

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Newport News Downtown Historic District

Other names/site number: VDHR #121-5621

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 37th Street, Warwick Boulevard, 23rd Street, West Avenue, 31st Street, Washington Avenue

City or town: Newport News State: VA County: Independent City

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

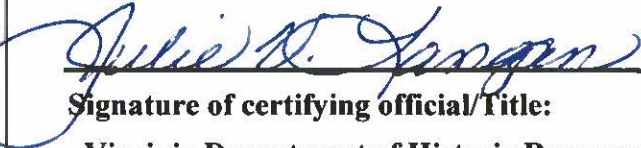
I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B X C D

 Signature of certifying official/Title: _____ <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	<u>6/5/2023</u> Date
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In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>103</u>	<u>13</u>	buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	structures
<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	objects
<u>116</u>	<u>22</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 12

Listed properties are First Baptist Church (Ref #00000774, 1 contributing resource), St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (Ref #5000525, 4 contributing resources), Hotel Warwick (Ref #84000044, 1 contributing resource), Newport News Public Library (Ref#5000894, 1 contributing resource), Medical Arts Building (Ref #2001001, 1 contributing resource), Basic Construction Building (Ref #SG100003614, 1 contributing resource), and Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District (Ref #SG100005443, 3 contributing resources)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/residence; multiple dwelling/apartment building; hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE/business/office building; financial institution/bank; department store;

professional/doctors offices

GOVERNMENT/city hall; correctional facility; government office/municipal building; post office; courthouse

EDUCATION/high school; library

RELIGION/religious facility/church

RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility/arena; monument

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/processing plant

LANDSCAPE/parking lot; park

TRANSPORTATION/rail-related/train depot

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/residence; multiple dwelling/apartment building

COMMERCE/TRADE/business/office building; financial institution/bank;

GOVERNMENT/city hall; correctional facility; government office/municipal building; post office; courthouse

EDUCATION/library

RELIGION/religious facility/church

RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility/arena; monument

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/processing plant

LANDSCAPE/parking lot; park

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19TH CENTURY/Gothic Revival

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival

LATE 19TH CENTURY AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Beaux Arts, Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival, Dutch Revival, Tudor Revival, Classical Revival, Neo-Classical Revival

LATE 19TH CENTURY AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style, Bungalow/Craftsman

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style, Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, CONCRETE, STONE, GLASS, WOOD, METAL, SYNTHETICS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is a 91-acre district that captures the city's transition from pre-World War II activities and functions to postwar uses, most notably those related to the urban renewal movement of the mid-20th century. The district is located at the heart of the city and contains historic local, state, and federal functions found nowhere else in the city; therefore, no other place equivalent to this significant cultural landscape can be found in Newport News. As a result of the massive undertakings associated with urban renewal, the district includes a variety of architectural styles and building types. The fully redeveloped core at the southern end, where urban renewal projects were concentrated, features large, multistory office buildings designed by an assortment of architects in the International, Brutalist, and New Formalism styles. Typical for these styles, the buildings demonstrate strong vertical or horizontal massing with limited decorative features. To the north along West, Washington and Huntington avenues are a number of older buildings (including many monumental churches) that are illustrative of the city's pre-World War II architecture and activities. These resources exhibit more traditional styles including Gothic, Greek, Romanesque, and Colonial Revival and early-to-mid twentieth century Commercial Style. Similarly, the far north end of the district is notable for retaining a few pockets of pre-World War II housing as well as smaller one-and-two story commercial buildings that are indicative of the built environment that once characterized the city's downtown area. The surviving resources are interspersed with postwar parking lots and garages that proliferated due to increased reliance on the automobile, which was one of the key trends that impelled urban renewal projects as city officials sought to make access to downtown more convenient for suburban commuters. Exterior materials most commonly seen in the district are brick veneer, stone, concrete, and glass, as well as vinyl siding on the smaller number of residential resources. The most common alterations are additions to churches that accommodated growing congregations and expanded community services, and the application of vinyl siding to the exterior of most remaining dwellings. Overall, however, most resources retain a high level of

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integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, and materials. Meanwhile, much of the mid-twentieth century development retains its historic character and features that are illustrative of the urban renewal projects undertaken here. City officials used urban renewal as a framework for their attempts to reposition downtown as a vibrant institutional and commercial hub for the city and to ameliorate the impacts of rapid suburbanization. The result is a distinctive built environment focused on a post-1950 governmental and institutional core alongside a considerable number of important architectural resources that illustrate the character of pre-World War II downtown Newport News. The Newport News Downtown Historic District includes 151 resources; 116 of these are contributing resources, in addition to 12 contributing resources that have been previously listed in the NRHP, and 23 are noncontributing resources.

The previously listed resources within the Newport News Downtown Historic District are as follows: Medical Arts Building (NRHP 2002; DHR# 121-0223; 121-5621-0067), a 1928 office building; the 1929 Georgian Revival Newport News Public Library (NRHP 2005; DHR# 121-0080; 121-5621-0064), which still serves its original purpose; the 1928 Gothic Revival/Art Deco Hotel Warwick (NRHP 1984; DHR#121-0040); the small Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District (NRHP 2020; DHR# 121-5621-0101, -0102, and -0103) consisting of three of the few survivors of the city's historic "warehouse row"; the Basic Construction Building (NRHP 2019; DHR #121-5621-0049) that housed one of the most successful construction firms in Virginia after World War II; the 1902 Romanesque Revival/Richardsonian First Baptist Church (NRHP 2000; DHR# 121-0031; 121-5621-0034); and the 1916 Classical Revival St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (NRHP 2005; DHR# 121-0032; 121-5621-0002).

Narrative Description

SETTING:

The Newport News Downtown Historic District consists of approximately 91 acres of historic urban institutional, residential, and commercial development located within the City of Newport News. The downtown is located at the southwest corner of the Virginia Peninsula (or Lower Peninsula) where the Chesapeake Bay splits into the York River to the north and the James River to the south. These natural boundaries to the south and west left the city to grow east and north. The district is bordered to the east by Warwick Boulevard, multiple railroad lines that are indicative of the city's continued robust shipping industry, and Interstate 664. The district is bordered by the Newport News Marine Terminals to the south and the Newport News Shipyard and modern development to the north. Indeed, the city is best known for its shipbuilding yards, which have dominated the waterfront since the 19th century. The downtown historic district's waterfront is sandwiched between the modern marine terminals and the shipyard and then it extends eastward and northward to capture the area included in the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority's 1956 Master Plan, 1957 Revitalization Plan and 1958 urban renewal Project 3.¹

Included within the district is the principal institutional hub for Newport News, including City Hall, the municipal Circuit Court, Treasurer's Office, and other city offices. These are found between 23rd Street and 28th Street, along with the Newport News Federal Building and Post Office. North of this, commercial businesses and offices as well as large religious buildings are interspersed among a mixture of historic and modern parking lots and garages. Residential areas, including several apartment complexes, are found along the north and west periphery of the district boundary, most notably along the James River. The parcels for most resources are large, reflecting the scale of the downtown urban renewal project, which resulted in consolidation of numerous parcels into "superblocks," as well as the monumental size of the associated buildings. Within the areas not as directly impacted by urban

¹ The urban renewal plan for downtown Newport News was numbered Project 3 because the City had undertaken two prior urban renewal projects elsewhere in the city.

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renewal, property lots are smaller for earlier residential and commercial buildings, which provides a window into the city's pre-World War II cultural landscape. Most buildings sit close to the streets, separated only by sidewalks and utility poles as well as some road verges. The downtown is situated on relatively low, flat land with limited vegetation due to the numerous parking lots and many buildings located close to the public sidewalks. While there are some mature trees located along the streets – especially along West Avenue – the majority of greenspace is located at the aptly named Superblock Park (DHR# 121-5621-0072) near the center of the district between 28th and 26th Streets. Superblock Park is largely grass covered with mature trees irregularly filling in most of the boundary along the streets. Along the northwest and southeast sides is an internal L shaped asphalt parking lot. Additionally, Christopher Newport Park (DHR# 121-5621-0028) is to the west along the James River. Christopher Newport Park is the same width as the Superblock Park (between 26th and 28th Streets), but about half the depth running from the waterfront back to the two residential towers which separate it from the Superblock Park. Unlike Superblock Park, Christopher Newport is a formal park with paired brick wall sections at the entrance, several symmetrical concrete sidewalks separating areas of grass, educational signage, and benches throughout. There is also a fountain near the entrance and a plaque dedicated to the soldiers lost in the Civil War. Near the water at the center of the park is a statue of the founder of both the city and Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company: Collis Potter Huntington. A low brick wall separates the park from the overgrown waterfront. Residential areas, including apartment complexes, also have more landscaping, including mature trees and plantings.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC RESOURCES:

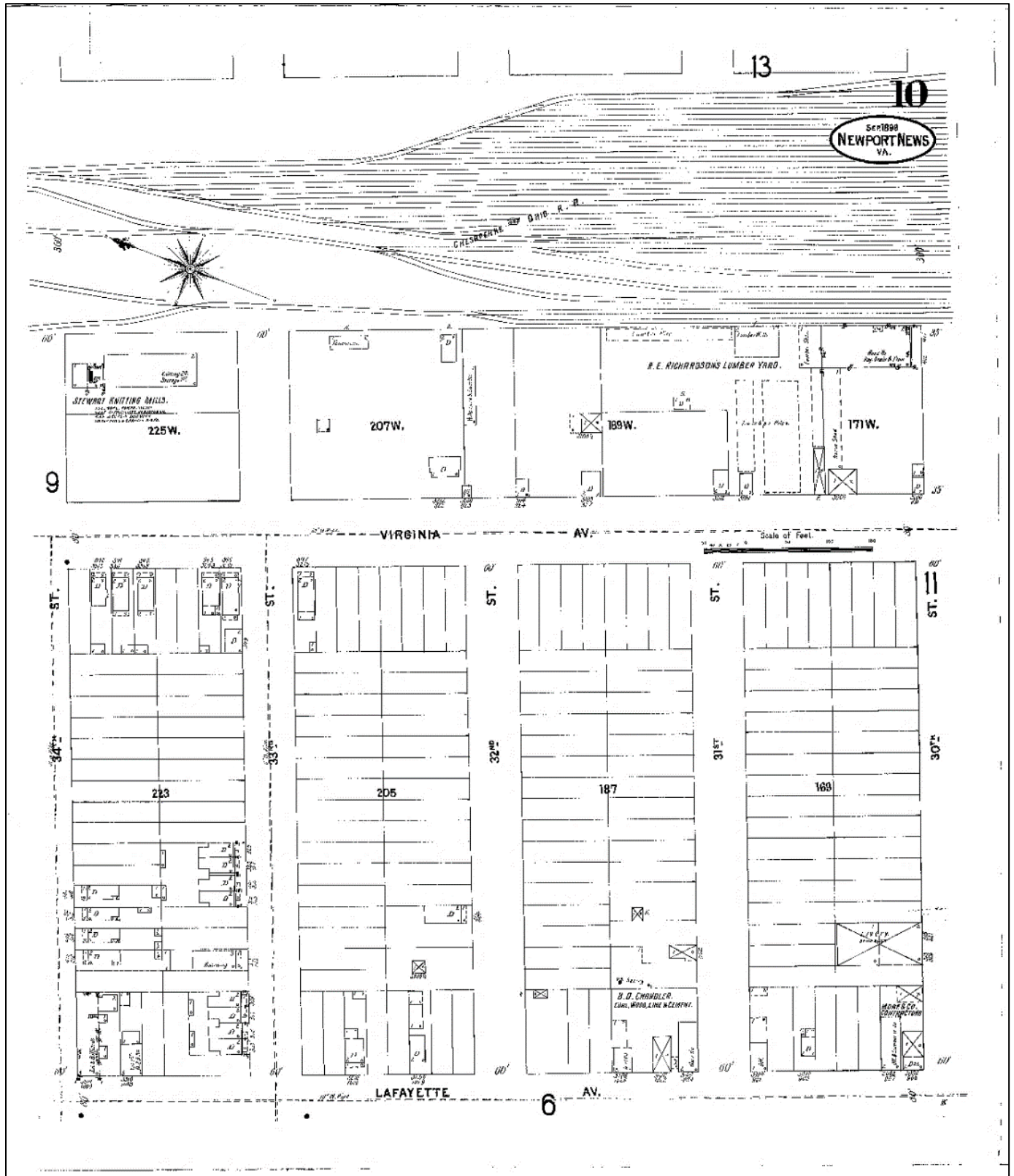
The Newport News Downtown Historic District, where initial development occurred during the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century followed by extensive redevelopment in the mid-twentieth century, captures a wide range of historical change and growth for the city. The district encompasses a majority of the original historic downtown boundary, the redevelopment of the area into the city's current municipal and institutional center, and the historic expansion of the city north up to 36th Street, where a mixture of historic and modern parking lots and development borders the district boundary. The city was designed in a north-south, east-west grid system which has mostly carried through the expansion and redevelopment of the city center over time. Huntington Avenue (originally known as Lafayette Avenue) and Warwick Boulevard (originally known as Virginia Avenue) are two north-south streets which join north of downtown and create the main transportation artery between the historic core and the city beyond. The district's other two north-south streets, Washington and West avenues, are cut off to the north by the Newport News Shipyard. The east-west streets are numerically arranged with 23rd Street at the south to 36th Street at the north. These streets end at the James River to the west and Warwick Boulevard to the east. Early in the downtown's development, numerous railroad lines created a boundary just east of Warwick Boulevard, running parallel to the boulevard and ending at the marine terminal just south of downtown. This has provided a distinct downtown boundary and all areas east that was amplified by the construction of Interstate 664 during the late 1970s and early 1980s; the highway also runs parallel and east of the rail lines.

Within the street grid of the downtown district, originally small lots were platted uniformly across the city. In each block, eight lots faced the north-south streets on either end with twenty-four lots in between (twelve on each side), a pattern shown in early Sanborn Maps (Figure 1). During the early 20th century, many of these uniform lots were quickly consolidated to accommodate larger residential, commercial, religious, and institutional buildings, especially along the north-south streets. For instance, Hotel Warwick (DHR# 121-5621-0062), located at 2410 West Avenue, has historically occupied one parcel that spans the eight lots on the east side of West Avenue between 24th and 25th Streets. Similarly, Saint Vincent De Paul Catholic Church (DHR# 121-5621-0002) sits on one parcel spanning the eight lots on the west side of Huntington Avenue between 32nd and 33rd Streets. Mid-block examples include the residential duplex at 223 29th Street (DHR# 121-5621-0042) that sits on two combined lots. The building originally served as the Newport News Female Seminary from 1894 to 1902, after which it was a

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boarding house before becoming a duplex. One street to the south, on 28th Street, multiple small commercial spaces also occupy two combined lots.



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Figure 1: 1899 Sanborn Map showing the large amount of railway lines at the top along with the grid and parcel divisions originally planned for the city; Virginia Avenue is now Warwick Boulevard

The major resource types within the historic district are residential, commercial, religious, and institutional. Each resource type displays how downtown Newport News evolved across the 20th century. For example, the low-density development that characterized the city from 1900-1940 is represented by single-family dwellings, rowhouses, and small apartment buildings while post-World War II housing tended toward larger apartment developments, including a high-rise building. The architectural styles deployed evolved as well, transitioning from Romanesque Revival (Figure 2) and other popular revival styles to largely unadorned blocks by the early 1940s (Figure 5) and to the International Style (Figure 6) during the 1960s and early 1970s.



Figure 2: 223 29th Street (DHR# 121-5621-0042)

Residential

Today, residential buildings in the Newport News Downtown Historic District comprise a lower percentage of downtown's building stock due to the results of urban renewal during the 1960s-early 1970s. The pockets of pre-World War II housing that are extant, however, continue to offer a wide variety of types and styles that exemplify the developmental needs of the city. Early Sanborn Maps show entire blocks between 36th and 38th Streets along Washington Avenue filled with identical two-story duplex rowhouses located just east of the Newport News Shipbuilding Yards. These appear to be modest worker housing as there are two smaller dwellings on one lot. While these blocks were demolished for parking lots beginning in the mid-1960s, the building type was interspersed elsewhere downtown, and two duplexes similar to the demolished buildings remain at 319-321 and 323-325 33rd Street (Figure 3; DHR#s 121-5621-0006 and 121-5621-0007 respectively). These duplexes are brick and retain historic features such as their balance and symmetry, fenestration pattern, concrete sills and lintels, and brick detailing. Alterations include the insertion of vinyl window sash and removal or replacement of porches. Similar modest housing stock is concentrated along 36th Street between Warwick Boulevard and Huntington Avenue. Most of these dwellings retain their historic porches, fenestration pattern, and some wood details, while

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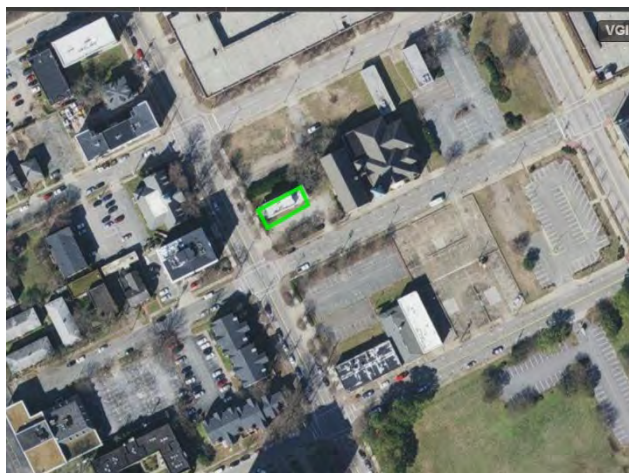
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common alterations include replacement vinyl window ash and siding.



Figure 3: 323-325 33rd Street (DHR# 121-5621-0007)

In addition to these smaller and simpler housing types were single-family dwellings that, while occupying single lots, were more elaborate and exemplary of the popular architectural styles of their time. Like the duplexes, few of these dwellings survive, but an example of such is 2904 West Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0066). This slender, three-story residence is a rare example of residential Beaux Arts style in the Newport News Historic District. It is restrained in design compared to other, more elaborate, Beaux Arts examples but still features rusticated decoration at the main level which becomes more refined on the second and third stories. Ornamental features include arched windows, bay windows, and classically-inspired design elements. The dwelling today stands as a remnant of a formerly residential area that transformed to largely commercial uses during the mid- to late 20th century (at left; the dwelling's location is indicated with a green outline).



Another type of residential building that may have housed the ship building workers are the early, multi-story apartment buildings that are still found along the James River just south of the yards. Most of the district's early 20th century apartment buildings are narrow, long, rectangular buildings covering most of the lot. They generally feature apartment units at each floor that flank a central entrance and public corridor. The Marlborough Apartments (Figure 4; DHR# 121-5621-0070), located just across the street from the shipyard, is a 1915 three-story, Colonial Revival building of such a configuration. Each apartment building features its own detailing to set it apart from the rest. The Marlborough has a relatively flat façade with deep eaves and a projecting fire escape and balcony on each

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side elevation, while another three-story building directly behind it, 96 31st Street (DHR# 121-5621-0047) features a central entrance with deep balconies at each apartment unit along the façade.



Figure 4: 3015 West Avenue, The Marlborough (DHR# 121-5621-0070)

During World War II, with shipyard production and employment at its peak, many of the apartment buildings and single-family dwellings near the shipyards were replaced with larger apartment complexes to accommodate the increased workforce and their housing needs near the yards, a need that had been greatly exacerbated by the lack of construction activity through much of the 1930s Great Depression. The St. James Terrace Apartments (Figure 5; DHR#s 121-5621-0043 and 121-5621-0039) feature fifteen multi-unit apartment buildings. These buildings are all rectangular in form, but varying in size, detailing, and orientation. Situated along the James River, the complex begins at 29th Street and ends at 31st Street across from the shipyard. While the buildings are spaced fairly close to one another, open common areas are found along the river and at 30th Street. The inclusion of green space within the apartment complex aligned with Federal Housing Administration standards that required ample natural light and ventilation as well as outdoor space for federally-financed and -insured housing projects. The widely popular “garden apartments,” as these came to be known, continued to be built through the 1950s in many areas. The historic district’s retention of such a housing type provides another insight into the city’s evolution through the mid-20th century.

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Figure 5: 74-85 30th Street, St. James Terrace Apartments (DHR# 121-5621-0043)

Multi-family dwellings continued to be a critically important source of housing as the population of Newport News increased rapidly during the mid-twentieth century. Proximity to the booming shipyards along the waterfront made the city's downtown area an especially favorable location for new, higher-density buildings. By the 1970s, high rise apartment buildings became more popular in dense metropolitan areas at the time. The fifteen-story, 135-unit high-rise at 90 28th Street, currently known as Seaview Lofts (Figure 6; DHR# 121-5621-0029) and completed in 1972, is one such example. Designed in the International Style, one of the most popular mid-20th century architectural styles at a national level, the building is distinguished by its flat roof, windows flush with the walls, and use of piers at the ground level. Incorporation of a recessed first-story block surrounded by piers is a character-defining aspect of the International Style. The intention was to create a sense of lightness and verticality to complement the smooth walls and lack of traditional ornamentation that were inherent to the style. In lieu of the ribbons of windows that often accompany the International Style, the Seaview Lofts has ribbons of balconies along its façade. The side elevations, meanwhile, feature vertical ribbons of windows flanking a vertical ribbon of balconies, which contribute to the building's vertical massing.

