

Community, History, & Culture

Tapping into South Burlington's history and promoting its culture are key to building community and identity in South Burlington. Providing and supporting opportunities for community-building are central to the City's work in the coming years, as we grow in population and want South Burlington to thrive as a community. This will include both preserving and engaging with the past and supporting new cultural ventures into the future.

South Burlington is a relatively young municipality and most development has occurred after WWII. As South Burlington grows and evolves, we must develop cultural resources here for our residents and appropriately preserve historical buildings, landscapes, and views.

Culturally, South Burlington is part of the greater Chittenden County and Vermont cultural community. Meeting our goals for greater South Burlington identity and building community requires investment in cultural resources and our artistic community. Progress will require both City-directed action and collaboration with community partners.

OBJECTIVES

- Integrate South Burlington's history into its future through engagement with historic sites, structures, and landscapes
- Promote cultural activities, development, art creation, and public art display equitably and accessibly across all areas of the city
- Support artistic diversity in South Burlington's cultural opportunities and integrate arts and culture into public buildings and spaces

INVENTORY, ANALYSIS, & CHALLENGES

Historic Sites and Structures. The City of South Burlington has diverse historic resources, including Paleoindian archeological sites, stone walls, historic farmsteads, Craftsman-style bungalows, International-style buildings, and post-World War II neighborhoods. South Burlington's buildings are a record of the City's evolution from an agricultural to a booming post-war suburban community. A varied cultural landscape must be preserved to preserve the City's history. Development must be sensitive to the City's historic and archaeological sites and structures.

South Burlington has fewer remaining truly historic buildings and properties than in some surrounding municipalities. The City's early history has been well documented through annual reports, oral histories, and publications, including the City's formation from the original City of Burlington and buildings potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Connecting between history and our cultural future keeps the past alive and enriches the present and future. Instead of locking historic resources, structures, and landscapes away, South Burlington recognizes their current value and the need to engage with history as we promote cultural development.

Scenic Quality. South Burlington has outstanding scenic views to the Green Mountains to the east, and the Adirondacks and Lake Champlain to the west. Through careful planning, appropriate development

design, and through acquisitions and easements, important vistas and viewshed protection zones can be protected for future generations to enjoy. Viewshed Protection Zones exist for six views and opportunities exist for additional overlay districts.

South Burlington's agricultural landscape is part of the City's cultural heritage. Prior to WWII, much of the land now in South Burlington was rural farmland surrounding the more urban Burlington core. The remaining farmsteads and farmland reflect the community's strong agrarian past. These landscapes are important links in our open space network as working lands and as conserved open spaces. Maintaining agricultural lands is a priority for the City both for food production and climate-resilience, and to preserve views and open space.

Cultural Facilities and Organizations. Cultural resources in the area have been historically centered in the Burlington downtown core, but we should encourage and attract new cultural amenities into South Burlington. Cultural resources both need and attract population density, which supports our housing goals, climate-resiliency goals, and bike/pedestrian-friendly built environment.

Cultural facilities in South Burlington are owned and operated by both the public and private sectors. Since opening in 2021, the new City Hall has provided an auditorium, Senior Center, Library, and numerous meeting rooms rentable by the public. Cultural organizations in the City include places of worship, service organizations, and community groups which attract both South Burlington residents and regional visitors. Collaboration with these regional organizations and religious communities can help build community in South Burlington and connect us to our surrounding area.

Community building and community vibrancy should also involve investment in the artistic community. The City has a role to play in supporting public art in new developments and redevelopments, providing facilities where artistic groups can meet and create art, and to support programming for all ages in the arts. The development of further community center space would provide much needed space for cultural organizations to gather. The City also can serve as a municipal partner in funding applications where such cooperation is necessary or desirable for future artistic projects and investments.

There are opportunities to engage in artistic and cultural projects at all levels in the City government. The City has improved the engagement with the arts community in City Hall by providing auditorium and other meeting space, and establishing a gallery space in the lobby. Future engagement opportunities could include with public infrastructure, recreation facilities and programs, and other public assets.