interior renovations.
- h. Fences and landscaping walls no more than eight (8) feet in height.
- i. Signs.

17.5 Activities That Require Design Review

Design Review is required for:

- a. Addition to or alteration of the exterior of a building which increases or decreases the square footage of the building, whether enclosed or not.
- b. The alteration of an exterior wall of a building by tearing down or removing any portion thereof.
- c. Filling in, boarding up, closing or enclosing any portion of an existing window, door space, porch, or breezeway.
- d. Changing the dimensions of an existing window or door opening or adding a new window or door;
- e. The addition or removal of materials to or from the exterior of a building where materials so added or exposed are of a different composition from those existing (does not apply to roofing);
- f. The alteration of the roof line;
- g. The construction of a building or structure in the historic overlay districts;
- h. The construction of a building with a floor area greater than 100 square feet located within 200 feet of an historic building on the same property;
- i. The demolition or relocation of a building or structure.
- j. Fences and landscaping walls greater than eight (8) feet in height.

17.6 Review Process

1. Prior to applying for a permit, the applicant should contact the Stowe Zoning Administrator (253-6130) to initiate the review process. This initial meeting will review the project location and scope, identify applicable guidelines, and determine the need for a meeting with the Stowe Historic Preservation Commission. If a meeting with the SHPC is required, the Zoning Administrator will discuss with the applicant the materials to be prepared and schedule a date for the review meeting.
2. The applicant will meet with the SHPC to present the proposed project. Documentation to be presented at the meeting will be determined in advance by the Zoning Administrator depending on the scope of the project including:
 - A. A site plan drawn to scale (preferably 1" = 20'), which may include:
 - Existing and adjacent buildings
 - Proposed structures
 - Sidewalks, driveways and parking lots
 - Other site features
 - B. Building elevations, including:
 - Facades, materials, color of roof and sidings
 - Existing and proposed new construction
 - Entrances, stairways and ramps
 - All significant external building elements, including but not limited to walls, windows, doorways
 - 3" X 5" or larger color photographs, or color copies of photographs, of the existing structure, showing all areas to be affected.
 - 3" X 5" or larger color photographs of adjacent buildings.
 - C. Additional drawings or materials as may be necessary to conduct the review. If the project involves an historic building, applicants must provide available background materials on the history of the structure, including historic photographs, if available. Applicants should contact the Stowe Historical Society and the Planning Office (253-2705) for documentation on the building and the property description from the Historic Registers and include these in the presentation.

17.7 Demolition of Structures

1. Within the overlay districts and for Historic Buildings outside the district, the SHPC first shall review each application for the demolition of a building or structure and make a written recommendation to the DRB within 15 days of the completed

presentation. The DRB then will conduct a public hearing to review the application and may approve the demolition if they find:

- (a) The SHPC has determined that the structure does not have historical or architectural significance or does not make a positive contribution to the district's streetscape; or
 - (b) The condition of the structure has deteriorated to such a degree that rehabilitation and use of the building is not feasible. It is the responsibility of the property owner to demonstrate to the DRB's satisfaction that rehabilitation is not feasible; or
 - (c) The condition of the structure has deteriorated to such a degree that it poses a threat to the public safety as determined by town or state officials and cannot be restored or repaired without causing undue financial hardship to the owner. The burden of proving this hardship is on the owner; or
 - (d) The structure is determined to be a deterrent to a major improvement that will be a clear and substantial benefit to the community. This determination of substantial benefit will be made by the DRB after receiving a recommendation from the SHPC.
2. Demolition Delay. If the DRB finds that the proposed demolition does not meet any of the above criteria, it may deny the application or impose up to a six- (6) month delay period. The DRB shall direct the applicant to participate in an investigation of alternatives to demolition during the six-month delay period. The Demolition Delay decision shall be publicly posted.

After the six-month delay period, one more public hearing will be held to review the proposed demolition. If the DRB is satisfied that the applicant for the demolition permit has made a bona fide, reasonable and unsuccessful effort to find or accept alternatives to preserve, rehabilitate, relocate or restore the building or structure, the DRB may approve the demolition of the structure. If the applicant has not demonstrated that a reasonable effort has been made, the DRB shall deny the demolition.

17.8 Relocation of Buildings

1. An historic building may be moved from one site to another:
 - a) If the integrity of the building in its original location is seriously threatened; or
 - b) If the building has lost architectural integrity due to deterioration and neglect; or
 - c) If the new location will be similar in setting and siting; and
 - The building will be compatible with the buildings adjacent to the new location in style, height, scale, materials and setback; and

- The relocation will not result in a negative visual impact on the site from which the building is removed, including the impact on surrounding buildings; and
 - The relocation will not compromise the structural or historic integrity of the structure.
2. Moving a non-historic building within the overlay district is appropriate if its removal or the proposed replacement will result in a more positive visual effect on the district.

17.9 Dimensional Waivers for Historic Buildings and All Buildings Within the Overlay District

The DRB may grant a waiver from the dimensional requirements of the underlying zoning district if it finds that granting the waiver will result in the preservation and renovation of the historic building, or the preservation of the historic pattern of land use of the surrounding area. Waivers may be granted for such uses including but not limited to small additions, accessory buildings, porches, dormers, windows and changes to the roofline.