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Figure 6: 90 28th Street, Seaview Lofts (DHR# 121-5621-0029)

Commercial

The Newport News Historic District features a number of surviving early-to-mid twentieth century Commercial Style buildings, as well as several examples of mid-twentieth century commercial buildings that were part of the city's urban renewal and redevelopment initiatives. The densest concentrations of early twentieth century commercial style buildings exist along 28th Street and are one- to three-stories with moderately intact storefronts. Most still feature their original storefront window and door configurations, and many retain their decorative details. Two-story commercial buildings often featured apartments units above the shops with large windows as seen at 3506 Washington Avenue (Figure 7; DHR# 121-5621-0091). Due to vacancy or long-term neglect, second-story windows on many of these buildings have been boarded up or replaced with vinyl window sash. The fenestration patterns, however, remain intact. The building at 3508 Huntington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0095), though altered at the storefront, retains its character-defining arched masonry façade, as well as the fenestration pattern of its upper stories. It is also likely that the storefront alterations, such as applied vinyl siding, are reversible. One of the largest examples of early commercial architecture that remains in the district is the Beaux Arts style ca. 1937 Montgomery Ward Building located at 2800 Washington Avenue (Figure 8; DHR# 121-5621-0088). Its mansard roof with dormers is among its most distinctive features, along with cast stone quoins, round-arched windows, a cast stone belt course and a heavy cornice defined with cast stone. The large display windows that once characterized the street level's façade and side elevation have been covered, but the street entry has been retained. The building's symmetry, precise proportions, and classically-inspired details are characteristic of Beaux Arts design.

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Figure 7: 3506 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0090) and 3508 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0091)



Figure 8 - 2900 Washington Avenue (DHR#121-5621-0088)

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As part of the city's post-World War II urban renewal efforts, several blocks of Washington Avenue, centrally located in the historic district, were redeveloped from their former small-scale commercial streetscape to larger commercial office buildings and financial institutions. An important consequence of the redevelopment was the loss of small businesses that offered a variety of services and goods for downtown residents. The removal of prewar commercial and residential resources permanently changed the character of Newport News's downtown. Rapidly emerging commercial and financial firms, propelled by new state and federal regulations that allowed expansion and consolidation as well as the general prosperity of the postwar period, became dominant features of the city's core, a process that was repeated in other Tidewater cities such as Norfolk and Hampton. Representative of national trends, most of these buildings were constructed in Modern Movement styles. Both 2700 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0074) and 2712 Washington Avenue (Figure 9; DHR# 121-5621-0073 respectively) are representative of the Brutalist style. Compared to one another, they illustrate the wide variety found within a style commonly considered to be monolithic in character. Both buildings feature rough, unfinished concrete finishes with minimal windows penetrating heavy concrete walls, use of repetition with obvious irregularities, and blocks of massing. 2700 Washington Street is much more symmetrical in building form and fenestration pattern, whereas 2712 Washington (see below) has more obvious irregularities. 2712 Washington Street also features more heavily textured concrete walls fluted in some areas with wooden forms while 2700 Washington has smoother, but still unfinished, concrete walls. These two examples, along with previously described commercial buildings, illustrate the wide breadth of significant building styles, forms, and dates found throughout the Newport News Downtown Historic District during its period of significance.



Figure 9 - 2712 Washington Avenue (DHR#121-5621-0073); rear view from 27th Street

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Religious

Scattered throughout the Newport News Historic District are numerous prominent religious buildings that date from 1899 to 1949. Romanesque Revival, Classical Revival, and Gothic Revival are among the high styles on display. All of the churches are constructed with heavily rusticated stone, brick, or a mixture of both and feature stained glass windows, prominent entrances that are raised from the street, and ornament surrounding the fenestrations. At 230 33rd Street (DHR# 121-5621-0002), St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church features Classical Revival design. At 221 34th Street, St. Paul's Episcopal Church (DHR# 121-5621-0004) is a fine example of Gothic Revival style. Trinity United Methodist Church (Figure 10; DHR# 121-5621-0041) is an excellent example of materials reflective of the Romanesque Revival style. Large, rusticated arches with emphasized keystones surround windows and doors with warm brick walls. A square tower is situated at the crux of the cross-gable roof and features terra cotta roofing tiles and bronze cornices and detailing. Many of the churches have additions attached to the main building, usually by a hyphen as seen in St. Paul's Episcopal Church (DHR# 121-5621-0004), where the rusticated stone of the main church is copied in the hyphen to a contrasting brick Colonial Revival style addition. Trinity United Methodist Church (DHR# 121-5621-0041) likewise has multiple additions surrounding the building, but are compatible with the original church structure, utilizing similar brick colors but less ornamentation to set it apart. Such additions were necessary to accommodate growing congregations; in part, due to the post-World War II "Baby Boom" that brought unprecedented population growth throughout Virginia.



Figure 10: 228 29th Street, Trinity United Methodist Church (DHR# 121-5621-0057)

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Institutional

The majority of institutional buildings are grouped towards the south end of the historic district and consist primarily of banks and government buildings. These buildings, many of which are monumental in size and scale, were largely constructed during the mid-to-late twentieth century as part of the city's urban renewal efforts. An important exception is the Newport News Federal Building and Post Office (DHR# 121-5621-0061), an outstanding example of Beaux Arts design constructed in 1904. The building displays a rich palette of classically inspired attributes, including precisely cut stone, a central entry bay with flanking Corinthian pilasters, a slightly projecting entry bay with a round-arched transom with stone tracery surmounted by a plaque of a bald eagle perched on a keystone with flanking swags, the words "U.S. Custom House" incised in the frieze above the second-story windows, and a dentiled cornice. Rectangular quoins are at each end of the entry bay. Round-arched windows are on the first story of the front block while remaining windows are rectangular with two-over-two sash surrounded by an architrave, stone sills with corbels, and a flat arch with a keystone. The roof is concealed by a parapet composed of molded panels and stone balustrades. The U.S. Postal Service continues to own and operate the building. Located at the corner of 25th Street and West Avenue, the building faces southeast toward the post-World War II municipal complex that was a centerpiece of the city's urban renewal Project 3.

Although removal of earlier buildings and altering street grids generally are associated with post-World War II redevelopment projects, very similar construction projects during the early 20th century also included clearance of buildings and consolidation of parcels. For example, the erection of the Beaux Arts Newport News High School (121-5621-0087) in 1919-1923 resulted in all dwellings and businesses between 30th and 32nd Streets east of Huntington Avenue being demolished. The massive building features character-defining aspects of Beaux Arts style, including symmetry of massing and fenestration, classically-inspired ornamentation such as a series of engaged pilasters with Corinthian capitals, two entry bays with upper-story, engaged Corinthian columns and ornamental plaques, and a heavy molded cornice with dentils. Indicative of the continued overwhelming importance of the Newport News Shipyard in the city, this resource now is privately owned but leased for Bachelors' Enlisted Quarters housing. Two ship anchors and a flagpole are placed in front of the building. The sidewalk has a series of heavy stone planters that bear insignia for warships built at the shipyard over the decades; the planters are likely a security measure introduced in more recent years. A USO and fitness center are within the building and the former school's running track has been retained at the rear of the building. The high school's Julius Conn Gymnasium (121-5621-0048), built in 1964, continues to be under City ownership and is a community gym.

In similar fashion, for the City's post-World War II municipal complex consolidation of multiple parcels into a superblock was accompanied by reconfiguration of the street pattern. The Newport News City Hall (Figure 11; DHR# 121-5621-0077) and the adjacent Newport News Circuit Court # 5/ Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (DHR# 121-5621-0054), and the Newport News Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courtroom One/ Office of the Magistrate (DHR #121-5621-0078) are among the most prominent results of Project 3. The buildings form a municipal complex that encompasses the entirety of two former city blocks and became the terminating southern end of Washington Avenue at 25th Street. The tall, Brutalist City Hall building sits in the middle of the historic Washington Avenue alignment, making it a prominent focal point along this north-south axis. The building features a strong sense of verticality through vertical ribbons of windows separated by ribbons of concrete. The primary entry is recessed beneath an engaged overhang supported by massive, square, concrete columns. The flat roof is concealed by a heavy parapet that visually weighs down the otherwise vertical massing. The new municipal complex also truncated 24th Street between West Avenue and Huntington Avenue, creating dead ends at both sides of the complex with a large parking lot along 23rd Street south of the City Hall and Court buildings. This was a

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radical change from the historic previous City Hall and Courthouse, which was constructed on a five-lot parcel at the corner of Huntington Avenue and 25th Street.



Figure 11: 2400 Washington Avenue, City Hall (DHR# 121-5621-0077)

Although constructed two decades apart, both the Circuit Court # 5 (DHR #121-5621-0054) and the Newport News Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courtroom One/ Office of the Magistrate (DHR #121-5621-0078) share many design similarities. At 2501 Huntington Avenue, the Circuit Court #5 building was completed in 1949 and features a modest Art Deco design with strong rectilinear massing and form. The slightly recessed primary entrance is set within a concrete surround with square pillars and is fronted by a short flight of concrete steps. Above the entry surround is an ornamental finial with a ribbon that bears the words “Justice” and “Order.” A ribbon of windows with flanking concrete surrounds extends the height of the four-story building. The walls are veneer with buff-colored brick. Ribbons of windows separated by concrete panels span the eastern two-third of the building’s façade. At 230 25th Street, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courtroom One/ Office of the Magistrate is a two-story, International Style building completed in 1968. The low-slung building’s horizontal massing is offset by vertical ribbons of sash separated by colored panels and a grid of concrete members. The centered entry echoes the 1949 Circuit Court #5 building. The slightly recessed entry is set within a molded concrete surround surmounted by a ribbon of windows and panels within a concrete grid. This building also has buff brick walls.

In addition to the wide variety of building types described above, the Newport News Historic District also includes the Victory Arch at 2501 West Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0058). The structure pays homage to returning World War I soldiers and those fallen. Inscribed above the arch is “VICTORY 1917-1918; Greeting with love to those who return, A triumph with tears to those who sleep.” It is situated near the embarkment that was the location where returning soldiers marched past welcoming Newport News citizens. Originally built of wood, the memorial

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was replaced with the extant 1962 stone arch that is a close replica of the original 1919 “temporary structure of wood and plaster” that was “hastily erected with \$6,000 in funds received through public subscription.”² Across the street from the arch is the Hotel Warwick, the first fireproof skyscraper hotel to be constructed in the city. Designed by Norfolk architect J. Kevan Peebles, the building features an eclectic combination of the Art Deco and Tudor Revival styles. The 7-story building displays the three-part arrangement common to early-20th century skyscrapers, with a cast concrete ground level, a brick shaft, and a decorative cornice highlighted by a dentil course, cast stone plaques with inset, arched niches, and a castellated cornice.



Figure 12: 2501 West Avenue, Victory Arch (DHR# 121-5621-0058)

INTEGRITY ANALYSIS:

The Newport New Historic District retains integrity that conveys a long period of significance from 1892 to 1973. The district is representative of nearly a century of the city’s history and includes its early development and commercial beginnings through the pivotal urban renewal movement that swept the nation during the mid-twentieth century. The district retains its *location* in the historic southern core of the City of Newport News, and individual resources are located in their historic locations. Due to circumstances of the post-World War II era that combined rapidly changing lifestyles, suburbanization, and widespread adoption of top-down urban planning practices, the district evolved considerably during its period of significance from one that was primarily composed of early-twentieth-century commercial and small-scale residential buildings within a consistent grid of streets and

² “Victory Avenue: An Enduring Reminder of the Great War.” Informational Plaque at West Avenue and 25th Street, Newport News, Virginia, August 10, 2022.

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parcels to a transformed space that includes larger superblocks and more automobile-oriented development associated with urban renewal. Therefore, the district retains integrity of *setting* associated with its multiple areas and lengthy period of significance.

The Newport News Historic District retains integrity of *design* both in its individual components and as a whole. As mentioned, the district's northern half and the northwesternmost areas retain the city's street grid much as it was laid out during the late 19th century. Buildings in these areas likewise are illustrative of the city's early 19th century cultural landscape. The retention of various dwelling types, including single-family, rowhouse, and apartments, along with the low-scale one- and two-story commercial buildings retain character-defining architectural elements. Hotel Warwick is another housing type that contributes to the district's integrity of design. The continued use of several major churches, such as St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church and Trinity United Methodist Church, as well as the former Newport News High School, are additional anchors of the pre-World War II built environment. The impressive Federal Building and Post Office displays a sophisticated Beaux Art design that makes it a prominent landmark. The urban renewal and city planning influences of the mid-twentieth resulted in the redesign of the urban core, which remains in place today and features the City's primary office buildings, including City Hall, municipal courts, and offices of the Commissioner of the Revenue and the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Moreover, buildings in the district reflect a century of architectural design trends and are representative of the works of several prominent architectural firms in the region.

Integrity of *materials* and *workmanship* has been retained on most buildings in the district, which has resulted in a high ratio of contributing resources to noncontributing resources. While some of the early commercial buildings have altered storefronts, most retain the open storefront configuration of large display windows, single-pane doors, knee-walls, and parapeted rooflines common to the early-to-mid twentieth century Commercial Style. In terms of materials, replacement cladding on commercial resources includes faux stone and metal panel siding at the façade, while side and rear elevations remain largely intact. Similarly, residential buildings have minor renovations or alterations, with the main changes being vinyl siding and windows. Some of the grander residential buildings, most notably along or adjacent to West Avenue, still retain much of their historic materials, although they may be in deteriorated condition. As discussed above, many of the major pre-World War II institutional and religious buildings have high integrity of materials and workmanship. Those resources built as part of urban renewal Project 3, most notably the City's various office and court buildings between 23rd and 26th streets, retain most of their historic materials and workmanship, although window sash have been replaced in some instances, such as at the two municipal court buildings. An important aspect of the integrity of materials and workmanship for the post-World War II buildings is how they feature the rapidly changing technology for fabricating materials and associated construction methods that proliferated from the 1940s through the early 1970s.

The Newport News Downtown Historic District retains the *feeling* of a mixed-use urban core that has a multi-layered cultural landscape. The northern and northwesternmost areas of the district feature the street grids and small parcels that once typified all of downtown Newport News, while the monumental buildings, including churches, schools, courthouses, office buildings, post office, and City Hall, represent a continuum of the city's redesigned landscape starting with the 1904 construction of the post office and continuing through urban renewal Project 3. The continuing importance of the naval shipyard and shipping industries are evidenced within the district, most notably with the adaptive reuse of the former Newport News High School to housing for military enlisted servicemembers. In addition to the integrity of the district's built environment and cultural landscape, the district has extensive documentation of the periods of development that have occurred since the 1890s through 1972 by way of historic maps and photos, post-World War II planning reports, and published histories about Newport News and its maritime industries. Therefore, the historic district conveys its integrity of *association* with multiple areas of significance during its period of significance.

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Primary Resource: **Warehouse (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1906**
Contributing Total: 1

222 23rd Street

121-0077

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0063

Primary Resource: **Warehouse (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1902**
Contributing Total: 1

24th Street

240 24th Street

121-5621-0059

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, Ca 1964**
Contributing Total: 1

25th Street

101 25th Street

121-0036

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0061

Newport News Federal Building and Post Office

Primary Resource: **Post Office (Building), Stories 2, Style: Beaux Arts, 1904**
Contributing Total: 1

210 25th Street

121-5621-0052

Primary Resource: **Bank (Building), Stories 1, Style: Modernist, Ca 1961**
Contributing Total: 1

230 25th Street

121-5621-0078

Newport News Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courtroom One/ Office of the Magistrate

Primary Resource: **Courthouse (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, Ca 1968**
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: **Gazebo (Structure)**
Non-contributing Total: 1

27th Street

227 27th Street

121-5621-0051

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 4, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1961**
Non-contributing Total: 1

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Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1967**
Contributing Total: 1

231 28th Street 121-5621-0033

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1961**
Contributing Total: 1

233 28th Street 121-0091

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0065

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1927**
Contributing Total: 1

247 28th Street 121-5621-0050

Primary Resource: **Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1960**
Contributing Total: 1

29th Street

74-85 29th Street 121-0124

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0039

Primary Resource: **Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, 1943**
Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: **Multiple Dwelling (Building)** **Contributing Total: 4**

80 29th Street 121-5453

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0049

Basic Construction Building, NRHP 2015

Primary Resource: **Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Colonial Revival, 1945**
Contributing Total: 1

87 29th Street 121-5621-0027

Primary Resource: **Apartment Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1959**
Contributing Total: 1

91 29th Street 121-0125

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0040

Primary Resource: **Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Dutch, Ca 1935**

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314 34th Street **121-0161** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0010*

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1896
Contributing Total: 1

332 34th Street **121-0157** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0008*

Primary Resource: School (Building), Stories 2, Style: Gothic Revival, Ca 1903
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: Classroom Building (Building) Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: School (Building) Contributing Total: 1

35th Street

217 35th Street **121-0166** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0011*

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2.5, Style: Queen Anne, Ca 1898
Contributing Total: 1

232 35th Street **121-5220** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0023*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Vernacular, 1940
Non-contributing Total: 1

331 35th Street **121-0167** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0012*

Primary Resource: Store/Market (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1930
Contributing Total: 1

339 35th Street **121-5221** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0024*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1944
Contributing Total: 1

36th Street

218 36th Street **121-0169** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0013*

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Classical Revival, Ca 1940
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: Garage (Building) Contributing Total: 1

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316-318 36th Street **121-0170** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0014*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1925
Contributing *Total: 1*

319 36th Street **121-0172** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0015*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1898
Contributing *Total: 1*

321 36th Street **121-0173** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0016*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1898
Contributing *Total: 1*

325 36th Street **121-0174** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0017*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1900
Contributing *Total: 1*

327 36th Street **121-0175** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0018*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1900
Contributing *Total: 1*

331 36th Street **121-0177** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0020*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1900
Contributing *Total: 1*

333 36th Street **121-0176** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0019*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1900
Contributing *Total: 1*

337 36th Street **121-0178** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0021*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1900
Contributing *Total: 1*

339 36th Street **121-0179** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0022*
Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Classical Revival, Ca 1900

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Non-contributing Total: 1

Harbor Road

2295 Harbor Road 121-5621-0071

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, 1940

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Dock/Pier (Structure) Non-contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Gatehouse/Guard House (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1

Huntington Avenue

2501 Huntington Avenue 121-5621-0054

Newport News Circuit Court #5/ Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Primary Resource: Courthouse (Building), Stories 4, Style: Art Deco, 1949

Contributing Total: 1

2715 Huntington Avenue 121-5621-0053

Primary Resource: Bank (Building), Stories 1, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1961

Contributing Total: 1

2815 Huntington Avenue 121-0272

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0093

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, 1930

Contributing Total: 1

3100 Huntington Avenue 121-0082

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0087

Newport News High School (now Huntington Hall [privately owned])

Primary Resource: School (Building), Stories 3, Style: Beaux Arts, 1919- 1923

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Gazebo (Structure)

Non-contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Monument/Marker (Object)

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Monument/Marker (Object)

Non-contributing Total: 2

Secondary Resource: Restroom Facility (Building)

Non-contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Shelter (Building)

Non-contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Track (Structure)

Contributing Total: 1

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3200 Huntington Avenue **121-0033** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0085*

Primary Resource: Processing Plant (Building), Stories 2, Style: Art Deco, 1940
Contributing Total: 1

3305 Huntington Avenue **121-5208** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0100*

Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Art Deco, Ca 1940
Contributing Total: 1

3310 Huntington Avenue **121-0276** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0094*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1935
Contributing Total: 1

3405 Huntington Avenue **121-5621-0001** *Other DHR Id#:*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1963
Contributing Total: 1

3508 Huntington Avenue **121-0277** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0095*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1902
Contributing Total: 1

3614 Huntington Avenue **121-5207** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0099*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1943
Contributing Total: 1

Warwick Boulevard

3201 Warwick Boulevard **121-0307** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0096*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1950
Contributing Total: 1

3501 Warwick Boulevard **121-0310** *Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0097*

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1935
Contributing Total: 1

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3613 Warwick Boulevard 121-0311

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0098

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1898
Contributing Total: 1

Washington Avenue

2400 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0077

Newport News City Hall

Primary Resource: City/Town Hall (Building), Stories 10, Style: Brutalist, 1970
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: Government Office (Building) Contributing Total: 2
Secondary Resource: Monument/Marker (Object) Contributing Total: 3
Secondary Resource: Monument/Marker (Object) Non-contributing Total: 2
Secondary Resource: Plaza (Site) Contributing Total: 1

2500 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0082

Primary Resource: Courthouse (Building), Stories 3, Style: Modernist, Ca 1990
Non-contributing Total: 1

2501 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0076

Primary Resource: Bank (Building), Stories 6, Style: Modernist, Ca 1973
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: Parking Garage (Building) Contributing Total: 1

2600 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0075

Primary Resource: Bank (Building), Stories 10, Style: International Style, 1969
Contributing Total: 1

2601-2701 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0072

Primary Resource: Park (Site), Stories, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1990
Non-contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: Gatehouse/Guard House (Building) Non-contributing Total: 1

2700 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0074

Primary Resource: Bank (Building), Stories 4, Style: Modernist, Ca 1973
Contributing Total: 1

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2712 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0073

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Modernist, Ca 1973

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Bank (Building)

Contributing Total: 1

2800 Washington Avenue 121-0237

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0088

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Beaux Arts, 1937

Contributing Total: 1

3114 Washington Avenue 121-0081

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0086

Primary Resource: Theater (Building), Stories 3, Style: Art Deco, 1940

Contributing Total: 1

3404 Washington Avenue 121-0255

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0089

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1925

Contributing Total: 1

3506 Washington Avenue 121-0261

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0090

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1899

Contributing Total: 1

3508 Washington Avenue 121-0262

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0091

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1935

Contributing Total: 1

3512 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0084

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1930

Contributing Total: 1

West Avenue

2410 West Avenue 121-0040

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0062

Hotel Warwick, NRHP 1984

Primary Resource: Hotel/Inn (Building), Stories 7, Style: Art Deco, Ca 1928

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Commercial Building (Building)

Contributing Total: 1

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2501 West Avenue **121-5621-0058**

Victory Arch (WWI Memorial)

Primary Resource: **Archway (Structure), Stories, Style: Classical Revival, Ca 1962**
Contributing *Total:* 1

2591 West Avenue **121-5621-0057**

Primary Resource: **Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Romanesque
Revival/Richardsonian, Ca 1949**
Contributing *Total:* 1

2601 West Avenue **121-5621-0056**

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial,
Ca 1964**
Contributing *Total:* 1

2800-2804 West Avenue **121-5621-0068**

Primary Resource: **Apartment Building (Building), Stories 18, Style: Modernist, Ca 1964**
Non-contributing *Total:* 1

2801 West Avenue **121-5621-0055**

Primary Resource: **Apartment Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1987**
Non-contributing *Total:* 1

2901 West Avenue **121-0223**

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0067

Medical Arts Building, NRHP 2002

Primary Resource: **Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 4, Style: Colonial Revival, 1928**
Contributing *Total:* 1

2904 West Avenue **121-0222**

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0066

Primary Resource: **Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 3, Style: Beaux Arts, Ca 1897**
Contributing *Total:* 1

2907 West Avenue **121-0080**

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0064

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Newport News Public Library, NRHP 2005

Primary Resource: **Library (Building), Stories 2.5, Style: Georgian Revival, 1929**
Contributing Total: 1

3007 West Avenue

121-0226

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0069

Primary Resource: **Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2.5, Style: Neo-Classical Revival, Ca 1918**
Contributing Total: 1

3015 West Avenue

121-0227

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0070

Primary Resource: **Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 3, Style: Colonial Revival, 1915**
Contributing Total: 1

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1892-1973

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Forest Coile and Associates

James Knox Taylor

Louis Adolphe Simon

Rancorn, Wildman, and Krause

Reuben H. Hunt

J. Kevan Peebles

Charles M. Robinson

Carl Ruehrmund

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A (Community Planning and Development) as an example of an evolved downtown heavily influenced by the mid-to-late twentieth century process of redevelopment and federal programs such as urban renewal. The Newport News downtown experienced the same trends as many of Virginia's historic urban cores during the mid-twentieth century, with a mass exodus of citizens and businesses to rapidly growing suburban corridors made possible in large part by federal incentives. The multiple layers of the cultural landscape in downtown Newport News provide a progression through the city's development from the 1890s through the third quarter of the 20th century. Monumental construction projects, including churches, schools, and government buildings have been a characteristic of Newport News since the 1890s. Many of these are individually eligible for or are already individually listed in the NRHP (as listed below). After World War II, urban renewal Project 3 remade the southern end of downtown with major commercial and government buildings constructed by the early 1970s. Today the historic district features one of the best-preserved examples of urban renewal in Virginia's sprawling Hampton Roads region. Additionally, the district is locally significant under Criterion A (Politics/Government) for its large collection of local, state and federal government buildings stretching across most of the southern half of the district. Finally, the district is locally significant under Criterion C (Architecture) for its numerous individual examples of high-style architecture, including numerous individually-listed properties as well as post-World War II projects such as the Brutalist 1970 City Hall building. All three of these criteria are fully developed in the narrative statement of significance. The historic district's period of significance begins in 1892, when the Newport News Female Seminary-turned-residential-duplex at 223 29th Street (DHR# 121-5621-0042) was completed, and ends with a surge in major urban renewal-related construction projects which culminated in 1973 with the completion of three significant examples of Brutalist architecture at 2501, 2700, and 2712 Washington Avenue.

