



PORCHES

in Historic Downtown Montpelier

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 Porches

Originally designed to allow residents to enjoy the outdoors while still protecting them from the elements, porches have become a defining feature of our residential communities over the past 100 years. Today, porches dot the streets of Montpelier, creating a sense of community and openness within many neighborhoods.

Over time, many of the porches in Montpelier have been altered. Some have been enclosed, while others have been daylighted, added, removed, or entirely replaced. As with any renovation work, some of these changes have enhanced the building while others have degraded its character and overall architectural and historic integrity.



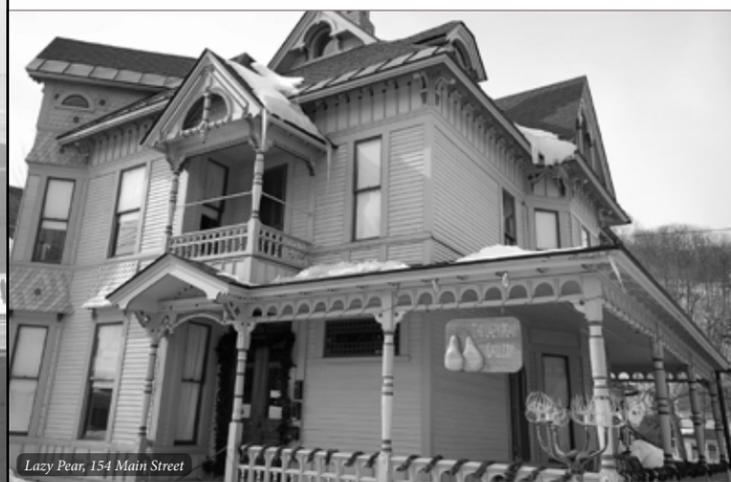
This specific Design Review Brochure is intended for the use of property owners within the City of Montpelier's Historic District who wish to remove, add, rehabilitate, restore, or reconstruct a porch on their property.

Porches

Distinct Features of a Porch

Many of the more attractive and amenable porch alterations were successful because the property owner paid attention to the unique elements of the original porch and honored those elements during its repair or restoration. In addition to the columns, stairs, railings, and roofline, the following are particular porch features that can define a porch's character and architectural style:

- **Balustrade:** The series of spindles (or solid material) that form the railing or skirt of the porch.
- **Brackets:** The projecting supports along the ceiling line of a covered entryway.
- **Chamfer:** A beveled edge connecting two surfaces, particularly on a column.
- **Cornice:** The horizontal decorative molding that crowns any building element, such as over a door or around the edge of a pedestal.
- **Frieze:** The decorative band running under the roof cornice.
- **Lattice/Trelliswork:** An open weave, either diamond or square, produced by interlocking lath or thin strips of wood or iron.



Size, both of the porch itself and of its elements, also plays a large part in defining the porch and ensuring balance with the rest of the structure.

Making Plans

Considerations Along the Way

Due to the important design elements discussed above, please consider the following guidelines when preparing to add, rehabilitate, restore, or reconstruct a porch on your property:

Appropriate Actions:

For porches that form an integral part of the original building design:

1. Repairing and retaining porches, stairs, and related decorative features in a manner consistent with their original appearance.
2. Maintaining porch roofs, cornices, and gutters to prevent water-related damage.
3. When replacing deteriorated features or when adding new features for safety (like stair railings): Matching (or closely approximating) new materials, proportions, and details.

For porches not original to the building:

4. Removing the porch or repairing a porch that was added in a newer style to update the appearance of a building. These porches are considered historic features.
5. Designing the porch to honor the scale, architectural style and historic character of the building.

Inappropriate Actions:

For porches that are an integral part of the original building design:

1. Stripping porches of columns, cornices, or other defining and/or decorative features.
2. Enclosing or removing original and/or open porches that are located on highly visible sides of the building.
3. Replacing porch railings or columns with new materials that are not in keeping with the original design (for example, replacing wood with wrought iron).

"Green" it Up

Weatherize your home by caulking and weather-stripping around windows and doorframes and installing door sweeps to reduce air leaks. Save energy by properly sealing your home against air leaks under sill plates and around windows, doors, framing members, and electric, plumbing, and mechanical penetrations.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

City of Montpelier
Department of Planning and Community Development
39 Main Street, City Hall, Montpelier, VT 05602-2950
Tel: (802) 223-9506 | E-mail: planning@montpelier-vt.org
www.montpelier-vt.org

Prepared by the Department of Planning and Community Development and Historic Preservation Commission.

Photography: Jim Sheridan and Gary Seaton of Northern Exposure