17.10 Site Guidelines

1. Setbacks, building orientation and “build to” line

- (a) A consistent “build to” line is preferred for buildings along village streets. In general, commercial and retail buildings are sited close to the sidewalk, whereas residential (current or former) buildings are setback from the sidewalk with landscaping in between. Buildings must meet the setback requirements of the underlying zoning district unless a waiver is granted under Section 17.9.
- (b) Buildings should be sited to conform to the street line and create a front entrance that is oriented to the main street or road on which the building is located. Buildings placed at odd angles to the street or pattern of adjacent buildings should be avoided. Exceptions can be made for sites with challenging topography or views.

17.11 General Guidelines for Alterations, Additions and New Construction

1. Alterations to Buildings. The emphasis of the guidelines for alterations is on facades. The most significant views of a building are those immediately visible from a public street or road (primary façade). Therefore, primary facades are most important and shall be carefully reviewed for adherence to the guidelines. Facades that are not in the public view (secondary facades) may not have to conform as closely to the guidelines.

- A. Alterations of primary facades shall and alterations of secondary facades should:
 - a) Preserve the proportion of a building and its original elements, massing and roofline.
 - b) Retain and repair historic features, when possible.
 - c) Remove non-historic materials, when possible.
 - d) Locate changes (such as a new window, handicap ramp, etc.) on the secondary facades, as much as possible.
 - e) In the case of storefronts, upper floors should have progressively smaller and/or fewer windows than the first floor.

- B. Alterations of primary facades shall not and alterations of secondary facades should not:
 - a) Extend or cut back roof overhangs.
 - b) Block primary facades from the street or road.
 - c) Include or result in oversize dormers and windows.
 - d) Change the location of principal entranceways, unless to restore the original historic entrance location or unless the new location would not diminish the building's historic integrity.

- 2. Additions to Buildings. These guidelines generally recommend that additions be compatible with the original structure. Insensitive additions can diminish a building's historic and architectural integrity. At the same time, exact matching of new and old materials is not required. "Change over time" presents many creative opportunities that are appropriate for new uses. The guidelines seek to define an appropriate balance between these two extremes.
 - A. Additions to buildings should:
 - a) Respect the scale of the original building and neighboring historic structures.
 - b) Be compatible in roof form, window heights and door opening sizes and proportions.
 - c) Minimize the removal of original materials at an addition's connection to the original structure.
 - d) Be constructed with similar or compatible material types.
 - e) Use trim compatible with the original trim.
 - f) Be located behind the primary structure, if possible. New walls should be set back from the face of the original building.
 - g) Ensure that new dormers are modest in size and set back from the roof eave. Dormer form and detailing should be compatible with the building's architectural style.

 - B. Additions to buildings should not introduce style and features that are incompatible with the original structure.

3. New Buildings in the Overlay District. The purpose of these guidelines is not to dictate the style of new buildings, but instead to ensure that new buildings are designed to fit into the context of the surrounding buildings and streetscapes.

A. New buildings should:

- a) Have a principal façade that is compatible with the precedence of nearby structures in terms of scale, massing, and alignments.
- b) Use architectural types appropriate to the scale and intended use of the building, rather than super-sizing or down-sizing a building type for an inappropriate use.
- c) Place ancillary structures in less visible locations to the side and rear of the primary building.

B. New buildings should not borrow from multiple historic styles and combine those into one design.

17.12 Guidelines for Specific Building Details

1. Rooflines and Materials

- (a) The original form of rooflines, overhangs and materials should be preserved to the extent possible. New dormers on existing buildings should be modest in size and set back from the roof eave. Dormer form and detailing should be compatible with the building's architectural style.
- (b) The decorative features of roofs, including trim and ornamentation of roof materials, should be preserved. Should the cost of detailing roof elements be prohibitive, the proportions should be preserved with simplified detailing.
- (c) Roof elements that add to the building's interest and diversity should be preserved.
- (d) On historic buildings, skylights shall not be placed on roofs immediately visible from a public street or road.

2. Windows

- (a) The preservation of window patterns, sizes and proportions, as well as original window features such as trim, sash and moldings, is encouraged, particularly on primary facades.
- (b) The repair of historic windows is preferred to replacement. This is particularly important on primary facades.
- (c) "Snap-in" muntins are discouraged.
- (d) Windows in additions should be compatible with the original windows in the historic building.
- (e) Shutters should be sized to fit the windows they frame.

3. Doors and Entrances

- (a) Door placement, appearance, materials and size should be preserved on primary facades. Variations are allowed on secondary facades, but should be coordinated as much as possible with the primary facade.

4. Porches

- (a) The original form and decorative features of porches should be preserved or repaired.
- (b) Replacement porches should match historical locations or use appropriate historical precedents.
- (c) The SHPC and the DRB may take into account the cost of replicating historic details in determining whether a simplified form, which retains the proportions and overall character of the original details, may be employed.

5. Trim. Detailing of trim elements shall, in order of preference:

- (a) Repair existing trim.
- (b) Replicate original trim, if possible.
- (c) The standard of 4(c) may apply to employing simpler but compatible trim detailing.

6. Exterior Materials

- (a) Wood Alternatives: The use of synthetic products is allowed, but not at the expense of compatibility with the original structure. Synthetic products will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The applicant shall provide samples of any such materials to be used.
- (b) Masonry:
 - 1. Preserving the original appearance of stone foundations is encouraged, even when replacing with poured concrete.
 - 2. When re-pointing stone or brick, the original appearance of the mortar joints should be duplicated. Hard mortars that could lead to cracks developing in the stone or brick should be avoided.

7. Exterior HVAC

Exterior heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment (not including window-mounted air conditioning units) should be placed to the rear, side or top of the building and screened from public view.