Areas of significance for the previously listed properties are as follows: Medical Arts Building (NRHP 2002; DHR# 121-0223; 121-5621-0067), Architecture; Newport News Public Library (NRHP 2005; DHR# 121-0080; 121-5621-0064), Architecture and Social History: Civil Rights³; Hotel Warwick (NRHP 1984; DHR#121-0040), Architecture and Military; Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District (NRHP 2020; DHR# 121-5621-0101, -0102, and -0103), Architecture and Commerce; Basic Construction Building (NRHP 2019; DHR #121-5621-0049), Commerce; First Baptist Church (NRHP 2000; DHR# 121-0031; 121-5621-0034), Architecture; and St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (NRHP 2005; DHR# 121-0032; 121-5621-0002). Social History, Religion, and Architecture.

³ The 2005 nomination for the Newport News Public Library does not specify Social History as an area of significance. The criteria justification in the nomination merely states that the property is significant for the library's role in "the history of desegregation of Newport News." Current practice is to assign the area of significance of Social History: Civil Rights.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Early History

References to some form of the name “Newport News(es)” first appear in the Virginia Company’s 1619 records, with the first official settler to the area being Daniel Gookin, Sr. on November 21, 1621. Initially the area of modern Newport News was part of the Kecoughtan division (later Elizabeth City). Eventually Virginia was divided into eight shires, including Warwick River Shire in 1634 (renamed the County of Warwick in 1643), which became the location of the modern City of Newport News. Tobacco was the main driver of the agricultural economy for much of the first century of Warwick County’s existence, but poor agricultural practices, such as failure to rotate crops, led to later soil exhaustion and long-term agricultural decline. Other than the failed Warwicktown (established 1680 at the mouth of the Warwick River) there was little in the way of dense development in the area for more than a century afterward. After the Revolutionary War, the Census of 1790 revealed Warwick County to have the second smallest population of any Virginia County at 1,690, with 990 of those being enslaved African Americans; by 1830 the population had fallen to 1,570. Additionally, the almost entirely agricultural economy consisted mostly of smaller farms, rather than large plantations commonly found elsewhere in the Tidewater region, and continued in this vein until the Civil War.⁴ On January 1, 1831, Parker West purchased the 265-acre Newport News farm, part of the original Gookin parcel, which would eventually be the site of the city. A rejuvenated agricultural and overall more diversified economy caused the population to rebound to 1,740 by 1860.⁵ After the Civil War the local economy and hierarchical society were decimated due to the dissolution of slavery, which had been key to the area’s economic activity since the 17th century. A chaotic decade was followed by the readmission of Virginia to the United States in 1870. In just ten more years, the modern Newport News began to be developed, primarily due to the widespread adoption of railroad-based shipping and the city’s location at the convergence of the James and York rivers where they meet the Chesapeake Bay, making it a prime location for a rapidly growing maritime industry.

Led by the efforts of Collis P. Huntington, the Old Dominion Land Company was established on October 19, 1880. This company, which was the primary driver of development for several decades, purchased 18,000 acres and proposed a map for the eventual town of Newport News, which it then proceeded to develop at a frantic pace. By 1880 the county population had grown to 2,258. In 1882 the eastern terminus of the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railroad opened at Newport News Point and led to a complete transformation of the economy and establishment of the city. The combination of the new town and the railroad terminus led to the rapid development of a modern port with deep-water wharves, huge piers, and a massive grain elevator. These were

⁴ John V Quarstein and Park S. Rouse, Jr., *Newport News, A Centennial History* (Newport News, Virginia: City of Newport News, 1996), 12-23; J. Luther Kibler, “Newport News in Colonial Times,” *Newport News’ 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 264-67.

⁵ *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 26-33.

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followed by the Hotel Warwick in April of 1883 and a population that grew exponentially from approximately 1,000 residents to 12,000 by 1891. Coal extracted from western Virginia and the Appalachian Mountains had become the leading product shipped to the ports and fueled the maritime industry. While it started small with the Chesapeake Dry Dock & Construction Company (soon changed to Newport News Shipyard in 1900) in 1886, the shipbuilding industry would eventually become a vital part of the Newport News economy, surpassing all others with both commercial and U.S. Navy contracts. In anticipation of the 1907 Jamestown Exposition, ferry service was established between Newport News and Norfolk.⁶

With the incredible growth of industry and the population, Newport News established its first public water system in 1891 by damming the Warwick River, but many of the streets remained dirt for horses until after World War I and much of the housing was substandard. The owners of the Old Dominion Land Company created the Newport News Light and Water Company in 1889 to fund the water system and a substantial building program of new brick houses to attract workers. The Virginia General Assembly initiated a popular referendum in 1888, approved by voters, which established Newport News as the Warwick County seat and thus host to a new courthouse. The number and variety of retail businesses, banks, and industrial companies grew steadily during this period. The 1881 weekly *Newport News Commercial* became a daily newspaper in 1894 and began an uninterrupted period of newspaper coverage for the city. The *Commercial* was eclipsed by the *Daily Press* by the turn of the century, and this paper has continued to serve the city to the present; multiple other newspapers emerged during the early twentieth century. This expansion of the press during the late nineteenth-century included three African American newspapers, led by the *Star*.⁷

The Development of the City of Newport News

The City of Newport News was officially incorporated on January 16, 1896, with voters choosing a mayor and fourteen councilmen, two from each ward. The city immediately created a formal budget for fire, police, health and street services, as well as a formal school system. Banking was established early in the new city with the creation of the First National Bank of Newport News in 1888. Telephone service followed in 1898 and the Newport News Street Railway Company in 1890, with the first electric streetcar service beginning in 1892. The establishment of the Citizens Railway Light and Power Company in 1900 ushered in the new era of regular power and electric light services; the company also listed ice production as one of its services. Clear evidence of the growing importance and prominence of the city was the 1904

⁶ E.O. Smith, "Collis P. Huntington: Empire Building," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 200-02; Annie Lash Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960* (Newport News, Virginia: The City of Newport News, 1961), 114, 119-21; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 54-63.

⁷ A.M. Hamilton, "The Growth And Development Of The City Government," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 7-8, 97-106; "Newport News Waterworks," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 127-28; Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 121-22; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 63-66.

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construction of the large, Beaux Arts Federal Building at the corner of West Avenue and 25th Street, which was built to house the Post Office (DHR# 121-5621-0061), and continues to serve that purpose. Improvements to the city continued with the chartering of the Newport News General and Non-Sectarian Hospital in 1915, which was the precursor to the current Riverside Regional Medical Center. In 1898 Newport News was declared a Port of Embarkation for the first of several times in support of the Spanish-American War and, like later conflicts, the C & O Railway and its facilities were taken over by the federal government to support the effort.⁸

World War I affected the City of Newport News, and the Hampton Roads region, much more than most American cities. The Newport News Shipyard, led by Homer L. Ferguson, who was chief executive from 1915 to 1953, rapidly expanded its workforce to 12,500 employees by 1919, and included women for the first time. For the second time in its history, Newport News was declared a Port of Embarkation by the U.S. Army. The army took control of the port from the C & O Railway and established multiple staging areas, including four primary bases to support the Embarkation order: Morrison, Stuart, Hill, and Alexander. The expansion of the port and the warehousing capabilities of the city served it well in future years. The population of Newport News also boomed during this period from 26,246 in 1910 to 47,013 in 1920. The desperate need to house so many new residents and workers resulted in the establishment of Hilton Village near Camp Morrison, the first government built planned community.⁹ Additionally, one of the most notable resources within downtown Newport News, the Victory Arch, was initially constructed in 1919 to honor soldiers returning from World War I. The original wood frame arch was replaced in 1962 with the current granite arch, which is fifty feet high and sits at the base of 25th Street and now honors fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II and the Korean War.¹⁰

In 1922 Newport News entered a depression as the boom economy of World War I severely contracted. This was coupled with the International Disarmament Conference that resulted in a pledge to halt all naval construction and the oversupply of commercial ships created by federally-supported building programs during wartime. The shipyard workforce collapsed from 14,000 to 2,200 in short order. Sporadic passenger ship orders from around the world kept the shipyard afloat until the construction of warships resumed in 1927. The shipyard won the contract for the innovative aircraft carrier *Ranger* in 1930, which began decades of a virtual

⁸ Andrew J. Hopkins, "Newport News' Post Office," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 211; Hamilton, "The Growth And Development Of The City Government," 7-8; "Electric Service First Pioneered on Lower Peninsula in Early '90's," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 94-95; "First National Bank Organized in 1888 with Office in Hotel," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 116-19; Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 132-33; "Citizens Rapid Transit Company," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 88-89; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 66-79.

⁹ Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 136-43; *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 84-93.

¹⁰ Charles L. Hurst, "The Roll of Honor," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 213; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 172

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monopoly on carrier construction for the U.S. Navy. During the 1920s the city annexed the town of Kecoughtan to continue its expansion. Additionally, the city changed to a manager form of government in 1920 with a mayor and a five-member council. The City and the Old Dominion Land Company worked together to build the Newport News Public Library (DHR# 121-0080) building at the corner of West Avenue and 30th Street in 1929; this Colonial Revival library is significant for its association with the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement and continues to serve the city today. While most of the United States suffered greatly during the Great Depression, a rebound in commercial and naval shipbuilding carried Newport News through the worst years with only moderate retraction and full recovery was achieved by the late 1930s. Also during the Great Depression, Newport News became more than an industrial town with the establishment of the 880-acre Mariner's Museum in 1931 as well as what would become the War Memorial Museum of Virginia in 1936. In 1938 the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NNRHA) was created to upgrade, rebuild, and expand the city's poor housing stock.¹¹ Local housing authorities were established to assist private developers with planning and constructing housing projects that were insured and/or funded by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Builders were required to adhere to the FHA's minimum design standards in order to receive federal assistance. In Virginia and other Southern states, these federally-approved projects were racially segregated with the majority of such improvements available only to White residents. Newport News, however, proved to be an exception with construction of the Newport News Homesteads, a late 1930s New Deal construction project to create modern housing for Black shipyard workers.

From its official 1896 incorporation until 1940, the City of Newport News completed eight boundary expansions, eventually encompassing most of the southern end of the peninsula south of the current James River Bridge and bounded to the east by the extensive railroad lines which ran parallel to the shipbuilding facilities. The corporate limits then ran east roughly along 36th Street, south of the current Interstate 664. The city limit in 1940 was to the east at the former Village of Kecoughtan, specifically Pear Avenue, and did not include the existing Greenlawn Cemetery.¹² The Newport News Downtown Historic District is almost entirely within the original 1896 city boundary.

¹¹ Philip Hairston Seawell, "Entertainment and the Arts in Newport News," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 188-89; Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 145-46, 166-67; Hamilton, "The Growth And Development Of The City Government," 97-106; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 102-129.

¹² A. Jack Stodghill, *The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins; Newport News* (Sarasota, Florida: First Edition Design Publishing, Inc., 2015), 46-50.

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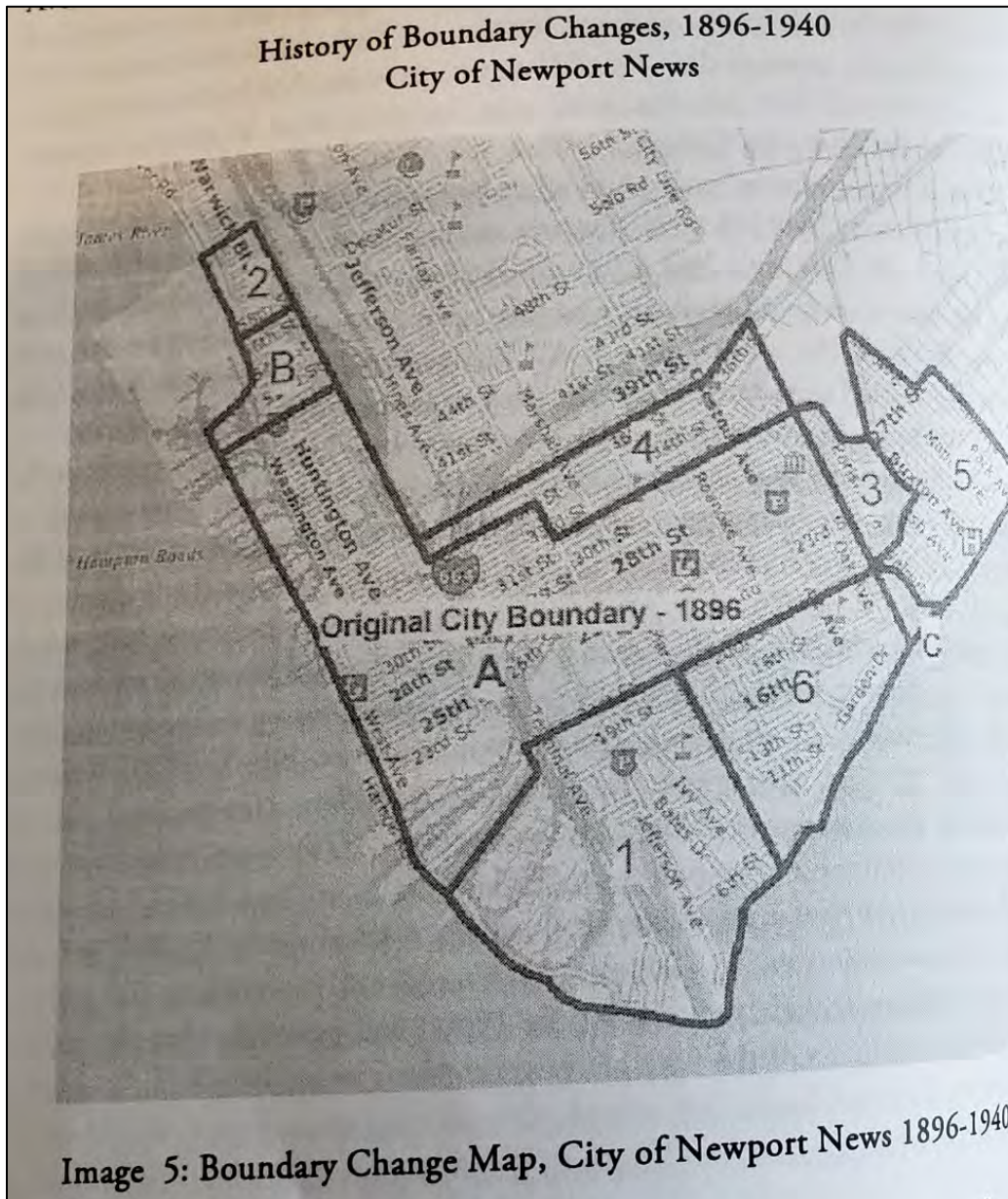


Figure 13: A History of Boundary Changes, 1896-1940 from
"The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins' Newport News, 1925-1965"

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II and on June 16, 1942, the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation (one of eight national ports of embarkation) was established with Newport News again as its headquarters. As with World War I, many industrial sites were taken over by the federal government for the war effort. With all local, state, and federal funding sources taken into account, more than five billion dollars was spent on improvements to city services and infrastructure. Notable improvements included the new Whittaker Memorial Hospital (NRHP 2009), which served only Black patients, and multiple expansions of Riverside Hospital. The shipyard employment peaked at 31,000 in 1943 as

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compared to the 1940 census recordation of 37,067 citizens for all of Newport News. Federal funding also helped with providing desperately needed housing for all of these additional workers with over 13,000 housing units built by 1945, including what may have been the nation's largest World War II housing development with 5,200 prefab homes in Copeland Park and Newsome Park.¹³

The post-World War II period brought challenges and change for Newport News. In 1946, gasoline-fueled buses replaced the electric trolley system, and by 1947 not a single ship was under construction at the shipyard. But commercial shipping and an expansion into turbine construction kept the shipyard afloat. One of its greatest commissions of the postwar period was the huge and incredibly fast *SS United States*, a 990-foot passenger liner. The Peninsula Industrial Committee (PIC) was created in 1945 in an attempt to prevent a post-war slump similar to the period after World War I. The PIC brought numerous businesses to Newport News, culminating in the transformation of the Copeland-Newsome Park temporary war housing project into the 811-acre Copeland Industrial Park on the border with the City of Hampton. Camp Patrick Henry was transformed into a commercial airport which opened in 1949. By the 1950s shipbuilding had returned to being a reliable and leading engine of growth and employment. The 1950s also saw Newport News face a population crisis with the geographically constrained city housing 42,358 residents as of 1950. Attempts to merge with the City of Hampton were rebuffed when Hampton instead merged with Elizabeth City and Phoebus in 1952. Warwick incorporated as an independent city the same year, effectively blocking any further expansion for Newport News.¹⁴ The multiple efforts to merge with other localities was fueled in part by the desire of White business leaders and residents to maintain a large majority of Newport News's population.

By this time, Newport News also was being adversely affected by rapid suburbanization that drained its urban neighborhoods of wealthy and middle-class White residents. Discriminatory practices in many suburban neighborhoods precluded purchase of homes by African Americans who, forced to remain in declining urban neighborhoods, struggled to maintain their neighborhoods and public schools in the face of growing divestment and declining local tax revenues. City officials attempted various methods to revitalize the city and counteract the limits of its size, as well as the downtown population decline experienced by a majority of cities during this period. Marshaling private and public investment sources and utilizing top-down master planning, the City embarked on its first urban renewal projects, which included a massive renovation program for city housing. At the same time, the City of Warwick expanded so quickly that it could not keep up with expected services from residents, many of whom worked in Newport News. After several failed attempts, the citizens of both communities approved a plan of consolidation on July 16, 1957, adopting the name of Newport News for the entire newly expanded city. Mrs. Philip Hiden, widow of the former mayor, and Mrs. Homer L. Ferguson, widow of the former longtime chief executive of the Newport News Shipyard, helped cut the

¹³ Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 149-54; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 132-140.

¹⁴ Stodghill, *The Making of a City*, 67-83; "Citizens Rapid Transit Company," 88-89; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 144-54.

