

Historic & Cultural Resources

Stowe's story is written not just in its streets and buildings, but in the landscapes, natural settings, and carefully arranged spaces that shape our town's unique character. Our historic and cultural resources are more than markers of the past, they are central to who we are, defining our sense of place and community identity. Preserving these resources, along with traditional development patterns and the historic built environment, is essential to maintaining Stowe's quality of life and visual charm. At the same time, we embrace a thoughtful approach to growth, encouraging new development that complements our heritage and strengthens our community for generations to come.

Stowe's historic resources are concentrated in its villages and scattered across rural areas, painting a rich picture of our heritage and landscape. Historic sites and structures throughout our community provide a tangible connection to our past, linking us to the people and events that have shaped our town. Preserving these resources does not mean freezing development in time or restricting new architectural expression; rather, it ensures that our history remains a valued part of the town's cultural fabric while allowing for thoughtful innovation and contemporary design. Stowe contains three designated historic districts:

Stowe Village Historic District

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, the Stowe Village Historic District is a vibrant, densely settled village that serves as the cultural, political, and commercial heart of Stowe. The character of the district is defined not only by its individual buildings but also by the streetscapes and the spaces between them. While primarily commercial, the district also features a mix of residential, ecclesiastical, and civic structures, including homes converted for commercial use. In 2003, the Town engaged a consultant to update the district. Today, the district includes 102 contributing historic structures, with notable examples including:

Akeley Memorial Building (c.1902)
Green Mountain Inn (1833)
Stowe Community Church (c.1863)
Stowe Free Library / Helen Day Arts Center (c.1861)
Bloody Brook School (c.1840)
Vermont Ski Museum (1818)
Lackey's Variety Store (c.1830)
Old Yard Cemetery

Moscow Village Historic District

The Moscow Village Historic District, situated along the banks of the Little River, encompasses properties north of the river on Moscow Road, River Road, and Shaw Hill Road, as well as properties south of the river on Adams Mill Road. This rural village district includes architectural, commercial, educational, engineering, government, industrial, and

transportation resources, providing a comprehensive picture of the Village's 19th- and 20th-century industrial and commercial development. Moscow Village was designated a State Historic District in 1982 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. The district contains 43 contributing historic resources.

Lower Village Historic District

The Lower Village was designated a State Historic District in 1982 and updated in 2006. The district includes 26 contributing historic structures, the most notable being the former Tubbs Snowshoe building, the original mill that spurred the development of the village.

State Historic Sites Survey

In 2006, the Town engaged a preservation consultant to complete a comprehensive update of the Vermont Architectural Resource Inventory (VARI), formerly known as the State Historic Sites Survey, covering all areas outside the Stowe Village Historic District. The survey identified a total of 222 historic buildings throughout the town. Since that time, some of these structures have been lost due to demolition or neglect. Buildings listed in the survey are subject to Section 10 of the zoning regulations, which requires design review for most exterior alterations.

Cultural Resources

Historic archaeological resources, including historic cellar holes, old sawmills, and other remnants of early settlements, offer vital insights into Stowe's past and help tell the story of the town's cultural and economic development. Key areas with notable archaeological features include Sterling Forest Historic Area, Brownsville, Old County Road, and Stowe Land Trust's Mill Trail property. Areas with high pre-historic archaeological sensitivity are typically found within 200 feet of rivers and streams. For larger projects subject to Act 250 review or those involving state or federal funding, a preliminary archaeological site assessment is often required to ensure these irreplaceable resources are identified, protected, and considered in planning and development decisions.

Sterling Forest Historic Area

In 2012, the Town received a Certified Local Government grant to identify and map historic sites in Sterling Forest, focusing primarily on cellar holes. The survey documented seven former homesteads and farmhouses, as well as a schoolhouse and the original Pike/Shaw Mill site and Boarding House, which are situated on adjacent conserved private land with public access.

Historic Preservation Efforts

The Stowe Historic Preservation Commission (SHPC), established in 2000, plays a central role in protecting and promoting the town's historic resources. Recognizing the value of preserving Stowe's architectural and cultural heritage, the Town adopted its first historic preservation ordinance in 2002. This framework was expanded in 2005 with the creation of the Stowe Historic Overlay District (SHOD), which encompasses Stowe Village and Lower

Village and provides enhanced protections for these concentrated historic areas and historic buildings outside of the village areas.

Within the SHOD, any new construction or exterior alterations to existing buildings—and any changes to historic structures elsewhere in town—must undergo a design review process before a zoning permit is issued. This review ensures that changes are compatible with the town’s historic character, maintain architectural integrity, and respect the traditional scale, materials, and detailing of the surrounding area. Serving as the Design Review Advisory Board, the SHPC provides expert guidance, balancing the preservation of historic assets with thoughtful, contemporary development. This oversight is crucial for sustaining Stowe’s unique sense of place, supporting community identity

Cemeteries

Stowe has a number of cemeteries on public and private land that are often overlooked as historic resources. Cemeteries can provide a unique window into the area’s past and the lives of its early settlers. The stones that mark early residents’ graves often provide interesting and valuable information about their lives, deaths, family connections, and the society of their time.

Historic & Cultural Resources – Goals, Policies, Tasks

Goal: Identify, preserve, and protect Stowe’s historic and cultural resources, including structures, districts, landscapes, significant views, and archaeological sites, that define our community character and sense of place.

Policies

1. Preserve and protect Stowe’s historic buildings and districts, cemeteries, and cultural landscapes as essential components of the town’s heritage, ensuring their integrity, authenticity, and long-term preservation.
2. Foster public understanding and appreciation of Stowe’s history, architecture, and cultural resources through education, outreach, and heritage celebrations.
3. Encourage new development that is compatible with the town’s historic character, visual quality, and traditional settlement patterns.
4. Protect visual and aesthetic character through zoning, design review, and planning practices that consistently safeguard both historic and contemporary development.
5. Maintain Stowe’s status as a Certified Local Government to access funding, technical assistance, and educational resources for historic preservation.
6. Promote incentives, programs, and regulatory tools that encourage the preservation, rehabilitation, and ongoing maintenance of historic resources.
7. Integrate historic resource considerations into all municipal planning and capital improvement projects, where appropriate.
8. Support the adaptive reuse of historic buildings to meet modern needs while retaining their character defining architectural features.

Tasks

1. Maintain and routinely update Stowe's inventory of historic structures and districts. Update the Stowe Historic Sites Survey. Include updated survey results in future zoning amendments to ensure their continued protection.
2. Monitor and maintain the condition of municipally owned historic buildings and sites, prioritizing preservation and early intervention for at-risk resources.
3. Develop and distribute educational materials, such as brochures, walking tour guides, and signage.
4. Partner with the Historical Society and other organizations to host lectures, tours, and community events celebrating Stowe's history.
5. Incorporate interpretive elements and storytelling into public spaces, trailheads, and historic sites.
6. Maintain the Town's Certified Local Government status to access state and federal preservation grants and resources.
7. Provide property owners information on state and federal financial incentives, such as grants, tax credits, or other programs, to support historic building renovation, restoration, and maintenance.
8. Explore and consider amending zoning regulations to include demolition by neglect provisions.
9. Develop and adopt design guidelines for new construction and the rehabilitation of historic buildings to ensure compatibility with the town's historic character and existing settlement patterns.