



Village of Ballston Spa

Introduction to the Historic District Design Guidelines

The 2023 Village of Ballston Spa Comprehensive Plan highlights the importance of the Village's architectural character as a constant theme. "The variety of architectural styles present in the Village helps create the image of community and attracts people to visit, live in, and invest in the Village"

Accordingly, it's important to have a goal to protect the Village's historic character through careful conservation of our historic structures and the sensitive design of new buildings. While these guidelines are particularly important for the Historic District, they are applicable to all parts of the Village. The District alone does not possess the full character of the Village, and other parts of the Village may in the future be included in an expanded historic district or be included in new districts. Also, its important to remember that we as owners are only a temporary steward of any building as it is more than likely to outlast us.

Preservation, Rehabilitation and Remodeling

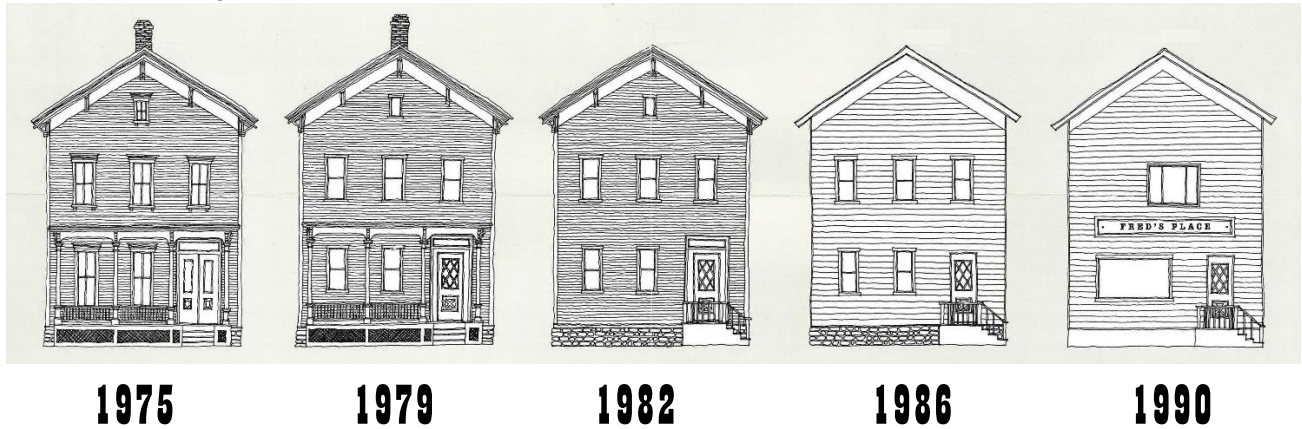
- **Preservation:** "Preservation is a frame of mind, an attempt to understand how a historic building came to what it is and to identify the elements that make it historic".* Full-on preservation is the purview of museum and National Register properties.
- **Rehabilitation:** "Rehabilitation makes creative use of the preservation mindset to adapt a historic building to the needs of the contemporary world while retaining the most important historic elements. Every project will require compromises, but with the right frame of mind it is possible to retain the historic character of an old house while adapting it to modern life" *
Clearly, virtually all owners will be renovating or rehabilitating an old house to some extent as opposed to performing a museum quality preservation. Therefore, these guidelines are geared toward practical and thoughtful changes that help preserve a building's character.
- **Remodeling:** To remake or to make over the design image of a building is to "remodel" it. The appearance is changed by removing original detail and by adding new features that are out of character with the original. A remodeling project is inappropriate in the Historic District and indeed questionable within the Village proper.

Character Defining Elements

- Character defining elements are closely related to the buildings' architectural style. Understanding this style will assist in determining the specific character defining elements as well as previous work that may or may not complement that style.
- In general, rehabilitation work should not adversely affect the distinguishing quality or character of the property or its environment.
- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible. Not only is this better for the building, but it is ecologically sound as using replacement materials is almost always harsher on the environment.
- To assist in ease of use, the Design Guidelines are organized into sections according to the elements addressed. The sections covered are:
 - Porches and Decks
 - Windows and Doors
 - Exterior Claddings
 - Roofs
 - Alternative Energy Systems

Incremental Changes

- Small changes may seem minor or innocuous when they are made, but the changes accumulate over time, putting the character of a building at risk.
- A composite example of the detrimental effect of accumulated changes is illustrated below. The first image shows the house in its original 1875 Italianate form. The next image shows the original windows and door have been replaced. The third image shows the porch and chimney removed. Fourth, brackets, door trim and attic window were removed with wide synthetic siding applied. Lastly, the foundation is cemented over, and windows changed as the building is put to a new use having lost all character over the span of fifteen years. *Illustration produced by the University of Vermont Preservation Program*



- With sufficient knowledge often a change can be made in a sensitive manner without incurring significant extra cost.

The Historic District Review and Guidelines

- Any project within the Historic District requiring a building permit and which would be visible from the primary street is subject to review by the Historic District Commission.
- The design standards are intended to help provide an objective basis for evaluating the appropriateness of individual design proposals.
- To the extent that these guidelines can be followed from the inception of project planning, the review process will proceed smoothly.
- To minimize "incremental deterioration" of building integrity.
- Gives an opportunity to provide hands on guidance for appropriateness and alternatives.
- Reinforces the character of the historic district and protects its visual elements.
- Protects the value of public and private investment, which might otherwise be threatened by the undesirable consequences of poorly managed growth and development.
- Increases increase public awareness of design issues and options.

Recommended Resources

- National Park service Preservation Briefs. <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm>
- Book: "Renovation: A Complete Guide" by Michael W. Litchfield. Taunton Press.
- Book: "Restoring your Historic House" by Scott T. Hanson. Tilbury House Publishers. Purchase directly from the author at www.YourHistoricHouse.com/shop
- Village of Ballston Spa Comprehensive plan 2023

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