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ribbon at the merged cities' opening ceremony on July 1, 1958; the event was accompanied by a nineteen-gun salute at Huntington Park at the northern line between the two former cities. The result was a city of sixty-four square miles (the largest in Virginia at the time) and a population behind only Richmond and Norfolk. As other cities in the Tidewater region grew and consolidated, the vehicular bridge and tunnel system was greatly expanded as automobile and trucking transportation were firmly entrenched as the dominant means of transportation and suburban residents demanded quick and easy access from their neighborhoods to white- and blue-collar jobs in the city. The transportation improvements created a connected, if highly competitive, Hampton Roads urban environment.¹⁵ As it had for most of the previous half-century, the Newport News shipyard led the way in the continued success of the city's economy with numerous commercial and military commissions. Additionally, the port expanded with more industrial piers and greater merchant ship capacity and draft depth. The population continued to grow, reaching 113,662 people in post-consolidation 1960, and the city's skyline transformed as urban renewal projects included several new skyscrapers by the early 1970s, marking the emergence of Newport News as a modern, fully developed city.¹⁶

Early, pre-World War II Redevelopment in Downtown Newport News

Long before urban renewal swept through many American downtowns in the post-World War II era, downtown Newport News underwent a fifty-year transformation through the first half of the twentieth century which saw most of the early housing and residential building stock pushed out in favor of commercial development. Substantial residential displacement was often a hallmark of post-World War II urban renewal and downtown redevelopment plans. In Newport News, however, redevelopment downtown had already shifted housing to the north and east of downtown. The net result was a redevelopment process that was focused on the transition from smaller to larger commercial businesses, as well as the parking challenges many of Virginia's downtowns began facing as early as the 1910s.

From 1897-1899 along the north side of 25th Street, between Washington and Lafayette (now Huntington) avenues a number of dwellings were demolished in favor of growing businesses. By 1899 commercial development extended above 32nd Street and Washington Street was already being established as the primary commercial corridor for Newport News. The U.S. Federal Building and Post Office was constructed in 1904 along the east side of West Avenue, taking up the entire block between 25th and 26th Streets. Along with numerous new businesses established in the same area, this building continued the long process of pushing residential development north. Residential neighborhoods east of Jefferson Avenue (outside of downtown) also grew at a rapid pace at this time. The area east of downtown between Jefferson and Madison avenues, and between 19th and 23rd streets, was almost entirely occupied by African American residents. Between 1913 and 1919 the number of houses and apartment buildings east of the railroad lines

¹⁵ This was a period of consolidation for nearly all of the Hampton Roads area: the City of Virginia Beach was formed by the 1963 merger of the City of Virginia Beach and Princess Anne County; the City of Chesapeake was formed by the 1963 merger of the City of South Norfolk and South Norfolk County; the City of Suffolk was formed by the 1974 merger of the City of Suffolk and the City of Nansemond (former Nansemond County).

¹⁶ Stodghill, *The Making of a City*, 83-92; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 158-84.

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continued to grow dramatically, with most of them for the Black community, while many of the parcels abutting the railroads contained industrial development. By 1926 the area of downtown between West and Huntington avenues from 23rd to 28th streets was increasingly occupied by commercial development. The construction of the Newport News High School in 1919-1923 resulted in all dwellings and businesses between 30th and 32nd Streets east of Huntington Avenue being demolished. The expansion of the shipyard and dock areas, accelerated by World War II, continued to encroach on housing from the north and south. Additionally, as the population exploded during World War I, many new housing developments and projects were initiated, all east of the railroad tracks and outside of downtown.¹⁷

A Home Owners' Loan Corporation, a New Deal-era government-sponsored corporation, published a redline map in 1940 that offers a very clear picture of the housing status of downtown Newport News and the surrounding neighborhoods at that time, as well as the discriminatory practices that were used to assign monetary value to private property. More than half of the Newport News Downtown Historic District was marked as being largely "Commercial," consisting of "important retail and wholesale areas." To the north of the district was a large section of housing from 42nd to 50th Streets, which has now been almost completely subsumed by the Newport News Shipyard. Within the historic district two notable sections of housing remained in 1940. The first was between 26th and 37th streets from Washington Street east to the Elizabeth River. The northern half of this area was absorbed by the shipyard by the early post-World War II period. The blocks from 26th to 28th street later were completely redeveloped through urban renewal projects; resulting in two apartment towers along with the aptly named Superblock Park. In contrast, the three blocks east of West Avenue, between 28th and 31st streets retain pre-World War II apartment buildings and a handful of single-family dwellings as well. The differing trends of development again illustrate the multiple-layered character of the cultural landscape in the city's downtown district. The other large section of housing on the 1940 redline map was one block wide from 26th Street to 38th Street between what is now Huntington Avenue to the east and Warwick Boulevard to the west. Other than two small sections (the north blocks of 33rd and 36th Streets), the housing stock is no longer extant, with much of it demolished before the beginning of redevelopment in the 1950s. Additionally, the 1940 report claimed that there was zero new residential construction under way at the time of the survey.¹⁸ The conclusion regarding the effect of redevelopment associated with early urban renewal efforts on downtown Newport News's residential housing stock is that it was minimal. A limited number of dwellings were lost during the period of post-World War II redevelopment, but the majority had already been cleared on an ad hoc basis in favor of new commercial projects.

The housing that was still extant in downtown Newport News by the early 1950s was largely for shipyard workers, although a few substantial older dwellings, such as at 2904 West Avenue, remained. Other observations in the Owners' Loan Corporation Description were that the streets were well paved and that multiple churches, schools, and stores also remained in the downtown

¹⁷ Reid and McCartney, *Renaissance Survey*, 33-64.

¹⁸ Home Owners' Loan Corporation Appraisal Department, "Security Map and Area Description of Great Norfolk, Va.," C36, March 15, 1940.

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area. Ten percent of the buildings in downtown at that time were apartment houses constructed during World War II for shipyard and defense workers. The “Class and Occupation” of a majority of downtown workers consisted of shipyard workers, clerks, merchants and businessmen earning annual salaries in the range of \$1,500-3,000. Pursuant to the segregation-based purpose of these redline documents, the report claimed that there were no African American residents in downtown in 1940.¹⁹

Post-World War II Urban Renewal of the City of Newport News, Phase 1 (ca 1957-1962)

As noted above, by the mid-20th century Newport News faced the same challenges of a declining downtown and divestment experienced by the majority of urban cores in the United States at that time. The new, consolidated city initially saw a significant boost to downtown businesses, but this resulted in a corresponding crisis from the lack of parking. Like nearly every other American downtown, Newport News had been designed for a majority of shoppers to arrive by bus, streetcar, or on foot. The rapid adoption of personal automobiles that began during the 1910s and was briefly suspended during the Great Depression and World War II, became a major postwar trend that transformed urban and rural landscapes. A major factor was construction of the interstate highway system, which quickly formed the backbone of local transportation planning practices. A predictable outcome of the massive shift of urban residents to suburban environs was a parking crisis when those individuals continued to work downtown. Addressing the lack of parking in prewar downtowns required a multiple-year effort and considerable capital. Simultaneously, most private investments were drawn to suburbs where newly affluent consumers began to flock to the innovative shopping malls that sprang up during the 1950s. In Newport News, residential suburbs and accompanying shopping centers began to emerge in the 1950s, mostly along Warwick Boulevard, well north of downtown. Meanwhile, longstanding businesses began to abandon downtown by the 1960s, again mostly for the new commercial corridor along Warwick Boulevard. Businesses that left downtown during this period included Nachman’s, La Vogue’s, and W. T. Chapin; the last major retailer to leave downtown was Sears Roebuck in 1975.²⁰

As noted above, redevelopment and renewal had been trends in downtown Newport News since the 1900s that played a transformational role in the city’s early historic fabric. The Housing Act of 1949 was passed with the specific purpose of clearing older, low-income “slum” areas and creating new housing for citizens. “Commercial renewal” led to a similar process for smaller businesses and older commercial buildings. The first period of master-planned urban renewal in downtown Newport News began in 1957 and continued over a decade. As a result, over forty-five acres of houses and small businesses were cleared to make way for new buildings to house Sears, a new Home Federal Savings and Loan building (DHR# 121-5621-0053), a new Municipal Court Building (DHR # 121-5621-0078), the 1962 Wilbern Building (DHR # 121-

¹⁹ Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, “Security Map and Area Description,” C36.

²⁰ Stodghill, *The Making of a City*, 83-92; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 92-93, 172-73, 192, 194.

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5621-0051), and several large parking lots; other projects never came to fruition.²¹ The acquisition costs were split between the City of Newport News and the federal government, with Newport News only shouldering one-third of the budget to purchase blighted properties.²²

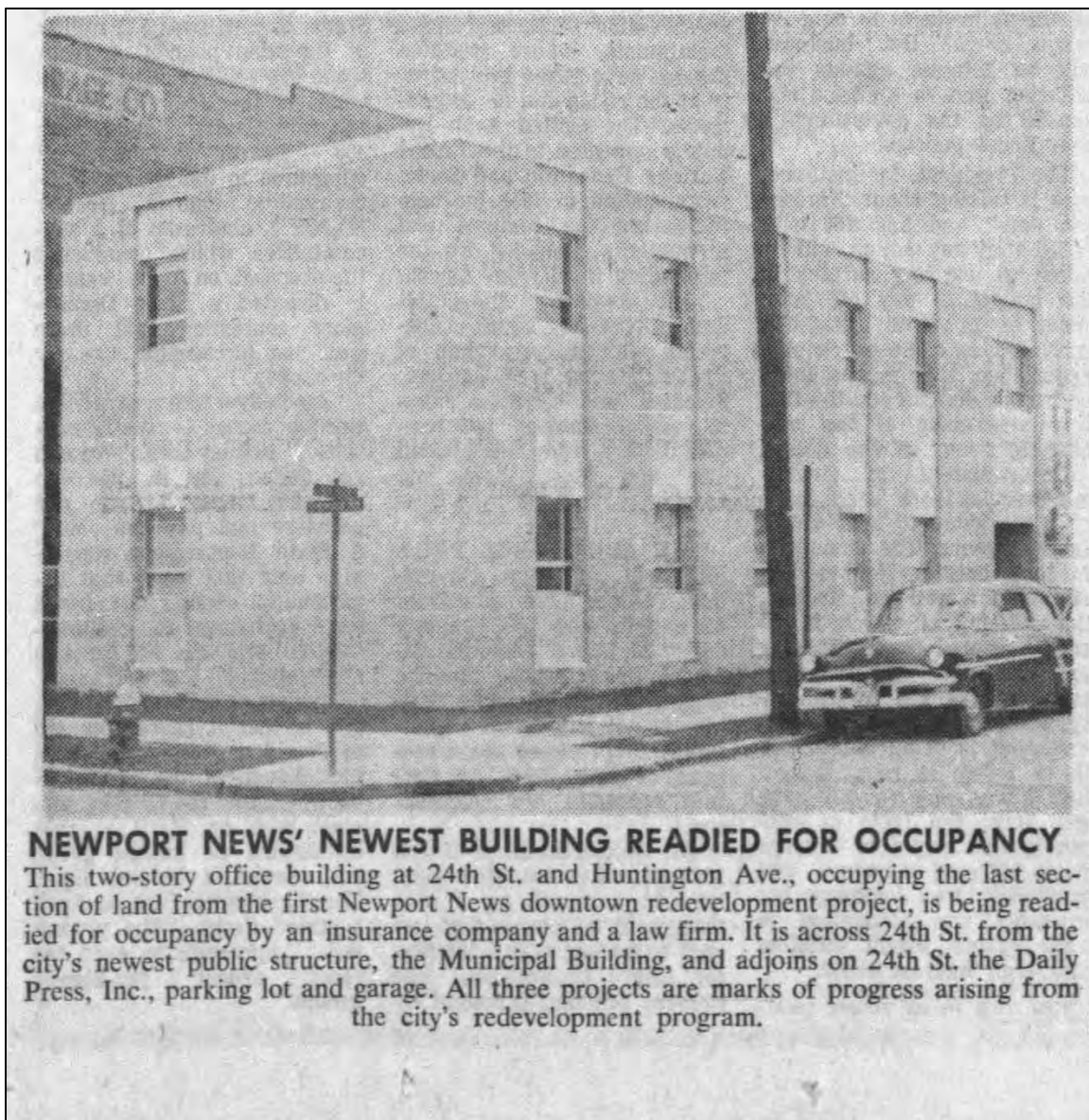


Figure 14: Photograph from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, May 2, 1964

²¹ Roberta G. Reid and Martha W. McCartney, *Reconnaissance Survey of Historic Architecture, Newport News, VA* (City of Newport News, Virginia: 1990), 158; Ada Louise Huxtable, "Many Historic Buildings Fall In Path Of Urban Renewal," *Daily Press*, May 31, 1970, A12.

²² "Downtown Redevelopment Report Indicates \$365,503 To Be Saved," *Daily Press*, February 28, 1960, 3-A.

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The new three-story Sears, Roebuck building (Figure 15), completed in 1959 at a cost of \$1,500,000, occupied about half of the initial redevelopment project area on a huge parcel between 26th and 28th streets to the south and north, Huntington Avenue to the west and Virginia Avenue (now Warwick Boulevard) to the east.²³ A substantial portion of the Sears parcel was covered by a paved parking lot with a capacity for numerous cars; the building's design and ample parking made it a suburban-style property within the urban core of Newport News. Today the building is still extant, but the exterior has been completely reclad and features an entirely new fenestration pattern. Now an office building, it abuts the historic district on its eastern boundary. The Home Federal Savings and Loan building at 2715 Huntington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0053) was completed in December 1960 and represented another step in the redevelopment plan for Newport News. Built in the "Colonial Williamsburg style," the building also served as the Peninsula headquarters for the bank.²⁴

²³ "New Sears Store is One of Most Modern in Virginia," *Daily Press*, April 14, 1959, 18.

²⁴ "S&L Association to Start Building New Headquarters," *Daily Press*, December 6, 1959, 3-A.

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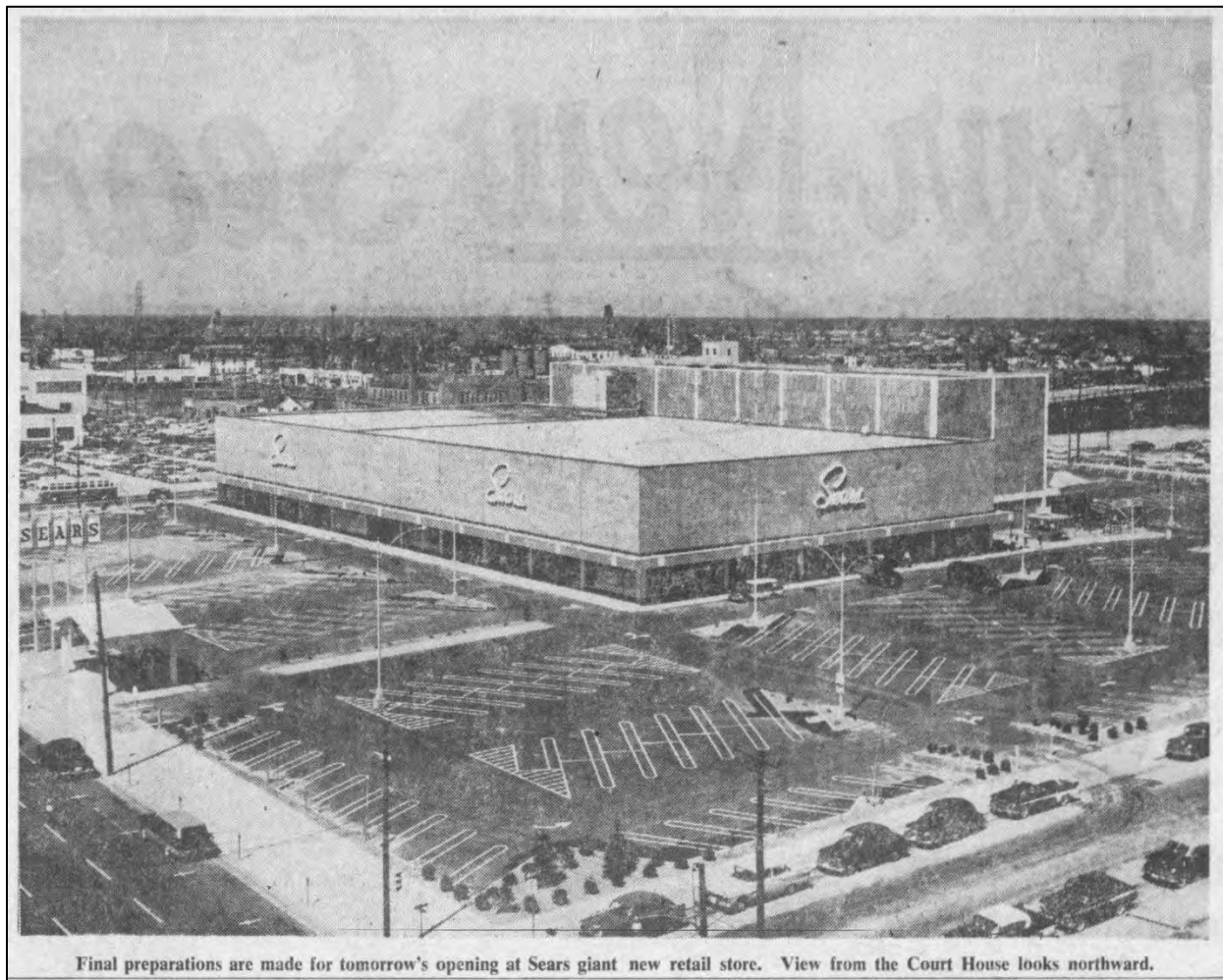


Figure 15: "New Sears Store Is One of Most Modern In Virginia," article from the *Daily Press*, Newport News, Virginia, April 14, 1959

In 1957 the city council increased the allowable height of buildings from two to three stories and voted for "liberalizing parking provisions." Additionally, the council made the creation and expansion of parking a priority of the entire first phase of urban renewal. For one particular block, the goal was to "move as early as possible to construct the huge new lot for parking...Completion in time for Christmas shoppers is the goal..."²⁵ The parking lots extant today in the historic district, therefore, were a purposeful innovation utilized by the city council, and in keeping with the national urban redevelopment movement, chosen with the goal of welcoming suburban shoppers while holding major retailers at traditional downtown locations. Once demolition of the commercial buildings and housing deemed unnecessary was complete (and displacing numerous business owners and residents in the process), many of the parcels

²⁵ Al Coates, "2-Way Traffic Ordered Restored on Jefferson Avenue By NN Council," *Daily Press*, February 26, 1957, 3; Al Coates, "Downtown NN Block For Parking Lot Now Next In Line For Razing," *Daily Press*, July 20, 1957, 3.

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were resold specifically “for use in retail, wholesale, industrial and municipal purposes.”²⁶ These four categories of land usage were maintained as the primary focus of redevelopment into the later phases of the urban renewal project in Newport News. In November of 1957 the city awarded a contract to the Warwick based E.W. Muller firm to construct a parking lot “which will be the biggest the city has ever provided.”²⁷ In addition to parking lots, a focal point of the downtown redevelopment program was substantial street improvements to increase the marketability and viability of the downtown for commerce. Of the initial budget of \$1,100,000 for redevelopment, \$86,300 was dedicated to this purpose.²⁸

Urban Renewal of the City of Newport News, Phase 2, 1962-1982

As the second phase of downtown redevelopment got underway, the city took on the position of obtaining commitments for “new stores and office structures before tearing down the old.”²⁹ Newport News also hired national consulting firm Harland Bartholomew & Associates, based in Atlanta, to advise the city on the best strategies as it continued its top-down redevelopment efforts. Fred Robinson, a partner in the firm, laid out four “primary requirements for a healthy downtown”: 1. Adequate access; 2. Good interior vehicular and pedestrian traffic circulation; 3. Sufficient parking adjacent to stores and offices; 4. Careful distribution of land use. For Newport News, Robinson emphasized parking and interior circulation. Robinson called for maintaining industrial uses along the perimeter of downtown, while focusing on a central core of retail and office buildings surrounded by adequate parking. He also advised keeping municipal buildings downtown and expanding them into a “municipal center.”³⁰ Additionally, some side streets were closed, and parking was eliminated on the primary arterial roads to quicken the pace of traffic through downtown, while parking was moved to the new off-street lots. One goal of this was specifically to “put downtown merchants more nearly on a par with their [suburban] shopping center competitors.”³¹ Another change in the approach to parking in downtowns was the emergence of multi-level parking facilities; these were specifically mentioned by Fred Robinson as part of the second phase of downtown renewal (Figure 16).³²

²⁶ Coates, “Downtown NN Block For Parking Lot Now Next In Line For Razing,” 3.

²⁷ “Muller Get Contract On Parking Lot,” *Daily Press*, 3.

²⁸ “Opening Of Bids On \$1,100,000 Bond Issue Set By NN Council April 9; Early Sale Desirable,” *Daily Press*, 3.

²⁹ John Grieff, “City To Have Master Plan This Year, Christie Says,” *Daily Press*, March 1, 1961, 3.

³⁰ At almost the same time, the City of Virginia Beach, newly merged with Princess Anne County, completed its major new municipal center alongside the much older Princess Anne County courthouse. The Virginia Beach Courthouse Village and Municipal Center Historic District was listed in the NRHP in 2018.

³¹ “Expert Stresses 4 Points To Aid Downtown Uplift,” *Daily Press*, June 28, 1962, 3, 32.

³² “Planners Okay Broad Aims Of 2nd Downtown Renewal,” *Daily Press*, March 7, 1963, 3.

