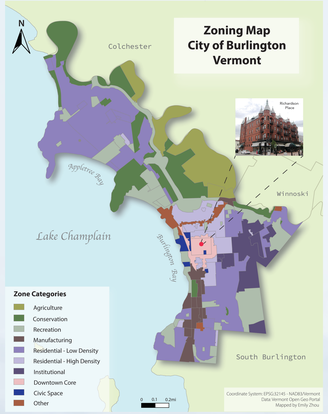
The zoning map of Burlington shows that areas in the city are mainly divided into agriculture, conservation, recreation, manufacturing, residential, and institutional. This small new England urban center carefully follows the traditional urban concentric model, where the downtown urban core is surrounded by residential, manufacturing, and agriculture zones.

On the scale of the entire Burlington, the Richardson place, the building of interest, is located at the downtown urban core, east of waterfront areas and west of Champlain College/UVM, and south of some high-density residential areas.

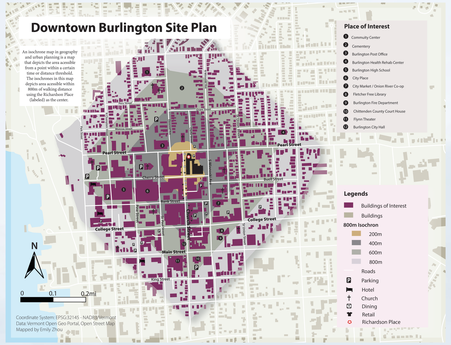


City Site

The public transportation network map reveals the distribution of bus stops and bus lines in Burlington. As a fundamental component of the urban matrix, these bus lines serve as an indicator as well as catalyst of high connectivity between the downtown urban core and other places in Burlington.

The Richardson place lies in a place where bus stops are accessible within walking distances. This is also reflected in one interview I did with an employee working inRichardson Place, who stated that one of the reasons she chose to work here is because this place is highly accessible through public transportation.

Neighborhood Site

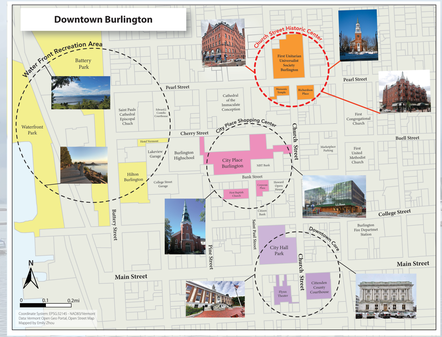


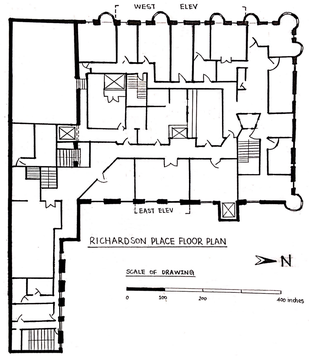
Zooming into the neighborhood in which the Richardson Place lies, the characteristics of high connectivity is reiterated. The map to the left uses an 800m isochron to represent areas within 800 meters of walking distance centered at Richardson Place. The building is located at the Church Street market place neighborhood, where we could find the City Hall, churches, theaters, hotels, parking place, and a variety of retail and dining options. This demonstrate how places around the Richardson place has served as an avenue for religious, social, and cultural activities.

Drawing upon Mike Greenberg's argument on urban matrix, we could also say that the Richardson Place displays high physical, functional, and social connectivity between itself and various other places in Burlington given the close proximity to all those services.

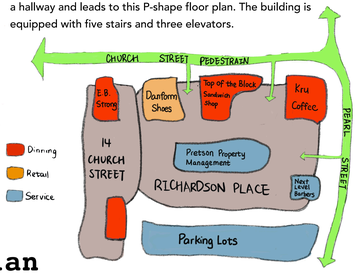
Street Block Site

Further zooming in, Richardson Place is at the intersection of Pearl Street and Church Street, which has made it both a synchronous space and a punctuated space as people congregate along Church Street to do many different things at the same time, and the building itself serve as a semi-colon at the street corner. To the right, I highlighted several important areas at downtown Burlington. This area has focuses on recreation, commercial, historic heritages, etc. Richardson Place, together with the Masonic Temple and the Unitarian church, they formed the earliest historic district of Burlington.





Richardson Place is a multi-usage building with dining and retail stores on the lower storage and office space on the upper storage. The building is easily accessible and has entrance towards the pedestrian street, Pearl Street, and behind the building through the parking lots. One can both access the building through the retail store, the side entrance, and front entrance. Zooming into the interior of this building, the floor plan shows us that the Richardson Place is connected to its neighbor, the 14th Church Street, through a hallway and leads to this P-shape floor plan. The building is equipped with five stairs and three elevators.

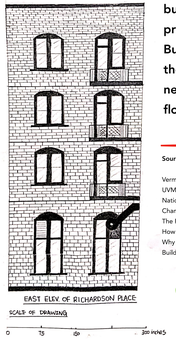


Space Plan

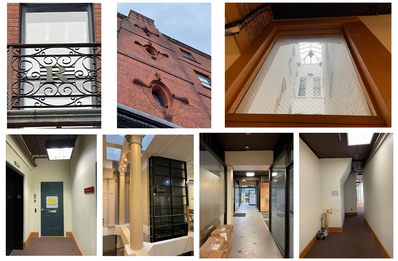
Structure

As for the structure, Richardson is a rectangular five-by-five bay brick building of four-and-a half story. The round towers that divide the bays on the primary western façade, capped with finials, are characteristics of the Scoto-French style; a blend of French Chateausque and Scottish baronial revival. Their asymmetry and protrusion from the wall plane complex the appearance of the façade, but still bring order and organization between each story. The windows on each façade of the building are very different. Only windows overlooking Church Street has balconies, which are adorned in the center with an iron "R". These facades are also equipped with additional ornaments. The balconies are not for functional use but only serve as decoration. Windows under the tower are the most heavily adorned, with arches and balconies.

