



# • DESIGN • REVIEW • GUIDE •

## Windows

Burlington is well known as a community with a high quality of life, small and cohesive neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown and waterfront – all within a spectacular setting on the shores of Lake Champlain. This deserving reputation is due in part to the City's small size, entrepreneurial spirit, civic-minded citizens and activist government. One of the many factors that makes Burlington such a great place to live, work and visit is the community's attention to detail, and respect for its setting, heritage and quality urban design.

Burlington's Design Review process strives to protect the city's unique qualities and strong sense of place by carrying out citywide development and design objectives. The purpose of this *Design Review Guide* is to help applicants in preparing projects to be reviewed by the Design Review Board and the Burlington Planning Commission. Through materials such as this, the Department of Planning & Zoning seeks to make information available well before the final design of a project saving the applicant, and the city, time and money.

### PURPOSE

Windows bring together two worlds. Windows enable an interaction between what is happening on the inside and the world outside. Windows allow occupants to share in the beauty of the yard or activity on the street, and invite the outside to become part of the interior. Let's face it, people are social creatures.

This is especially true for commercial buildings. Storefront display windows serve to both enliven a street, and draw us into the establishment. The inside of most retail stores are designed to take advantage of our tendency towards impulse buying. The same holds true for the design of the outside. By being able to see inside, we are encouraged to enter and explore further.



Storefront Display Windows

Windows are also an important climate control and energy management tool. Windows on a southern exposure allow for passive solar gain reducing winter heating bills. Windows that open allow fresh air exchange without fans and ventilation systems. However, a poor choice of windows or improper maintenance can create significant energy loss. Many energy efficient (and affordable) windows are available which can greatly reduce annual heating and cooling costs. In addition, the use of a single-sash storm window over an older window can achieve a similar energy saving as a replacement window at a much lower cost.

### SIZE AND LOCATION

Windows are an integral part of the design of a structure. They are specifically sized and spaced depending on the size of the building, and in coordination with the doors - especially the main entry. The placement of the first floor windows sets the rhythm for other floors. Especially on the front façade and the sides, it is important to lineup the upper story windows with those on the first floor. In addition, typically the largest windows of a house appear on the first floor. That way their placement is balanced against the overall size of the building, and avoids a 'top heavy' look.



Because many of Burlington's buildings are considered 'historic,' the size, placement, materials, and detailing of the windows must be respected. Windows are a fundamental part of the overall design of a structure. To change them in any dramatic way, is to completely lose the original intent of the architect and builder, and diminish the value of the building.

### DETAILING

Windows give a building character. Decorative trim including surrounds, hoods or varying sizes and shapes of the



Window Detailing

glass panes are commonly used to further distinguish and individualize the building. They reinforce the window openings, and set them apart from the exterior wall adding relief along the facade.

Whether it is the style of the window, the addition of shutters or ornate hoods, window detailing should generally be consistent across the entire building. While a few variations are usually interesting, a building should not 'mix and match' several different styles and designs. Finally, some buildings are specifically designed with very detailed and ornate trim. Classic examples include Queen Anne and Gothic Revival architectural styles. Unless your building is intended to reflect such a style, simple detailing offers a more elegant and classy look.

## DESIGN OBJECTIVES

- ✓ **Windows should be symmetrical across the building facade, and proportional to the size of the structure.**
- ✓ **Windows should provide a high degree of energy efficiency.**
- ✓ **Windows should have a consistent size, shape, and style.**
- ✓ **Ground floor commercial uses should include display windows along the streetscape.**
- ✓ **The windows of older buildings should retain their original placement, dimensions and materials to the greatest extent possible.**

## SOME COMMONLY USED TERMS:

**1. Double Hung:** A traditional window style where two independent sashes move up and down with one in front of the other (see example). Other styles include a *casement* where a single sash swings open from one side, and an *awning* where a single sash swings open from the bottom.

**2. Glazing:** The glass portion of the window. Many options are available with differing energy efficiencies and appearances. Older historic buildings often have windows that are a *single-glaze* (a single piece of glass), while newer windows are typically *double-glazed* (two pieces of glass joined with an air pocket between)

**3. Hood:** The top portion of the outer window trim. Sometimes called a *hood molding*, they may also be found over doors. Hoods have a functional basis enabling flashing to be put behind the window to keep water from going behind the frame into the wall.

**4. Light or Pane:** The individual pieces of glass within each sash. Windows are often described by the number of lights within each sash, as in 'two-over-two' or 'six-over-six.'



**5. Muntin or Munnion:** A narrow strip of wood that divides panes of glass within the sash to create a 'divided light' window. These are commonly found on older historic buildings. In newer windows, muntins may be found on the outside, inside or within a single pane double-glazed window. Removable muntins are often referred to as 'snap-in grills.' Snap-in grills are not encouraged as they are easily broken or lost leaving an inconsistent appearance from the street.

**6. Sash:** The sash is the movable frame into which individual pieces of glass are set. This is not the grill that may be over the glass or separate individual panes (the muntin), but the surrounding frame that enables the window to move within the opening.

**7. Divided Light:** Divided light windows have a muntin holding separate pieces of glass within each sash. Unless federal funds are involved, the City has allowed this definition to include insulated glass windows where the muntin is applied to both sides of the glass permanently (no snap-in grills). This allows for the use of energy efficiency glass, while still maintaining an authentic look.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

*city zoning permits & general information*

- **Burlington Dept. of Planning & Zoning**  
135 Church St.  
Burlington, VT 05401  
802.865.7188

*city building permits*

- **Burlington Dept. of Public Works**  
645 Pine St.  
Burlington, VT 05401  
802.863.9094

*historic building rehabilitation*

- **VT Division for Historic Preservation**  
National Life Bldg., Drawer 20  
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501  
800.622.4553

This information has been prepared with the assistance of a matching grant from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation through the National Park Service, US Department of the Interior under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior.

Regulations of the US Department of the Interior prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap in its federally assisted programs. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program activity or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance, should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington DC. 20013-7127.

*Prepared by the Burlington Department of Planning & Zoning, 2000.*