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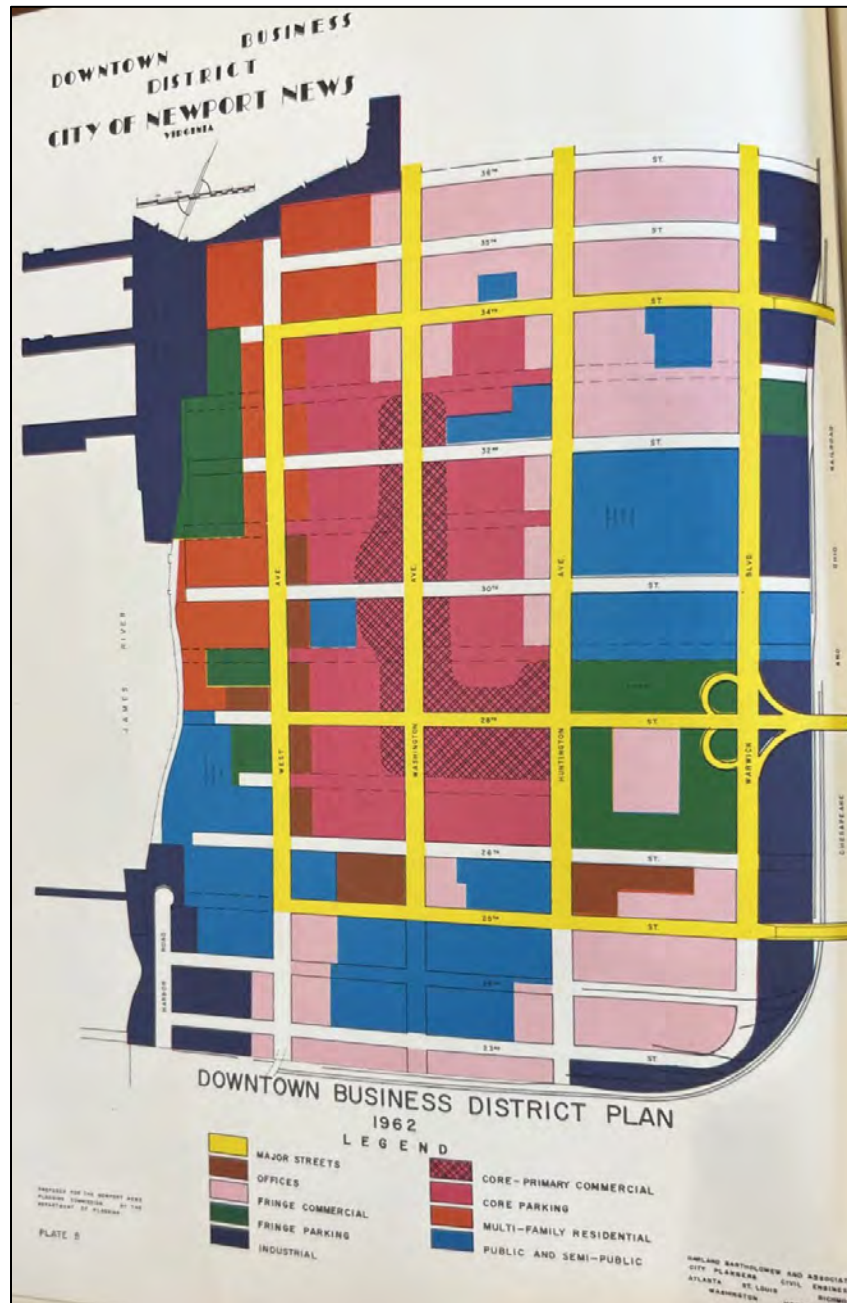


Figure 16: "Plate 5: Downtown Business District Plan" from A Report on Downtown Business District, Newport News, Virginia. Atlanta, GA: Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority. 1962

Fred Robinson also explained the larger outlook of downtown redevelopment. First, Newport News was not unique; most downtowns were having challenges at that time. However, he argued that downtowns were worth working to save as they were often the most important part of a city's image. If undertaken carefully, with the right combination of uses in the compact urban core, Robinson said a downtown could be rejuvenated and also generate a return on

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redevelopment investments in the form of greater tax revenues. The increased parking was intended to be free to motorists and provided by a combination of the City of Newport News and private businesses. Additionally, Robinson noted, while city government should be an anchor for downtown, he believed such buildings should be on the edge rather than within the central business district. Robinson finished with this guiding principle: “You don’t get a chance to rebuild a city twice in a lifetime; act thoughtfully, but boldly too.”³³ Early redevelopment efforts appeared to demonstrate that the city was on the right path with the city’s return on investment in the first phase already 150% by 1962.³⁴

The final contribution by Bartholomew & Associates to the redevelopment of downtown Newport News was a six-step process of potential redevelopment (Figures 17-18). The first of these steps would technically be the second phase of the official federal redevelopment process. Each step highlighted a different section of downtown to allow for redevelopment at a pace to minimize substantial dislocation of businesses:

- 1. 30th Street to 33rd Street
- 2. 29th Street to 31st Street
- 3. West Avenue to Washington Avenue including portions of 27th, 28th, 29th streets
- 4. West Avenue to Washington Avenue from 25th Street to 27th Street
- 5. Upper 33rd Street to 35th Street between West and Washington avenues
- 6. 32nd Street to 35th Street between Washington Avenue and Huntington Avenue.³⁵

Much of the demolition slated for these six phases occurred, but the resulting infill development efforts were inconsistent. The most dramatic example of failed construction plans is the Superblock Park, which consists of the two full blocks bounded by West and Washington avenues and 26th and 28th Streets. Today this is a large green space with limited public parking. However, the site was originally planned to be filled with a large complex of banking and office space led by the local Basic Construction Company.³⁶

³³ John B. Grieff, “Downtown Redevelopment Is Explained By Consultant,” *Daily Press*, 3, 54.

³⁴ John B. Grieff, “Redevelopment Paying Off For Newport News,” *Daily Press*, December 27, 1962, 3, 5.

³⁵ John B. Grieff, “3rd Downtown Redevelopment In Planning Stage,” *Daily Press*, January 8, 1965, 3, 8.

³⁶ “Basic Co. Eyes Two Blocks In Downtown Redevelopment Area For Major Structure,” *Daily Press*, April 4, 1965, 3.

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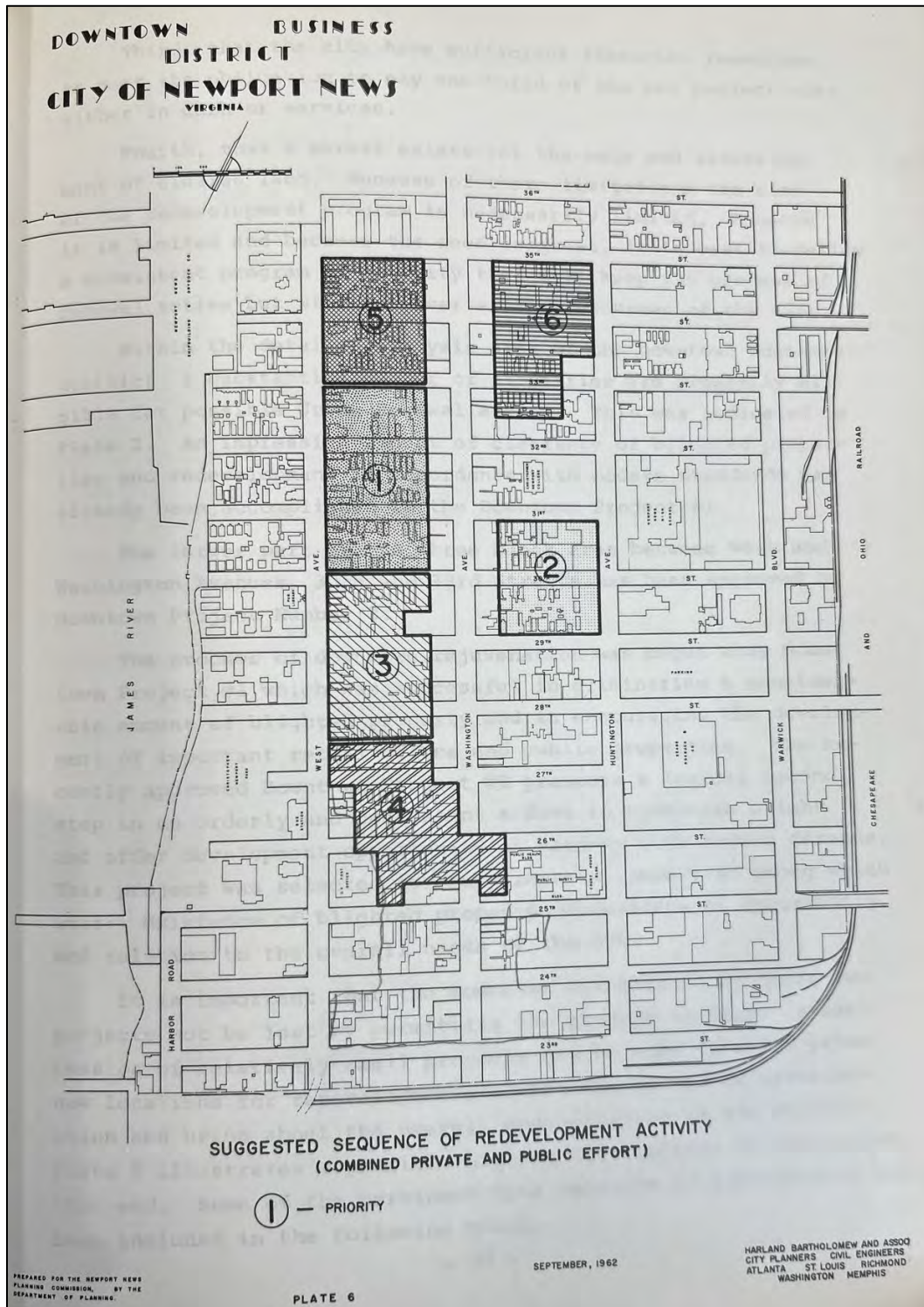


Figure 17: "Plate 6: Suggested Sequence of Redevelopment Activity" from A Report on Downtown Business District, Newport News, Virginia. Atlanta, GA: Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority. 1962

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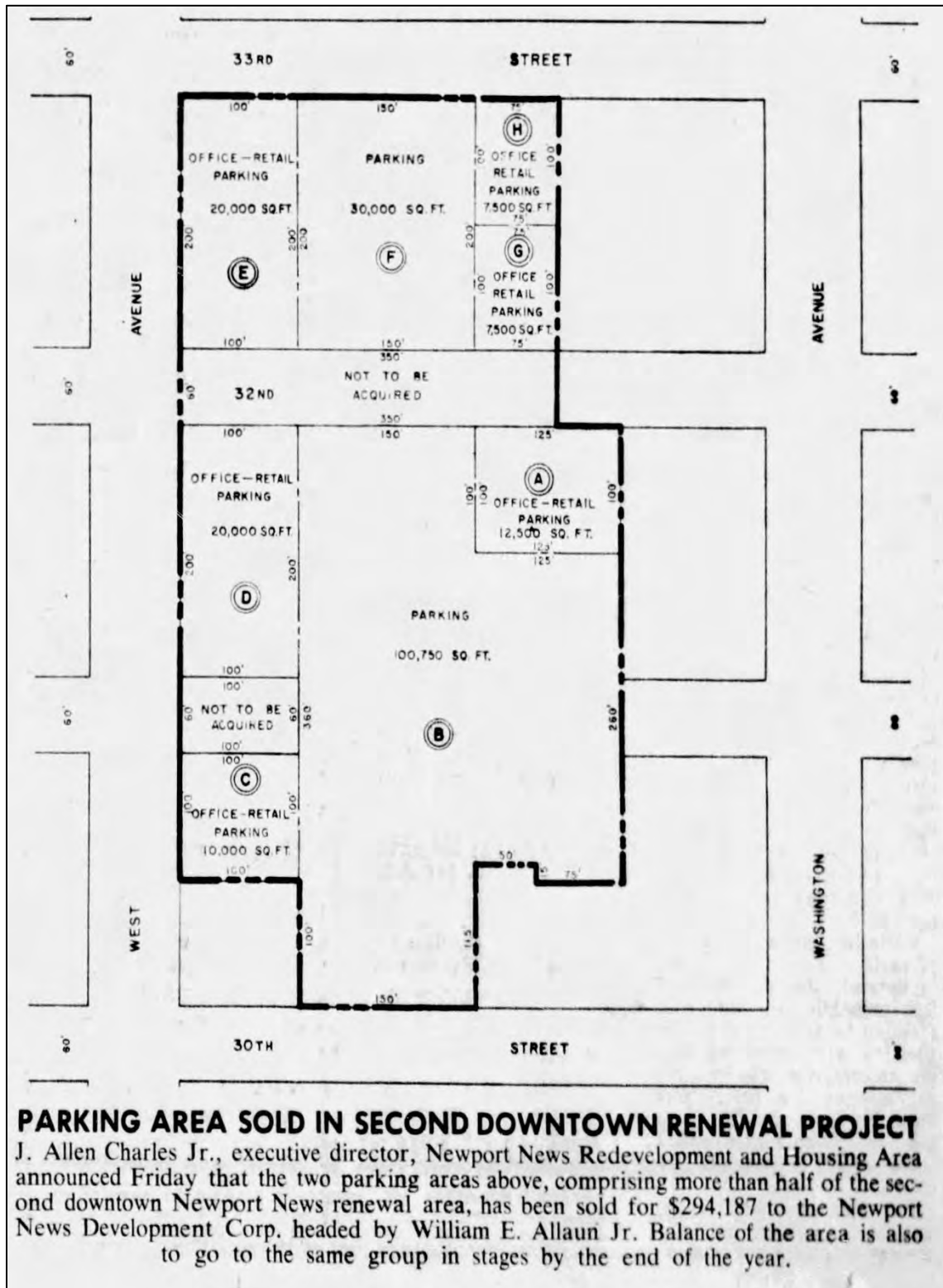


Figure 18: Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, October 2, 1965

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The second phase of urban renewal continued in 1964 with most of the three blocks between 30th and 33rd streets being demolished in favor of the eight-story Bank of Warwick building, an addition to the La Vogue Store in 1965, and a drive-in branch for the Bank of Hampton Roads as well as additional parking lots. All of these buildings later were demolished. The largest of the lots encompassed an entire block (framed by West Avenue and Washington Avenue to the west and east, and 30th and 31st streets to the south and north) and is now the site of the largest parking garage in downtown Newport News. The following year saw a more successful urban renewal project that led to the demolition of most buildings from 23rd to 28th streets between Washington Avenue and West Avenue (Figure 19). The buildings eventually constructed in this newly cleared area included the new (and current) City Hall (1972) (DHR# 121-5621-0077), the First and Merchants Bank (1969) at 2600 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0075), and Newport Towers (1972) (DHR# 121-5621-0056) at the corner of 27th Street and West Avenue. The aforementioned Superblock Park spans from 26th to 28th Streets.³⁷

³⁷ Reid and McCartney, *Renaissance Survey*, 158; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 189.

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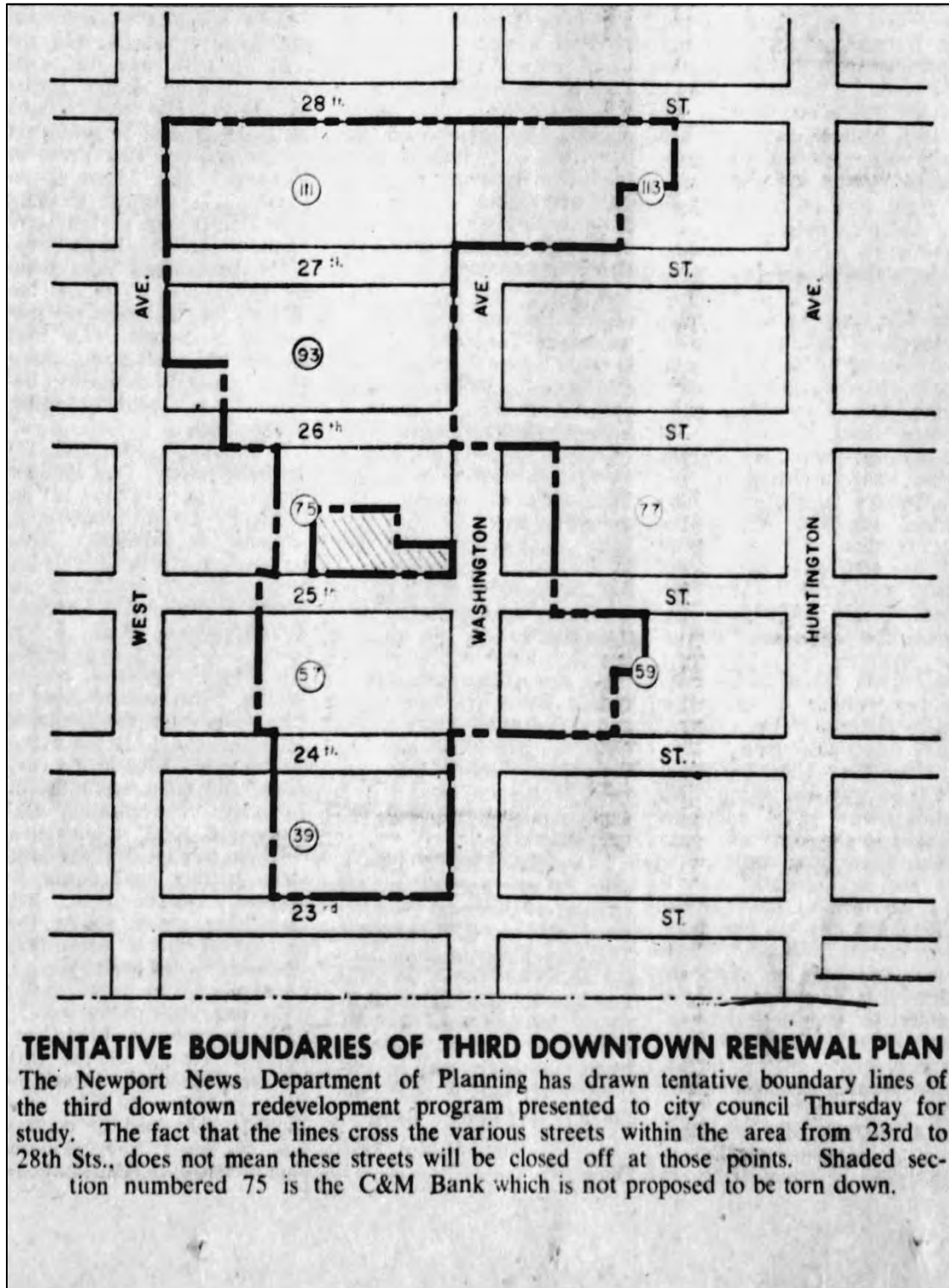


Figure 19: Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, March 8, 1965

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The detailed series of redevelopment plans proposed and carried out by the city gave large businesses, particularly banks, the confidence to construct new office buildings, including regional headquarters, in downtown Newport News.³⁸ The goal of the city in establishing the new City Hall downtown, placing so many government offices in downtown and encouraging large commercial businesses such as banks to follow suit, were parts of the larger plan to halt the abandonment of the downtown area. To a significant extent this goal was accomplished.



Figure 20: "New Downtown Bank Construction Planned" photograph from an article in the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, June 9, 1972

The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act (1966) amended the 1949 Housing Act to refocus urban renewal on providing housing, and required future urban renewal plans to consider historic properties and preservation as part of any larger efforts. The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act bolstered this effort by expanding the National Register of Historic Places to all potential historic resources and requiring all federally-linked projects to take into account any adverse effects on National Register-eligible and -listed properties.³⁹ A 1968 Downtown Land Use Plan (Figure 21, from the overall 1968-1973 city Comprehensive Plan)

³⁸ John B. Grieff, "Speakers Urge Speed For Renewal Project," *Daily Press*, November 22, 1966, 2, 34.

³⁹ Huxtable, "Many Historic Buildings Fall."

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shows downtown defined with the same boundaries as the initial 1962 Downtown Business District Plan.

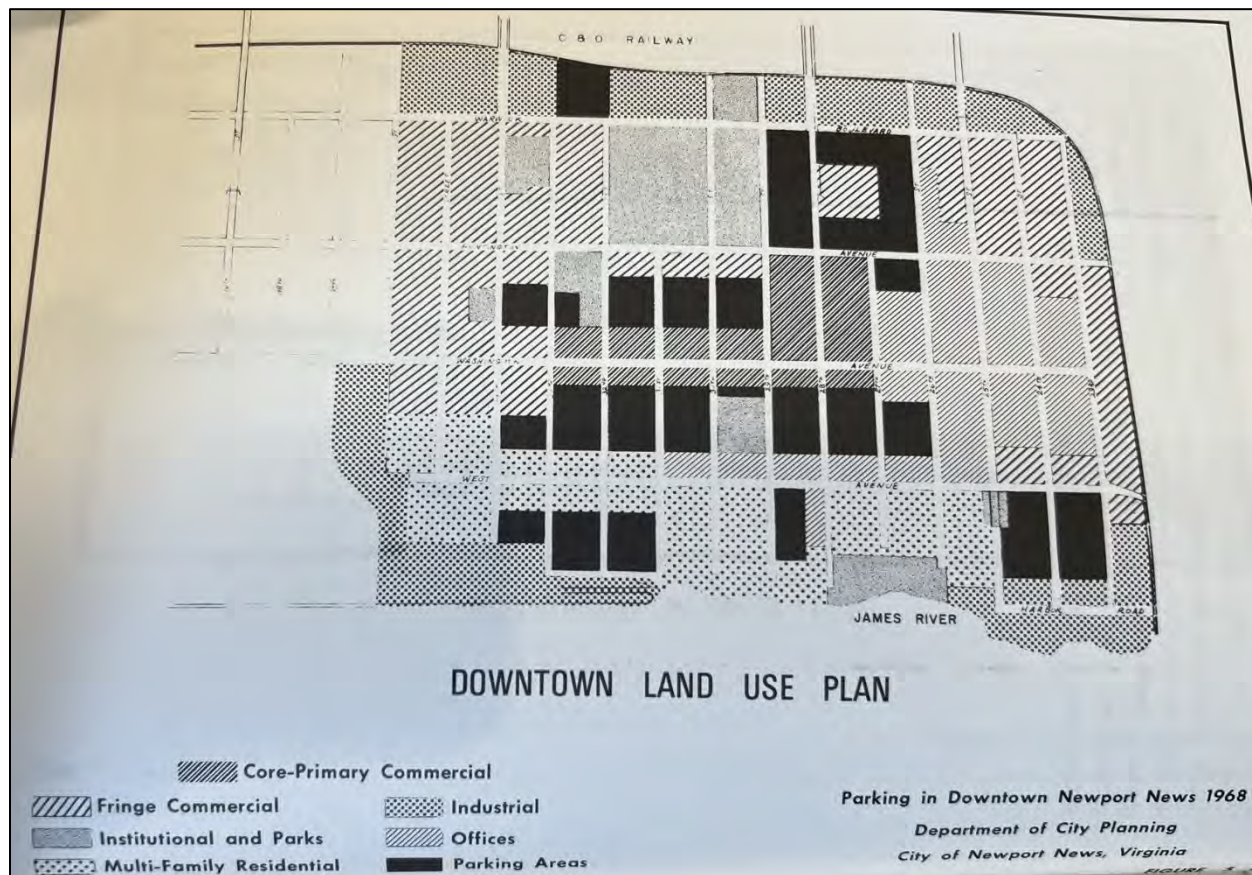


Figure 21: Downtown Land Use Plan, City of Newport News. *Comprehensive Plan Reports, 1962-1968, City of Newport News, VA. Newport News, VA: 1968*

The final city-led effort to redevelop downtown Newport News, which postdates the period of significance, was the 1982 Newport Centre plan. The plan initially called for \$275 million in spending to create a hotel/cultural/retail complex on the Superblock Park, a new office center, residential towers, and a landscaped seventeen-hundred-foot sea-walk along the James River. The area covered by this ambitious plan consisted of over fifty acres from the waterfront to the railroad tracks past Warwick Boulevard and between 25th and 35th streets. The plan ultimately was largely unrealized but did result in the demolition of historic commercial buildings on Washington Avenue between 29th and 30th streets as well as a block of residential and commercial historic buildings between 34th and 35th streets. The only privately funded part of the plan that was built was the River Park Tower apartment building (DHR# 121-5621-0029), located close to the existing residential Newport Towers. However, continuing its efforts to bolster the downtown area, the City also constructed a new courthouse near the City Hall.⁴⁰ The city's continued commitment to its downtown is seen in the myriad of local government offices

⁴⁰ Reid and McCartney, *Renaissance Survey*, 158; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 202-03.