If we compare the elevation drawings on different facade of the building, it is interesting to notice that each facade obtain very distinctive appearances. As exemplified by the leftmost elevation drawing, this facade of Richardson Place is facing Church Street and is much more heavily adorned. Its lowest story is occupied by retail stores and upper story is marked by this distinctive R sign on the balcony. In contrast, the other elevation drawing of this facade that faces the parking lot does not generate much interest: the windows and balconies are simplistic and consistent throughout. The building definitely has an emphasize towards the Church Street and is still extending itself to the pedestrian (colored portion of the elevation drawing represent changes over time), but different components all work harmoniously because the same proportion, style, and color are used throughout.



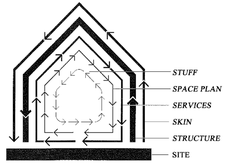
Stuff



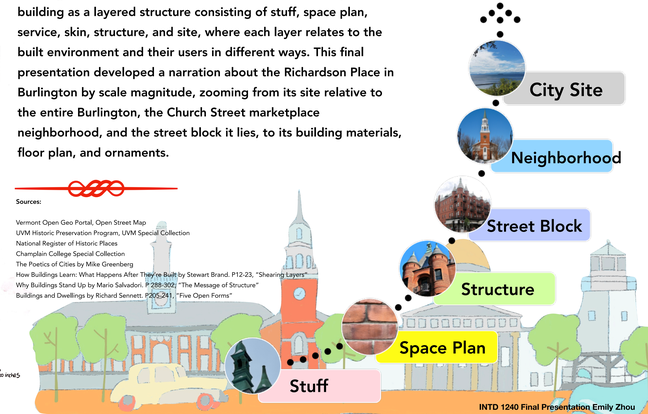
Looking closely at some elements of the building, the windows are one-over-one double-hung sash with brick lintels, except for the three arrow-slit windows that interrupt the brick façade near the top of each tower. Two center bays each feature a pair of windows and a balcony overlooking Church Street, which is adorned in the center with an iron "R". The interior is is hollowed out with glass windows as the ceiling, which brings light to the interior and makes it look much more spacious. The decoration of the interior displays a mix of modern and classic design and there are many evidence of change: modern elevators and classic elevators from different time periods are both kept, corridors of very different styles are visible.

If you were to visit Burlington, you should not miss the Church Street marketplace. Described as the "gem in the crown" of the Queen City of Burlington, it welcomes 1.5 million visitors each year to shop, each, meet, and greet, mark milestones, or just pass the time of day. Before transforming into a marketplace, Church Street has gone through a drastic transformation in the past century. Photographs from the late 1800s indicate that Church Street was once home to residential properties; timer-frame houses flanked a dirt street with paved sidewalks. These were replaced with brick storefronts, and by the 1890s, larger buildings were being constructed to quarter expanding businesses. It was also around this time that some prominent buildings, now constitute part of the Church Street Historic District, were constructed. Indeed, there are many buildings in the Church Street Marketplace that deserve to have their architectural and historic significance acknowledged and explored. One of these buildings is the Richardson place, the earliest commercial building, located at 2 Church Street.

Building Portraits Prologue



The most interesting aspect of a building is the variety of approaches available for us to study its structure and socio-historical context. For example, through analyzing it from different scales, we are able to get different kinds of information about the building. Indeed, Stweart Brank, as we have read, conceptualized building as a layered structure consisting of stuff, space plan, service, skin, structure, and site, where each layer relates to the built environment and their users in different ways. This final presentation developed a narration about the Richardson Place in Burlington by scale magnitude, zooming from its site relative to the entire Burlington, the Church Street marketplace neighborhood, and the street block it lies, to its building materials, floor plan, and ornaments.



Sources:

Vermont Open Geo Portal, Open Street Map
UVM Historic Preservation Program, UVM Special Collection
National Register of Historic Places
Champlain College Special Collection
The Poetics of Cities by Mike Greenberg
How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built by Stewart Brand. P12-23, "Shearing Layers"
Why Buildings Stand Up by Mario Salvadori. P 288-302, "The Message of Structure"
Buildings and Dwellings by Richard Sennett. P205-241, "Five Open Forms"

Richardson Place: Church Street's Gem in the Crown

In 1901, Abernethy had even replaced the "R" on the balconies with "A", a fitting and symbolic act for this transformation.

In 1982, the first two floors were gutted in preparation for new retail stores and the upper stories were renovated into office spaces instead of apartments.

From 1986 onward, the building starts to extend itself to the pedestrian street by offering outdoor seating areas in the summer.

1895 Richardson Place is built by Albert E. Richardson and W.H.McKillip, and designed by Albany architect Walter Dickson.

1911 The building was then taken over by Frank D. Abernethy. H. W. Allen's business partners and evolved into Abernethy's Department Store.

1982 The Abernethy's went out of business in November, 1982. In June of the following year, Richard Corley purchased the property and spent $5 million to renovate it.

1986 Corely's business model for Richardson Place was not sustainable and the space closed in spring of 1986.

2022 Today, Richardson Place is owned by Jeff Davis and is home to office on the upper stories, Flavelle's on the Block Sandwich Shoppe occupy the retail space.