



# SLATE ROOFS

*in Historic Downtown Montpelier*

## *Slate Roofs*

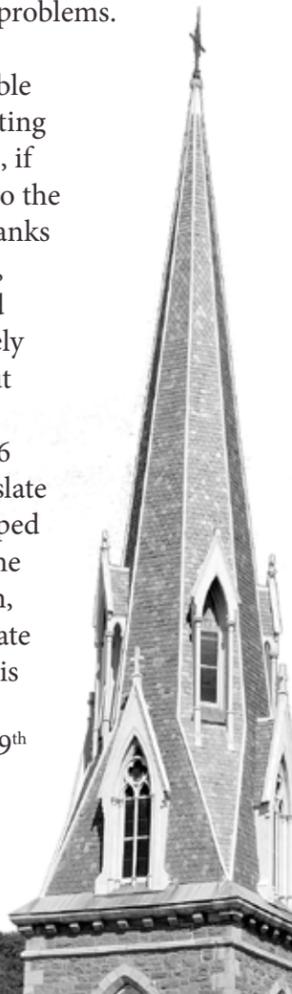
The City of Montpelier believes that ongoing maintenance of historic buildings, such as reasonable repairs and use of quality materials, extends the life of these structures and contributes to the vitality of downtown Montpelier.

In providing this document to local citizens, the Department of Planning and Community Development seeks to encourage the proper maintenance of historic buildings in the City and make information available to property owners well before the final design of a project, thereby saving both the owners and the City valuable time and money.

### *The Value of Slate Roofs*

Despite their often unremarkable appearance, roofs are one of the most integral features of a building. When in good condition, the roof is easy to forget, but a faulty or deteriorated roof can cause serious problems.

Slate roofs are one of the most durable roofing materials on the market, lasting on average 125 years (and up to 200, if cared for regularly) in comparison to the 20 to 30 year lifespan of asphalt. Thanks in large part to its durability, beauty, and the fact that it is both water and fire proof, slate has been an extremely popular roofing material throughout history. Slate roofs first appeared in North America in 1625, and by 1876 the U.S. was the largest exporter of slate in the world. Much of the slate shipped abroad originated in Vermont. As the color of slate tends to vary by region, the red, green, purple, or mottled slate around Montpelier indicates that this material was likely mined from the state during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.



Bethany Church, 115 Main Street

This specific Design Review Brochure is intended for the use of property owners within the City of Montpelier's Historic District who wish to preserve, rehabilitate, or restore the slate roof on their building.

### *Extending the Life of Your Slate*

Although slate is extremely durable, it still requires regular inspections and preventative maintenance to ensure a long lifespan. Owners of slate roofs are encouraged to:

1. Clean gutters every fall and spring. Gutters and flashing are the weakest point in your roof and therefore the most likely source of leaks.
2. Check for ice dams every winter. If not prevented or addressed immediately by melting, ice can work its way under the slates and cause them to break, creating water damage under your roof and potentially on or under your siding.



132 State Street

3. Inspect your roof for broken, loose, or deteriorated slates every 2 to 5 years. Repair any broken, cracked, or missing slates at once. A problem that initially requires a quick, cheap fix can quickly and easily escalate into a bigger issue that requires a much more costly and time-consuming solution.
4. Work with a professional slater. Poor installation practices can lessen the life of a slate roof.
5. Minimize foot traffic on your roof. By hooking ladders over the ridge, you can distribute your weight more evenly and help prevent cracks. To avoid breakage, soft soled shoes should be worn if walking directly on slates.

## *Making Plans*

### *Considerations Along the Way*

Due to the issues discussed above, please consider the following guidelines when preparing to preserve, rehabilitate, or restore the slate roof on your building:

#### **Appropriate Actions:**

1. Replacing roof with in-kind materials where possible and only considering substitute material when the in-kind replacements are technically or economically unfeasible.
2. Preserving the original shape and pattern of the roof.
3. Repairing or replacing the trim along roof edges to match the original.

#### **Inappropriate Actions:**

1. Altering the shape or pattern of your roof, especially on the principal façade of the building.
2. Removing old roofing materials that can reasonably be repaired.
3. Extending the roofing material beyond the edge of the roof boards to a length of more than 5/8 of an inch.
4. Using tar or mastic sealants to fix leaks. These materials become hard, cracked and inevitably cause more damage to your roof down the road.
5. Using plywood or pressure treated materials to replace sheathing. The vibration caused during plywood installation can loosen other slates. Pressure treated materials shrink over time, gradually cracking and damaging the wood.

## *"Green" it Up*

Conduct a melt test to see if you are losing energy/ heat through your roof. Is snow melting more quickly on your roof in comparison to nearby buildings? If you notice different patterns of snow melt or a number of icicles or ice dams, you may have large air leaks, HVAC duct leaks, or inadequate insulation. Once you identify the problem, create a strategy to address it such as sealing air leaks and ductwork or installing insulation where needed. With monthly heating costs rising, upfront expenses like these will save you more money on energy bills over time.



City Hall

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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