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located within or bordering the historic district: City Hall, the Treasurer's Office, the Circuit Court, the General District Court, the City Jail, the Magistrates Office, Commissioner of the Revenue, the Sheriff's Office, the Public Law Library and multiple other local government offices and agencies. The presence of so many government offices, as well as multiple large financial buildings, contributed significantly to maintaining a viable downtown during the multiple decades of redevelopment and the large commercial exodus.

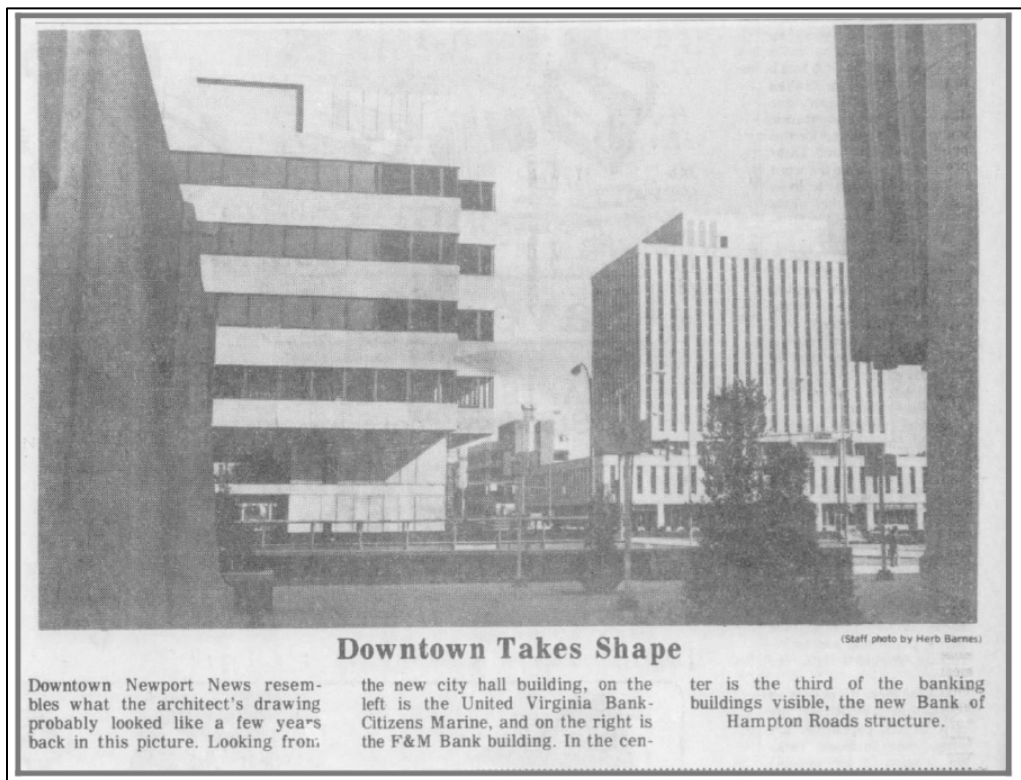


Figure 22: "Downtown Takes Shape" article from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, April 17, 1974

Civil Rights Movement and the Impacts of Urban Renewal in Downtown Newport News

While Newport News faced the same long and difficult fight for desegregation as most of the South, and shared in the larger national Civil Rights movement, many of the pivotal events occurred outside of the commercial and governmental core of downtown. By the 1950s, the residential focal point of the African American community in Newport News was along Jefferson Avenue. When Martin Luther King, Jr. began his speaking tours of the south he visited Newport News twice, in 1958 and 1962, both times at the First Baptist Church on the corner of 23rd Street and Jefferson Avenue. The First Baptist Church had started downtown on 29th Street near Washington Avenue. And, while this grand Gothic Revival church building still remains, the First Baptist Church congregation had moved to its new location on Jefferson Park Avenue in

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the 1950s.⁴¹ Also in the 1950s the city cleared thirty acres of “East End slums” to facilitate the construction of two huge new housing projects: Dickerson Courts in 1953 and John H. Ridley Place in 1954.⁴² All of this occurred between 14th and 21st Streets along Jefferson Avenue, east and across the railroad tracks from downtown. Norman Conn, recalling his father’s Cut Rate barbershop at 24th Street and Jefferson Avenue, declared that “the color line had been clearly drawn.”⁴³ It was drawn with most African American residents outside downtown.

However, downtown Newport News was witness to important events in the movement for equal rights. Possibly the earliest Civil Rights leader in Newport News, W. Hale Thompson, operated his law practice out of a building on the corner of 25th Street and Jefferson Avenue, also outside of downtown.⁴⁴ However, Thompson, a local leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was the leader in the effort to desegregate the Newport News Public Library (DHR # 121-0080) in downtown. After rejecting the establishment of a segregated Branch No.1, Thompson filed suit in the U.S District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia against the city and the library board. Two days before the trial was set to start, the library Board of Directors declared on July 8, 1952 that the library main reading rooms were “available to all adult inhabitants of the City of Newport News.”⁴⁵ Additionally, while most of the built environment for these events along Washington Avenue is no longer extant, like many cities in the south, Newport News did see a robust effort to desegregate restaurants, in various “lunch counter” protests.⁴⁶ Just north of downtown Newport News is the massive Newport News shipyard which underwent a staggered process of desegregation throughout the 1960s.

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant in the area of **Community Planning and Development** as a result of its association with the gradual physical expansion of the city from 1896 through 1949, and the eventual merger with the City of Warwick in 1958. This geographic growth of the city led directly to the movement of residents and businesses out of downtown and into the newly expanded areas of the city. The result was an extended period of Redevelopment and Renewal of the downtown area sparked by the Federal Housing Act of 1949. The Housing Act provided for the first time a mechanism for local public agencies to leverage federal dollars for the redevelopment dilapidated sections of the city, resulting in multiple waves of demolition and new construction contributing to another facet of the district’s association with public community planning and development. The Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority led these efforts with multiple rounds of redevelopment beginning in 1957 through 1982, with the goal of responding to the modern parking demands as well as creating more open

⁴¹ J.H. Knight, “Two Worlds: The Dying Old, The Emerging New,” *Daily Press*, January 11, 1958, B1; “Dr. Martin L. King Will Speak In Newport news,” *Daily Press*, June 30, 1962, A20.

⁴² Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 158.

⁴³ Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 180.

⁴⁴ Josh Reyes, “Newport News civil rights leader memorialized in Southeast Community mural,” *Daily Press*, February 10, 2018.

⁴⁵ *Newport News Public Library*, National Register of Historic Places, Prepared by Gregg Grunow, 2005, Section 8, 10-11.

⁴⁶ <https://sail.cnu.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/oralhistoryproject/oralhistoryhome>.

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development patterns. The lack of parking was the driving force in many businesses leaving downtown as well as the focal point of the city's efforts to stabilize and rebuild the downtown area. The decision by the city to redevelop so many blocks of downtown, establish several large parking lots, and focus nearly all municipal offices in a concentrated section of south downtown, redefined the city of Newport News.

The neighboring city of Norfolk underwent a similar process with some key differences. Like Newport News, Norfolk started their redevelopment plans early in the 1950s, and were led by a redevelopment authority: the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA). A 1956 Master Plan, 1957 Revitalization Plan and 1958 Project 3 resulted in widespread purchase of property and demolition of buildings. NRHA then set about creating "Downtown South" as a virtually new district with open spaces, wide boulevards, and modern financial and commercial buildings downtown. By 1965 the large-scale clearing was largely complete, but the role of NRHA in downtown continued through land sales and the contracting of public improvements including roadways, parking areas, pedestrian walkways, lighting and substantial waterfront improvements.⁴⁷ The redevelopment efforts of Newport News occurred over a much longer time frame, with demolition beginning in the 1950s and lasting into the 1980s. However, much like Norfolk, Newport News did successfully pursue a core government center and lured multiple large financial institutions to construct new buildings downtown. Newport News also embraced the goal of waterfront improvements being an integral part of downtown redevelopment, though on a much more limited scale.

From 1957 through 1962 the City of Newport News completed several City-originated Redevelopment and Renewal plans which resulted in multiple blocks of demolition and facilitated the establishment or movement of several large commercial enterprises. In 1962 the city hired the national city planning consultant firm of Harland Bartholomew and Associates. This firm laid out an extensive plan of further redevelopment as well as improvements to parking and circulation and, finally, anchoring the entire renewal effort with a new city hall complex at the south end of downtown. For the purposes of redevelopment, their *Downtown Business District* report defined downtown as being the railroad lines to the south and east, the James River to the west and 35th Street to the north.⁴⁸

The Harland Bartholomew plan declared that the Downtown Business District's "long standing pre-eminence as a focus for retail, office, professional, governmental, transient housing and entertainment functions of the City is continually being threatened by the development of outlying shopping centers, office parks motel concentrations and entertainment features." This was not new information but does provide a good definition of the challenges faced by downtown. To combat these challenges, the goal of the comprehensive urban renewal plan was "...continuing transition of land uses; a system which will expedite vehicular access to the district and circulation within the district; and finally, a network of off-street parking facilities

⁴⁷ *Downtown Norfolk Financial Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places, Prepared by Ashlen Stump, Kayla Halberg, Ethan Halberg, 2002.

⁴⁸ Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *A Report On Downtown Business District, Newport News, Virginia* (Newport News, VA: Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority: 1962), 4.1.

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adequate in amount and in location to serve the needs of the district.” Additionally, the report argued for the acceleration of the conversion away from residential uses downtown to provide more land for parking and commercial development.⁴⁹ The definition used by this report, and many cities at this time was derived from Federal standards at the time for redevelopment. Any area receiving Federal funds “must be more than 50 percent blighted as measured by specific criteria of building dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty design, lack of ventilation, light or sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout...”⁵⁰ Clearly this extremely broad definition led to vast amounts of demolition in urban centers and the eventual reworking of the Federal Urban Renewal program.

As previously discussed, a key component of the city’s decades long redevelopment plan was the continual push for a greater quantity of more accessible parking spots to encourage the retention of commercial businesses downtown. Officials in Newport News, and many American cities at this time, believed that the key to keeping businesses downtown was to provide ample parking to counteract the attraction of malls and strip malls built adjoining suburban areas, in the case of Newport News located to the north up Warwick Boulevard. Reliance on the automobile for transportation had become ubiquitous for the American shopper by the mid-twentieth century and the usual result was the decentralization of downtown commercial districts. A handful of businesses, such as Sears, were able to build new locations downtown which incorporated parking. However, most businesses relied on the city to create parking lots, and eventually parking garages, regularly spaced to make any business accessible using a car. As part of every round of redevelopment the city incorporated new parking lots of varying size scattered throughout downtown to make parking as accessible as possible for local businesses. Later, after the POS, the city has continued this trend by constructing large parking garages downtown, sometimes replacing earlier parking lots.

Criterion A: Politics/Government

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant in the area of **Government** as the location of the majority of significant local government offices and buildings. These range in time from the 1904 Newport News Post Office, Customs and Court House Building (which still serves as the post office) to the purpose built 1972 City Hall and includes more than a dozen local government offices and agencies spanning law enforcement, revenue, planning and most government functions. The decision by the city to not only retain its primary government offices downtown, but to expand the local government footprint over several decades, also represents another feature of the district’s association with public community and planning. Beginning early in the redevelopment process, the city set the goal of building a new City Hall downtown and having it serve as the hub of local government. This mission was undertaken over several decades and largely succeeded. The construction and location of so many government services

⁴⁹ Harland Bartholomew, *A Report On Downtown Business District, Newport News, Virginia*, P1, P2, P11.

Interestingly, this move away from residential in the downtown area is the opposite of downtown strategies in recent years and may well have exacerbated the problem for Newport News.

⁵⁰ Harland Bartholomew, *A Report On Downtown Business District, Newport News, Virginia*, P33.

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and offices, coupled with the incentivized location of several large financial buildings downtown, prevented a complete collapse of the downtown area and led to its eventual renewal.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant under **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture** for its impressive collection of resources which span the history of the city from its late-nineteenth century beginnings through the mid-twentieth century period of redevelopment. The district includes a wide range of architectural styles, and the collection of buildings includes many designed by prominent local architects and represents residential, commercial, religious, governmental functions spanning more than a century of development and history in the community. Additionally, the district contains multiple examples of resources previously listed on the National Register.

While much of early downtown Newport News was lost to the combined initial growth of the city as well as the following redevelopment of the downtown, a significant core of pre-World buildings remains. These late-nineteenth and early twentieth century resources clearly convey the story of the early growth of the city beginning with the establishment of Newport News Shipbuilding in 1886 and the official creation of the city in 1896. Stretching from West Avenue to the waterfront, and from 29th Street to 31st Street, is an excellent collection of early twentieth century apartment buildings demonstrating the early expansion of the population before its merger with the City of Warwick, and significant expansion after World War II. Supporting the residents of early Newport News was a collection of still extant institutional buildings representing the full breadth of the community. West Avenue features the individually listed Medical Arts Building (DHR# 121-0223), a 1928 office building, as well as the individually listed 1929 Georgian Revival Newport News Public Library (DHR# 121-0080) which still serves its original purpose. Also on West Avenue is the individually listed 1928 Gothic Revival/Art Deco Hotel Warwick (DHR#121-0040) and the outstanding 1904 Beaux Arts Federal Building (DHR# 121-0036), which functioned as the Courthouse for many years, and still houses the Post Office. A few blocks away is the 1923 Beaux Arts former high school (DHR# 121-0082) which served the residents of downtown Newport News for decades. Additionally, along 23rd Street is an impressive collection of early twentieth century warehouse buildings (Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District, DHR# 121-0076) offering strong evidence of the early commercial history of the downtown. Finally, there is a remarkable collection of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century churches which continue to relay the early story of downtown Newport News and its residents: the individually listed 1902 Romanesque Revival/Richardsonian First Baptist Church (DHR# 121-0031); the individually listed 1916 Classical Revival St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (DHR# 121-0032); the 1900 Romanesque Revival/Richardsonian Trinity United Methodist Church (DHR# 121-0126); the early 1899 Gothic Revival former First Presbyterian church (DHR# 121-0068); the 1899 Gothic Revival St. Paul's Episcopal Church (DHR# 121-0070); and just across the street from Victory Arch is the 1949 former Greek Orthodox Church (DHR# 121-5621-0057). Taken as a whole, these early historic resources in downtown Newport News are interspersed with the mid-to-late twentieth century resources to show the complete developmental history of the city.

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Properties Previously Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Architects

Basic Construction Company Headquarters Building

The Basic Construction Company Headquarters Building is a large, multi-story, brick sided masonry building which features two distinct sections representing two periods of architectural history in downtown Newport News. The original three-story, square section was constructed in 1945 in a traditional Colonial Revival style typical of the early-to-mid twentieth century institutional designs in Virginia. It features typical Colonial Revival features including Flemish bond brick, a water table, jack arched headers, a hipped roof and hipped dormers. In 1965 a three-and-a-half story, late International Style addition was added to the original building. It features simple American bond brick veneer and fixed aluminum windows. The two sections of the building are dramatically different, but representative of each period of construction and the development of downtown Newport News as well.

Lyle Ernest Swiger

Basic Construction Company Headquarters Building

Lyle Ernest Swiger was an architect and engineer born November 21, 1899, in Harrison County, West Virginia and died on September 26, 1948, in Newport News, Virginia. Swiger attended the College of Engineering, University of West Virginia and the Carnegie Institute of Technology, where he studied architectural engineering. He began his career in 1920 as a draftsman in Morgantown, West Virginia before working as an assistant engineer with the C&O Railway Company in Richmond, Virginia in the early 1930s after finishing his education. He then worked as an architect in Richmond, Virginia at several positions before moving to Newport News, Virginia to join the firm of Williams, Coile, and Pipino in the late 1940s. He is listed on his 1942 draft card as working for the Virginia Engineering Company while he lived in Norfolk, Virginia. Just before his death Swiger had established his own architectural firm in the First National Bank Building in Newport News, Virginia.⁵¹ With his early death limiting the scope of his career, there are few records of his work in Hampton Roads.

Forrest Coile and Associates (Forrest W. Coile)

*Basic Construction Company Headquarters Building, Addition
Bank of Hampton Roads (2700 Washington Avenue)*

⁵¹“Lyle Swiger, 48, Architect, Dies At Home,” *The Daily Press* (Newport News), September 27, 1948, p.1; “Rights Tomorrow For Lyle Swiger,” *The Daily Press* (Newport News), September 28, 1948, p.2; National Register of Historic Places, Basic Construction Company Headquarters Building, Newport News, Virginia, Prepared by Marcus Pollard, July 2018.

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Forest Winfield Coile was born on September 20, 1905, in Johnstown, Ohio and died on December 25, 1994, in Newport News, Virginia. Coile studied architecture at Carnegie Institute of Technology (Pittsburgh) until 1927 and then at the Ecole Americaine des Beaux Arts Academy in France. He was a partner in several firms before forming his own firm: Williams, Coile & Pepino (1932-1941) and Williams, Coile & Blanchard (1931-1959). By 1959 Coile was head of his own firm, Forrest Coile and Associates and specialized in designing schools including approximately 120 in the greater Hampton Roads area thus tending towards an institutional design style.⁵²

Newport News Post Office, Customs and Court House Building

While not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the 1904 Beaux Arts Newport News Post Office, Customs and Court House Building was found to be potentially eligible and is an outstanding individual example of the architectural fabric of downtown Newport News. The building is an excellent example of Federal public architecture from the early twentieth century. The two-story irregular plan building features two primary entrances which are largely identical: one for the post office on the north elevation and a second for the customs and courthouse on the south elevation. Each features a central, double-leaf door with an arched transom with ornate metalwork and a stone eagle above. This recessed entry is flanked by two-story, stone pilasters with composite capitals which support the entablature. The entablature has inscriptions labelling the respective post office and customs/courthouse facades. Stone stairs lead up to each entry. The exterior walls feature stone siding with decorative patterned stone, rounded stone window arches with keystones, decorative stone sills and jack arches, while the roof details include a cornice-line balustrade and modillions.

James Knox Taylor

Newport News Post Office and Customs and Court House Building

James Knox Taylor (1857-1929) studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and initially worked as a draftsman in New York City. He worked for several years in private practice in St. Paul and Philadelphia before joining the office of the supervising architect of the Department of the Treasury in 1895. In 1897 Taylor took on the position of supervising architect which he held until 1912. While serving as supervising architect he declared that the “classical style of architecture” would return to federal designs; he followed this with designs which offered interpretations of neoclassical and Georgian Revival styles. In 1907 *The Brick-builder* called Taylor designed buildings to be “a splendid success in keeping abreast with the spirit of the times.” Taylor moved to private practice after his work at the Treasury Department as well as being appointed the director of the Department of Architecture at M.I.T. in 1912.⁵³

⁵² John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955, Richmond, VA: New South Architectural Press, 1997, p.92; Rogers Dey Whichard, *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia, Vol.3*, New York, 1959, p.63.

⁵³ Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 439.

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First Baptist Church

The First Baptist Church was completed in 1907 following the exact design used in the previous church, which burned in 1902. The church is a two-story, Romanesque style building featuring a hipped roof with cross gables and an exterior cladding of pink rusticated stone with a plain stone water table. The exterior features heavy Roman rounded arches with keystones, and simple stone lintels over the windows. The entry is recessed within a three-bay porch. The interior sanctuary features semicircular seating. A 1930 three-story, Gothic Revival buff brick addition was added with pink stone highlights, echoing the original church.

Reuben H. Hunt

First Baptist Church

Reuben H Hunt has been identified as one of the most prolific architects of the American south during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. At the age of 24, Hunt opened his own architectural firm, R. H. Hunt Company in Chattanooga, TN in 1886. Hunt designed numerous buildings in Chattanooga and has been called the city's "master architect."⁵⁴ Hunt designed a wide variety of building types and architectural styles. Following his success in Chattanooga, he expanded, opening a second office in Dallas, TX and designed hundreds of buildings all over the south. While skilled in designing various building types, Hunt was especially interested in church architecture, and published the three-volume *Modern Church Designs* in 1916. The books included church designs that ranged in style, scale, and price point. His work primarily followed national trends and met the practical needs of clients. Sources estimate that at least 39 buildings designed by Hunt are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁵⁵

Hotel Warwick

The Hotel Warwick is a seven-story building constructed in 1928 and employs elements of the Gothic Revival and Art Deco styles. The hotel features red brick in a running bond with stone ornamentation. The first-floor façade, facing to the north and west, is entirely stone, contrasting with the rest of the building. A lancet arch opening with a parapet above surrounds the primary entry door on the west elevation. The parapet features pierced quatrefoils, as well as a central stone inset with a heraldic shield and crown. "Warwick" appears in cast stone above the doorway. The roofline features a large parapet with a series of small, rounded arches and large crenellated elements. There are decorative stone bands above the first story and above the sixth story. The Hotel Warwick was the first skyscraper and first fireproof hotel in Newport News, and is the only remaining example of 1920s and 1930s eclectic commercial architecture remaining in the city.

⁵⁴ "Reuben Harrison Hunt," Preserve Chattanooga, <https://www.preservechattanooga.com/hunt> (accessed 6 Dec 2022).

⁵⁵ Gavin Townsend, Zoe Rhine, Laura Phillips, Catherin W. Bisher, "Ruben H. Hunt (1862-1938)," *North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000088> (accessed 6 Dec 2022).

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John Kevan Peebles

Hotel Warwick

John Kevan Peebles, originally of Petersburg, Virginia, earned a degree in engineering from the University of Virginia in 1890, and remained on staff until 1892. He is credited with designing many buildings on UVA's campus. By the mid-1890s, Peebles moved his practice to Norfolk, Virginia, where his career blossomed. He designed numerous prominent buildings in the Hampton Roads region, as well as other part of the state.⁵⁶

Medical Arts Building

The 1928 Medical Arts building is a four-story, red brick building located across the street from the Newport News Library, and designed by the same regionally renowned architect, Charles M. Robison. This classically inspired building originally housed medical offices but is now an apartment building. It is a large rectangular building, nine bays wide and ten bays deep which would have dominated the area when originally surrounded by primarily dwellings. The building is highlighted by the first-floor stone façade which features a traceried fanlight over the double entry doors. The entry is flanked by stone niches with keystones and festoons. The entablature is carved with "Medical Arts Building" and supported by simple pilasters and topped by a narrow dentiled cornice. The adjoining storefronts feature storefront windows topped by a false arcade filled with square panels. The upper stories feature stone sills and brick jack arches with stone keystones. The roofline features a robust cornice with dentils and a central false pediment topping a protruding central bay.

Newport News Public Library

The 1929 Georgian Revival style Newport News Public Library was constructed one year after the Medical Arts Building across the street and also designed by regionally known architect, Charles M. Robison. This was the first public library building in Newport News. The exterior is Flemish Bond red brick with wood trim elements. The plan of the building is a modified crucifix with a symmetrical façade with a gable roof on the main section and a hipped roof on the rear section. The highlight of the east facing façade is a pair of elliptically curved stairways providing access to the second story entry. The central three bays, of the nine-bay façade, protrude and feature four Doric pilasters framing the entrance and supporting a pediment. In the tympanum of the pediment is the seal of the Corporation of Newport News; the entablature has dentils and a frieze highlighted by the words "Public Library." The second-story, entry level features tall Palladian windows with round brick arches with stone keystones.

Charles M. Robinson

Medical Arts Building

Newport News Public Library

⁵⁶Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 343-350.

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Charles M. Robinson of Richmond, Virginia was among the most influential Virginia architects of the early twentieth century, particularly within the areas of educational institutions and in residential development. Prior to beginning his practice in Virginia, Robinson worked in Pennsylvania, and studied under D.S. Hopkins of Grand Rapids, Michigan, as well as J. K. Peebles of Petersburg, Virginia. From 1921 to 1931, Robinson served as the College Architect for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, and his work there has been noted as one of his crowning achievements, and influenced the popularization of Colonial Revival design of the twentieth century.⁵⁷ Robinson's commercial designs are few, as are his Newport News commissions, making the Medical Arts Building and the Newport News Public Library locally significant works of this Virginia master.⁵⁸

Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church

The Catholic church of Saint Vincent de Paul is a one-and-a-half story Classical Revival style building completed in 1917. The church features many classically inspired design elements highlighted by a dramatic pedimented two-story entry portico with four massive stone Corinthian fluted columns. The raised foundation is marked by a stone band water table and accessed by granite steps leading up the north facing façade. The rear of the entry portico features four brick Corinthian pilasters. The first-floor entry and flanking windows are pedimented, while the second-story windows feature round arches. Three huge square coffers decorate the portico ceiling. The sides of the church are punctuated by eight tall stained-glass windows with stone sills and rounded brick arches with stone keystones. The roofline features a massive stepped, dentiled cornice, which is highlighted by a pediment atop the entry portico.

Carl Ruehrmund

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church

Carl Ruehrmund was born in Berlin, Germany in 1855 where he studied architecture and engineering. Prior to immigrating to the United States in 1881, he was employed by the German government. By 1882, Ruehrmund had moved to Richmond, Virginia, where he worked with German-born architect Albert Lybrock. Ruehrmund inherited the practice in 1886, following Lybrock's death. By 1916, Ruehrmund had entered into partnership with his son, Max E. Ruehrmund. Carl Ruehrmund designed numerous buildings in Richmond of various types including residential, commercial, religious, and institutional examples, making his design of the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church a rare example of his work in the city.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 386.

⁵⁸ National Register of Historic Places, Medical Arts Building, Newport News, Virginia, Prepared by Ashley M. Neville and Sarah Meacham, Feb 2002.

⁵⁹ Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 392-395; Robert P. Winthrop, "Architects of Richmond: Carl Ruehrmund," *Architecture Richmond*, <https://architecturerichmond.com/2013/10/14/architects-of-richmond-carl-ruehrmund/>.

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Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District

Located along the southern boundary of the Downtown Newport News Historic District is the previously listed Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse district. This small historic district consists of three three-story masonry warehouse buildings constructed ca 1906. These buildings are rare surviving examples of Industrial Commercial style warehouses which would have once been a common sight in the downtown Newport News industrial sections. These warehouses face the mid-twentieth century City Hall complex: an appropriate juxtaposition highlighting the varied and important architectural resources of the downtown historic district. These three warehouse buildings retain character defining features such as minimally decorative brick cornices, segmental-arched window openings, parged brick arches above first-story façade openings, and loading door openings. The interiors feature large, open plans with character-defining timber post and beam structural framing.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR #121-5621

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 91 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 36.987021 Longitude: -76.436164
2. Latitude: 36.986802 Longitude: -76.427921
3. Latitude: 36.973819 Longitude: -76.428246
4. Latitude: 36.974037 Longitude: -76.436487

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is roughly bounded by 36th and 37th Streets to the north, Warwick Boulevard and Huntington Avenue to the east, 22nd Street to the south and Victory Landing Park and the James River to the west. The boundary follows the parcel lines of contributing resources along the boundary's edges. The attached Sketch Maps, scaled at 1" = 200', display the true and correct boundaries of the historic district.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the Newport News Downtown Historic District encompass the areas of the historic commercial, residential and government core that retain integrity associated with the

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district's areas and period of significance. The district's historic setting and all known historic resources associated with the earliest part of the City of Newport News, Virginia, have been included within the historic boundary, and any areas which have lost integrity have been excluded, per National Park Service guidelines.

The boundary of the proposed Newport News Downtown Historic District poses some challenges because it is incorporating a multi-layered cultural landscape made up of still extant and significant resources of early Newport News, including monumental buildings such as churches, schools, and government buildings that began altering the city's initial grids of streets and parcels. These are coupled with the variegated significant resources that resulted from post-World War II urban renewal projects. Together, these layers illustrate the important historic and architectural trends in downtown Newport News. The district's historic boundary has been drawn to include as many contributing resources as possible while excluding areas that lack cohesion in visual and spatial relationships. *To assist in determining the starting point for the historic boundary, planning maps from the 1962 and 1968 redevelopment plans were used to identify the area considered by the city to be "downtown" for the purpose of urban renewal. These were supplemented by earlier Sanborn maps, as well as a map showing the pre-merger expansions of the early city. Collectively, these maps show that all of the current proposed boundary was considered part of the Newport News downtown throughout the city's history.*

With the understanding that the boundary must include an area identifiable as a substantial part of the historic downtown, certain individual resources and resource types were included. An excellent example of this is the group of dwellings along the north side of 36th Street, at the north end of the district boundary. These represent the only remaining block of single-family dwellings in downtown Newport News and tell an important story of the early-20th-century built environment. The historic Palace Theater at 3114 Washington Avenue fills two important roles: it is a valuable Art Deco resource while also being one of the few remaining early commercial resources located along Washington Avenue, which was once the primary commercial corridor for downtown. While the theater appears as a solitary extension of the boundary on the west side, the architectural and cultural significance of this theater warrants its inclusion. Alternately, several small commercial resources further up Huntington Avenue, between 38th and 39th streets, have been separated from the district boundary by large parking lots for shipyard employees unrelated to the City's organized urban renewal program and, therefore, were separated from the rest of the historic downtown. Another example of carefully considered inclusion is the Superblock Park bounded by 26th Street to the south, Washington Avenue to the east, 28th Street to the north and West Avenue to the west. This park was a direct, planned result of one round of redevelopment, but also is a relic of an unrealized construction project. While this empty block, which has unimproved grassy land and a section of asphalt parking, would be excluded from many district boundaries, it was included here because of its direct link to the period of downtown urban renewal and its association with one aspect of the failures experienced with the City's redevelopment plans.

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Resources excluded from the boundary were also selected through traditional criteria: integrity, period of construction, or a lack of association with the district's significant trends. Vacant land that was not created purposefully as part of downtown urban redevelopment during the district's period of significance was also excluded. To further define and clarify the boundary, the excluded resources and parcels along the boundary edges are discussed in more detail to justify the proposed district boundary. These excluded properties generally fall into three categories: resources which, because of age or integrity, would not contribute to the district; parking lots for which there is no evidence of history or design linked to the post-World War II period of urban renewal; and vacant land which is the result of recent demolition and is not linked to the mid-to-late twentieth century urban renewal plans.

The south boundary of the district is clearly defined by the expansive Newport News Marine Terminals and their associated parking lots. Moving along the western boundary, at the intersection of West Avenue and 23rd Street are the United States District Court on the northeast corner and the Huntington Ingalls Industries Office building on the northwest corner. These two buildings were constructed after 1990, almost two decades after the district's period of significance (POS). Adjoining the Huntington Ingalls office building to the west and north is the ca. 1990 Victory Landing Park, which is a large, modern park planned and constructed long after the end of the district's POS. In contrast the 1965 Christopher Newport Park, created as part of a phase of urban renewal, is included. The remainder of the western portion of the boundary consists of contributing resources along the James River, which forms a natural boundary.

The beginning of the north boundary runs along the southern end of the Newport News Shipbuilding facility, which is a significant factor in the current boundary as well as the development of the north end of downtown Newport News. Thus, the block of 31st Street between the James River and West Avenue is the first section of the north side of the district boundary. The next block to the east, between West Avenue and Washington Avenue is completely filled with a modern garage. While this area was in the larger area of downtown redevelopment, this garage is clearly a non-contributing building and was thus excluded from the boundary. Everything north of this garage and 31st Street, and west of Washington Avenue, is part of Newport News Shipbuilding. The central section of the district contains a gap which forms a partial separation between the north and south halves of the district but is justified. The large, modern apartment complex which occupies two blocks between Washington Avenue and Huntington Avenue, with 30th Street to the south and 32nd Street to the north, must be excluded because it not only is non-contributing, but its design is completely out of character with the historic district as a whole. To the south of the apartment complex is another non-historic garage between 29th and 30th streets, along the east side of Washington Avenue. Finally, north of the Superblock Park is an area of two half-blocks on the west side of Washington Avenue which consist of a combination of asphalt and grass left after recent demolition. Including this land within the boundary would not substantially fill in the overall district boundary nor connect the district to any additional historic resources.

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Moving north, the remainder of the western boundary is clearly defined as Washington Avenue, with everything beyond it to the west belonging to the shipyard. The small gap in the western boundary along Washington Street, between 32nd and 34th Streets, consists of two half-blocks; the north side is the site of a newer fire station, and the south side consists of recently vacated land that is now a mixture of asphalt and grass. North of 36th Street, between Washington and Huntington avenues, and north of 37th Street between Huntington Avenue and Warwick Boulevard, are the beginning of many blocks of shipyard parking lots constructed and expanded after the POS and, therefore, provide a justified northern boundary.

From 36th Street south to 30th Street, Warwick Boulevard is a boundary between the historic district and more recent light-industrial resources that abut the railroad tracks to the east. The two exceptions to this are a highway offramp which fills the block east of Huntington Avenue, north of 34th Street and south of 35th Street. The other parcel along Warwick Boulevard not included within the district boundary is a vacant lot between 33rd and 34th streets which is the site of recent demolition.

Beginning at 30th Street south to 23rd Street, most of the land and resources between Huntington Avenue and Warwick Boulevard is excluded from the boundary because it consists of either noncontributing resources or modern parking lots not created as part of the mid-20th century redevelopment plans. The parking lot to the east of the mid-century Julius Conn Gymnasium, between 29th and 30th streets, was until at least the 1990s the site of the Newport News Armory building. When that was demolished, a modern parking lot was constructed in its place. The next block, east of Huntington Avenue, between 28th and 29th streets, has two buildings constructed beyond the POS. The large building which occupies the two blocks to the south, between 26th and 28th Streets, is the 1960s Sears Roebuck store described in Section 8, but it has been completely reclad and expanded over time and now lacks integrity as a mid-20th century downtown retail anchor. Because of these alterations, and the property's location at the edge of the historic district, it was excluded. The block between 25th and 26th streets is the site of a modern parking lot and was excluded as it sits on the edge of the district's boundary. The final edge of the boundary is formed by the large ca. 1986 Newport News Juvenile Detention Center and parking complex, located southeast of the district between 23rd and 25th streets.

11. Form Prepared By

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date: March 2023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Newport News Downtown Historic District

City or Vicinity: Newport News

County: City of Newport News State: Virginia

Photographer: Marcus Pollard

Date Photographed: May 10, 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo Number of 24	Description	Camera Direction
1	Corner of 35 th Street & Warwick Boulevard	SW
2	Corner of 36 th Street & Washington Avenue	SE
3	221 34 th Street (St. Paul's Episcopal Church)	NW

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Photo Number of 24	Description	Camera Direction
4	Corner of 34 th Street and Huntington Avenue	S
5	230 33 rd Street (Saint Vincent De Paul Catholic Church)	S
6	3302 Huntington Avenue (Coca-Cola Plant)	E
7	317-325 32 nd Street	W
8	Corner of 33 rd Street and Warwick Boulevard	SW
9	3114 Washington Avenue (Palace Theatre, historically)	NE
10	80-90 31 st Street (St. James Terrace Apartments)	SE
11	81-91 30 th Street	W
12	119 29 th Street (First Baptist Church, historically)	NW
13	2800 Washington Avenue (Montgomery Ward, historically)	SE
14	228 29 th Street (Trinity United Methodist Church)	SE
15	Corner of 28 th Street and West Avenue	W
16	Super Block Park from the corner of 27 th Street and Washington Avenue	W
17	2712 Washington Avenue	E
18	Super Block Park from the corner of 28 th Street and West Avenue	SE
19	Christopher Newport Park	W
20	101 25 th Street (Newport News Post Office)	SE
21	101 25 th Street (former Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church)	SE
22	2501 West Avenue (Victory Arch)	SW
23	2410 West Avenue (Hotel Warwick, historically)	E
24	Corner of 26 th Street and Washington Avenue	N
25	2501 Huntington Avenue (Newport News Courthouse)	S
26	Looking toward the Corner of 25 th Street and Washington Avenue from the Newport News Treasurer's Office	NE
27	2400 Washington Avenue (Newport News City Hall) from Washington Avenue	SE
28	2400 Washington Avenue (Newport News City Hall) from 23 rd Street	NE
29	200 block of 23 rd Street	E
30	2295 Harbor Road (former C&O Depot)	W

Figures and Historic Images Log

1. 1899 Sanborn Map showing the large amount of railway lines at the top along with the grid and parcel divisions originally planned for the city; Virginia Avenue is now Warwick Boulevard
2. 223 29th Street (DHR# 121-5621-0042)

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3. 323-325 33rd Street (DHR# 121-5621-0007)
4. 3015 West Avenue, The Marlborough (DHR# 121-5621-0070)
5. 74-85 30th Street, St. James Terrace Apartments (DHR# 121-5621-0043)
6. 90 28th Street, Seaview Lofts (DHR# 121-5621-0029)
7. 3506 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0090) and 3508 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0091)
8. 2900 Washington Avenue (DHR#121-5621-0088)
9. 2712 Washington Avenue (DHR#121-5621-0073); rear view from 27th Street
10. 228 29th Street, Trinity United Methodist Church (DHR# 121-5621-0057)
11. 2400 Washington Avenue, City Hall (DHR# 121-5621-0077)
12. 2501 West Avenue, Victory Arch (DHR# 121-5621-0058)
13. A History of Boundary Changes, 1896-1940 from "The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins' Newport News, 1925-1965"
14. Photograph from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, May 2, 1964
15. "New Sears Store Is One Of Most Modern In Virginia," article from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, April 14, 1959
16. "Plate 5: Downtown Business District Plan" from A Report on Downtown Business District, Newport News, Virginia. Atlanta, GA: Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority. 1962
17. Plate 6: Suggested Sequence of Redevelopment Activity" from A Report on Downtown Business District, Newport News, Virginia. Atlanta, GA: Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority. 1962
18. Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, October 2, 1965
19. Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, March 8, 1965
20. "New Downtown Bank Construction Planned" photograph from an article in the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, June 9, 1972
21. Downtown Land Use Plan, City of Newport News. Comprehensive Plan Reports, 1962-1968, City of Newport News, VA. Newport News, VA: 1968
22. "Downtown Takes Shape" article from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, April 17, 1974

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number SLR Page

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Name of Property

Newport News (Independent City), Virginia

County and State

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 100009200

Property Name: Newport News Downtown Historic District

County: Newport News (Independent City)

State: VA

Multiple Name: N/A

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

James Gabbert
Signature of the Keeper

6/2/2026

Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

This SLR is issued to clarify the status of resources in the district.

The property located at 90 28th Street (ID# 121-5621-0029) is a contributing 1972 International Style Apartment building. The original nomination did not identify associated structures. These include the following contributing resources:

Parking Deck – contributing structure. The two level parking deck is integral to the design and use of the apartment building.

Swimming pool and deck – contributing structure. Although the pool itself has been filled with dirt, it still exists and with the accompanying deck and low wall, is recognizable for its original use.

Section 5: Adds 2 contributing structures to the resource count, making the total now **5 contributing structures.**

Tax Credit project #50380

The VA State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



Legend

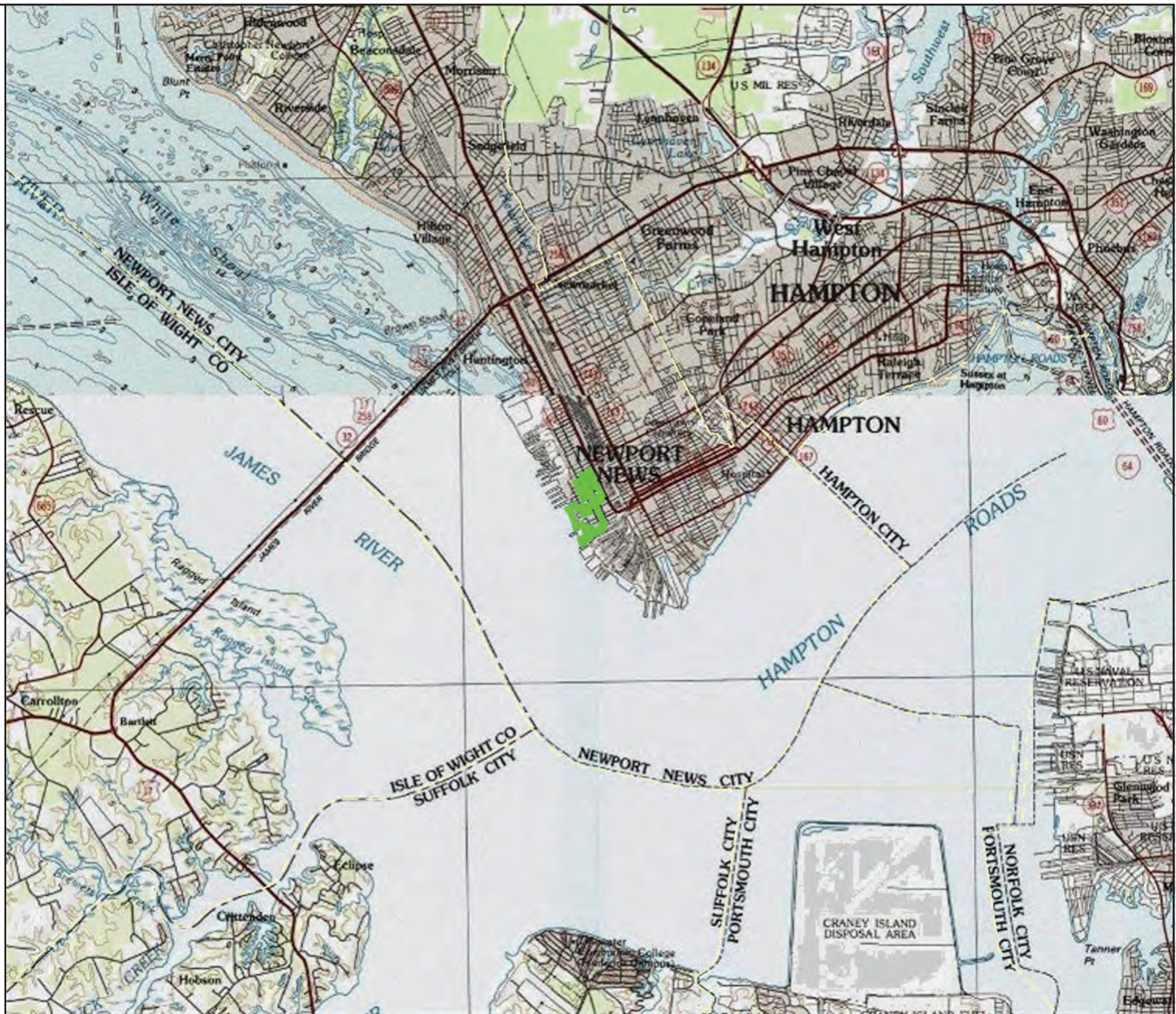
County Boundaries

TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Newport News Downtown Historic District

City of Newport News, VA

DHR No. 121-5621



Historic Boundary



Miles



1:144,448 / 1"=2 Miles

Title:

Date: 6/8/2023

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.



Legend

County Boundaries

AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY
Newport News Downtown
Historic District
City of Newport News, VA
DHR No. 121-5621

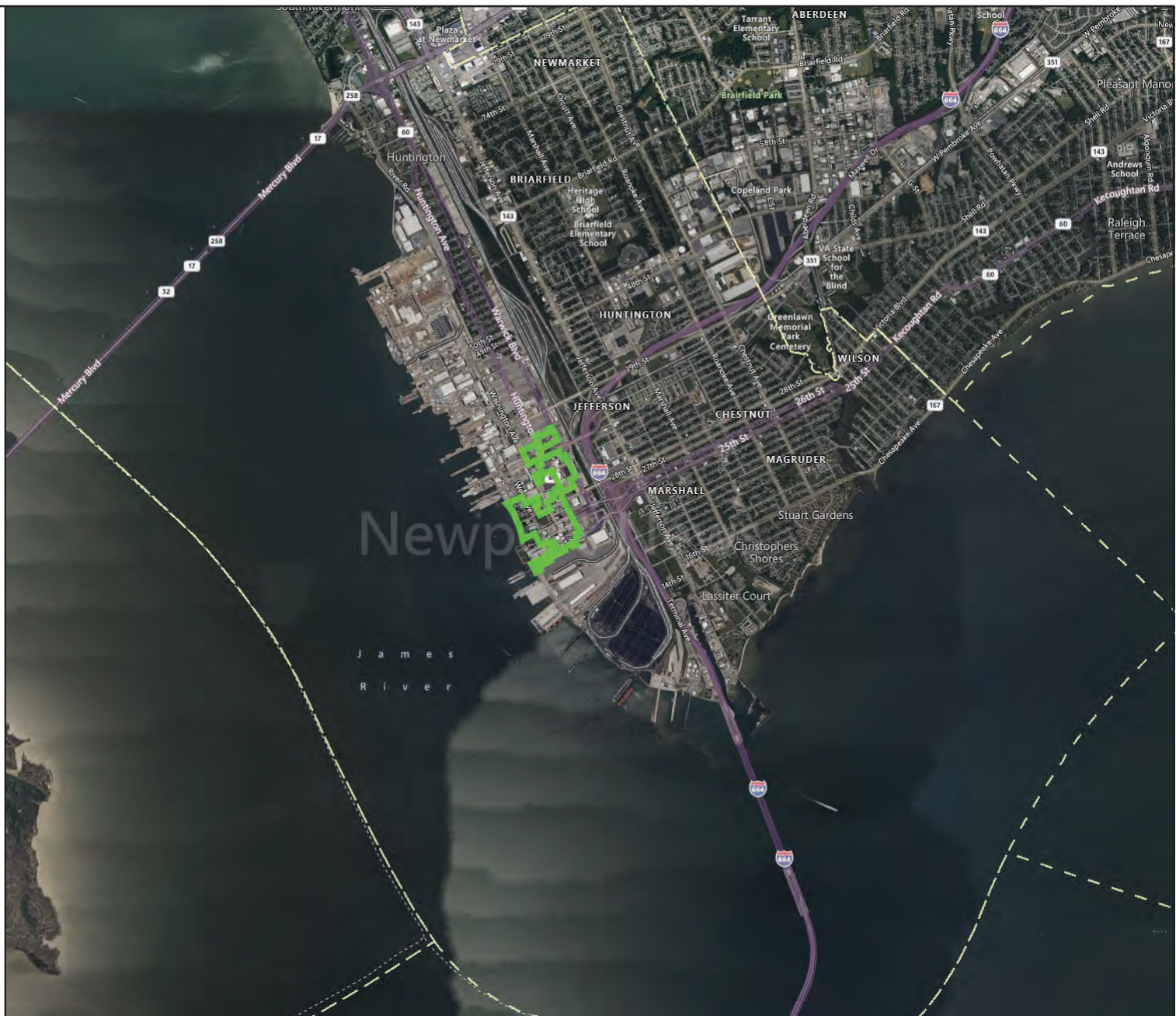
Historic Boundary



Feet



0 120 240 360 480
1:72,224 / 1"=6,019 Feet



Title:

Date: 6/8/2023

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

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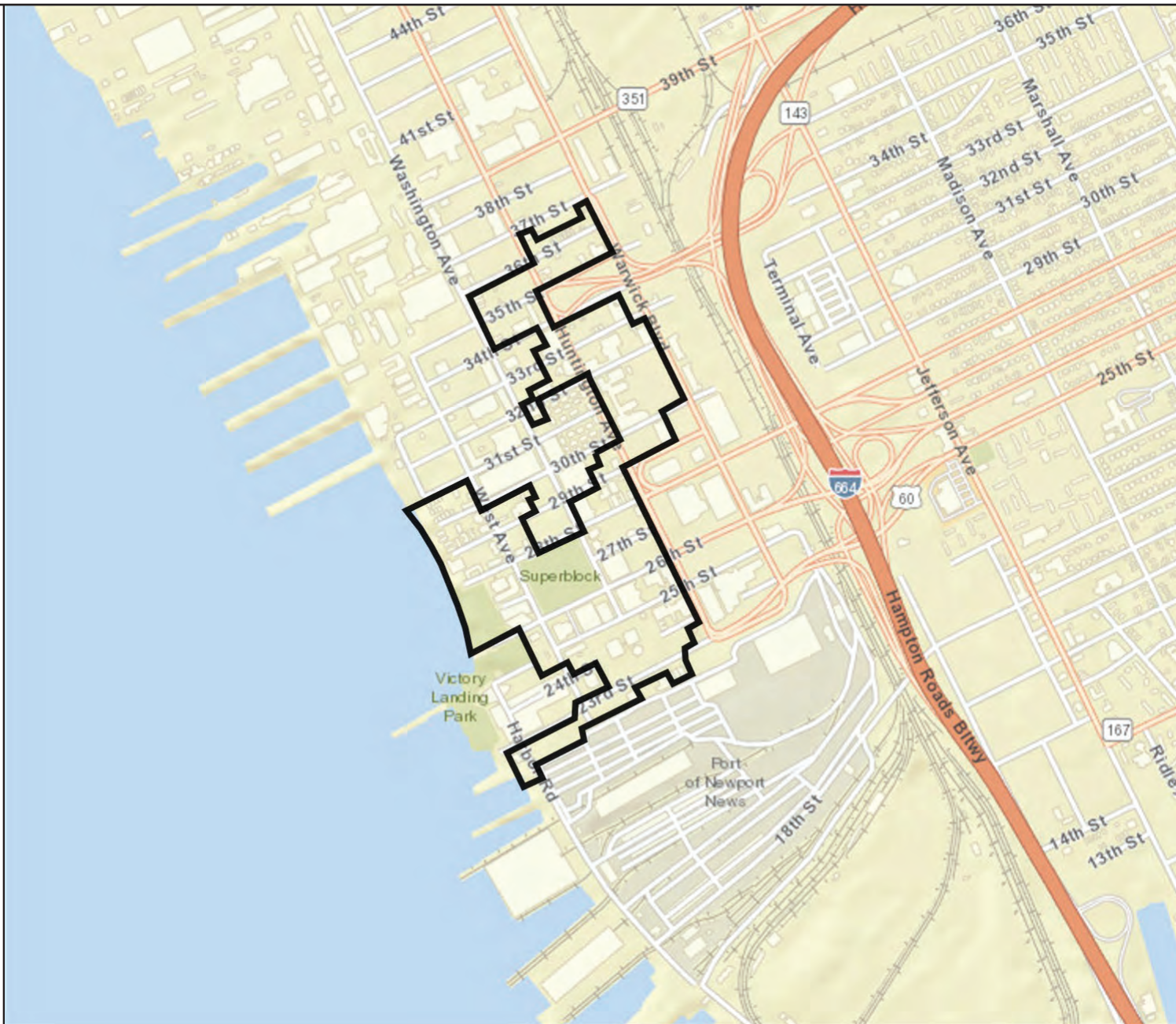


Legend

County Boundaries

STREET MAP

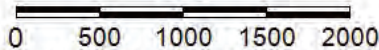
**Newport News Downtown
Historic District
City of Newport News, VA
DHR No. 121-5621**



Historic Boundary



Feet



1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet

Title:

Date: 6/8/2023

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

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Legend

County Boundaries

AERIAL VIEW

**Newport News Downtown
Historic District
City of Newport News, VA
DHR No. 121-5621**

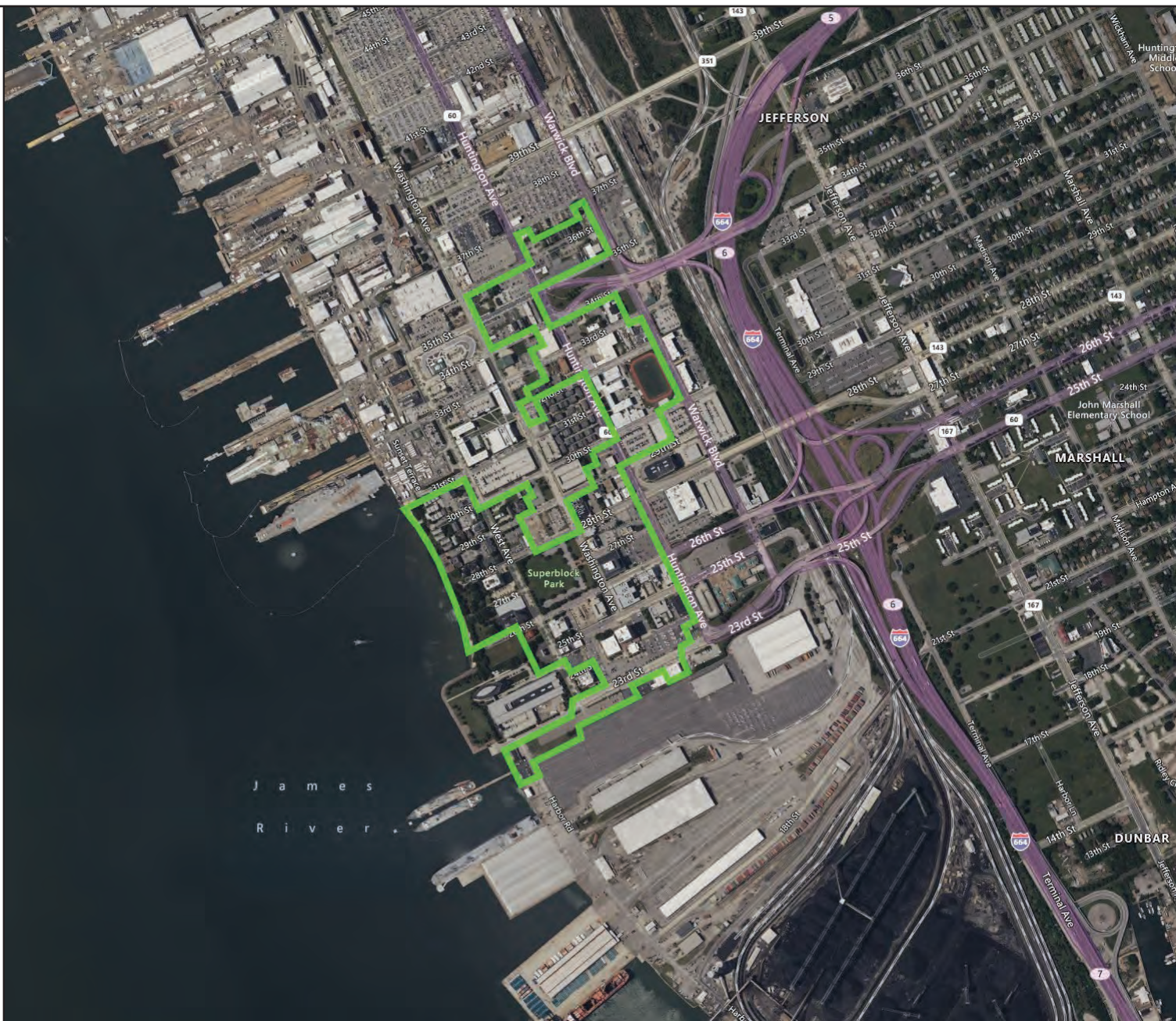
Historic Boundary



Feet

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1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet

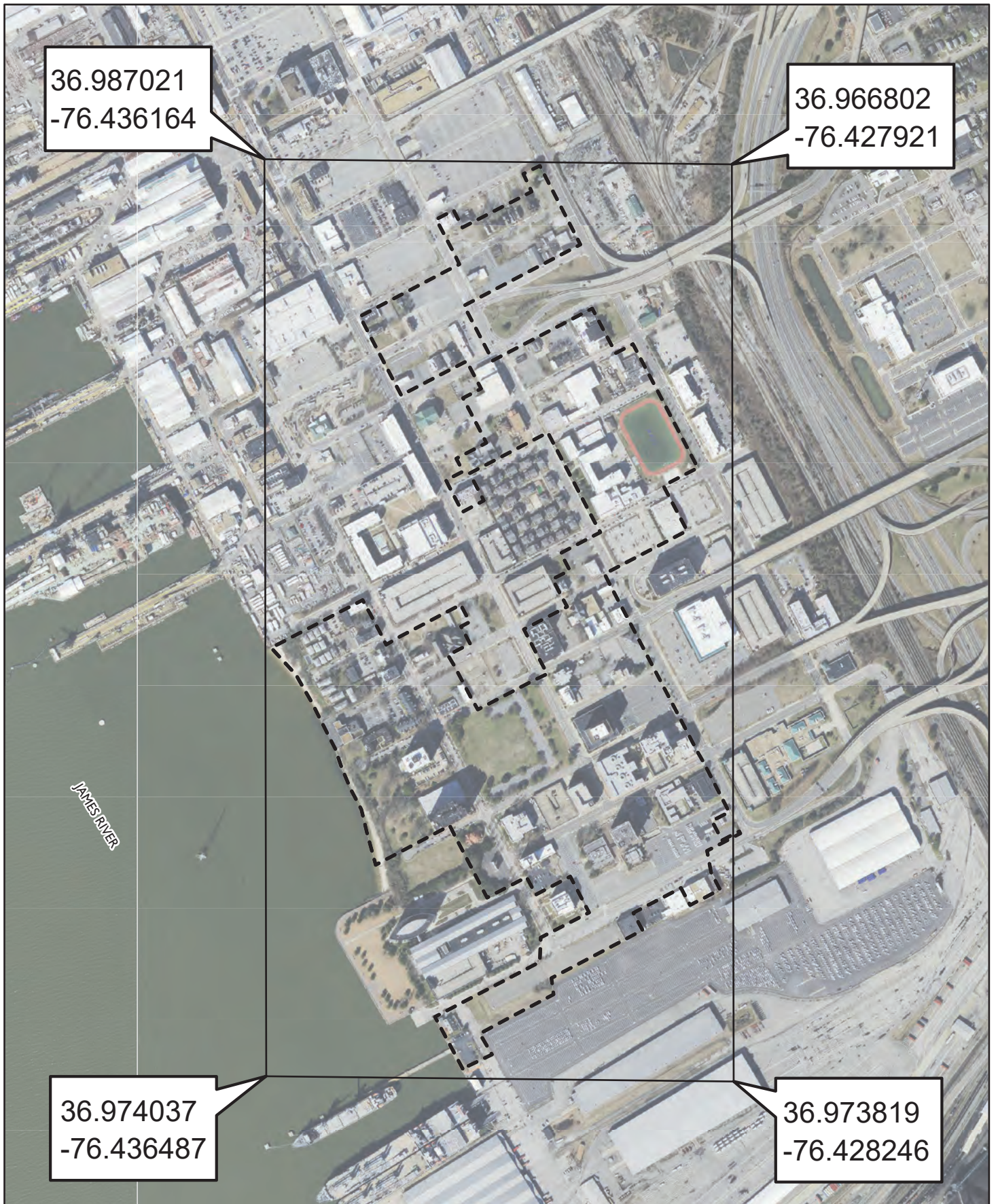


Title:

Date: 6/8/2023

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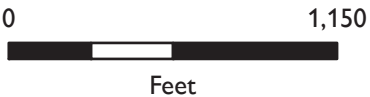
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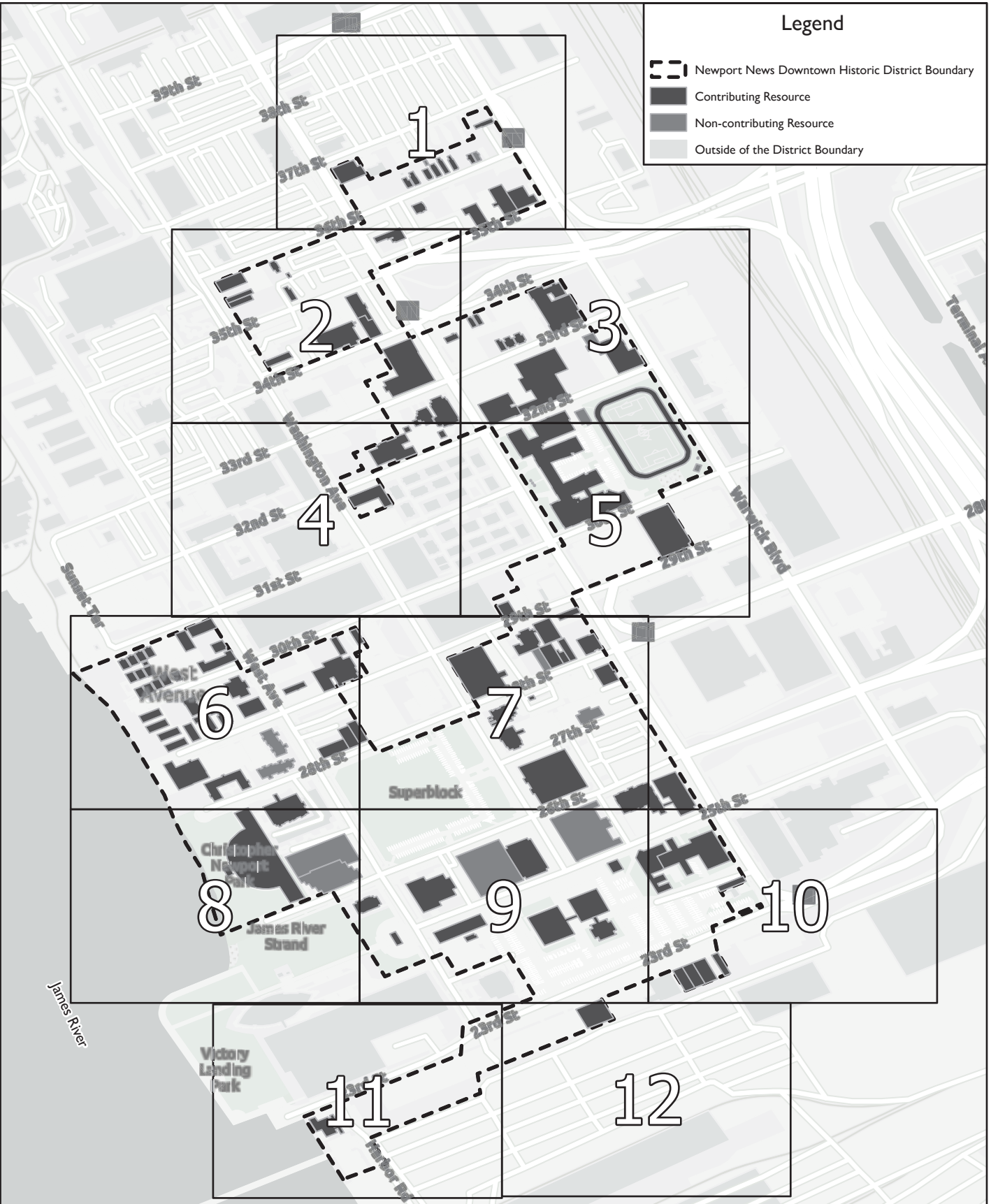
Location Map

Newport News Downtown Historic District

 Historic Boundary

City of Newport News, Virginia
DHR ID #121-5621 January
2023



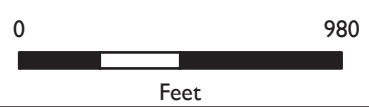


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
Sketch Map Index

Newport News Downtown Historic District

City of Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023



Legend

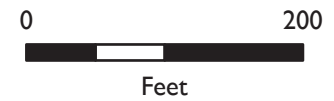
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-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary







Sketch Map 1 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
DHR ID #121-5621
January 2023







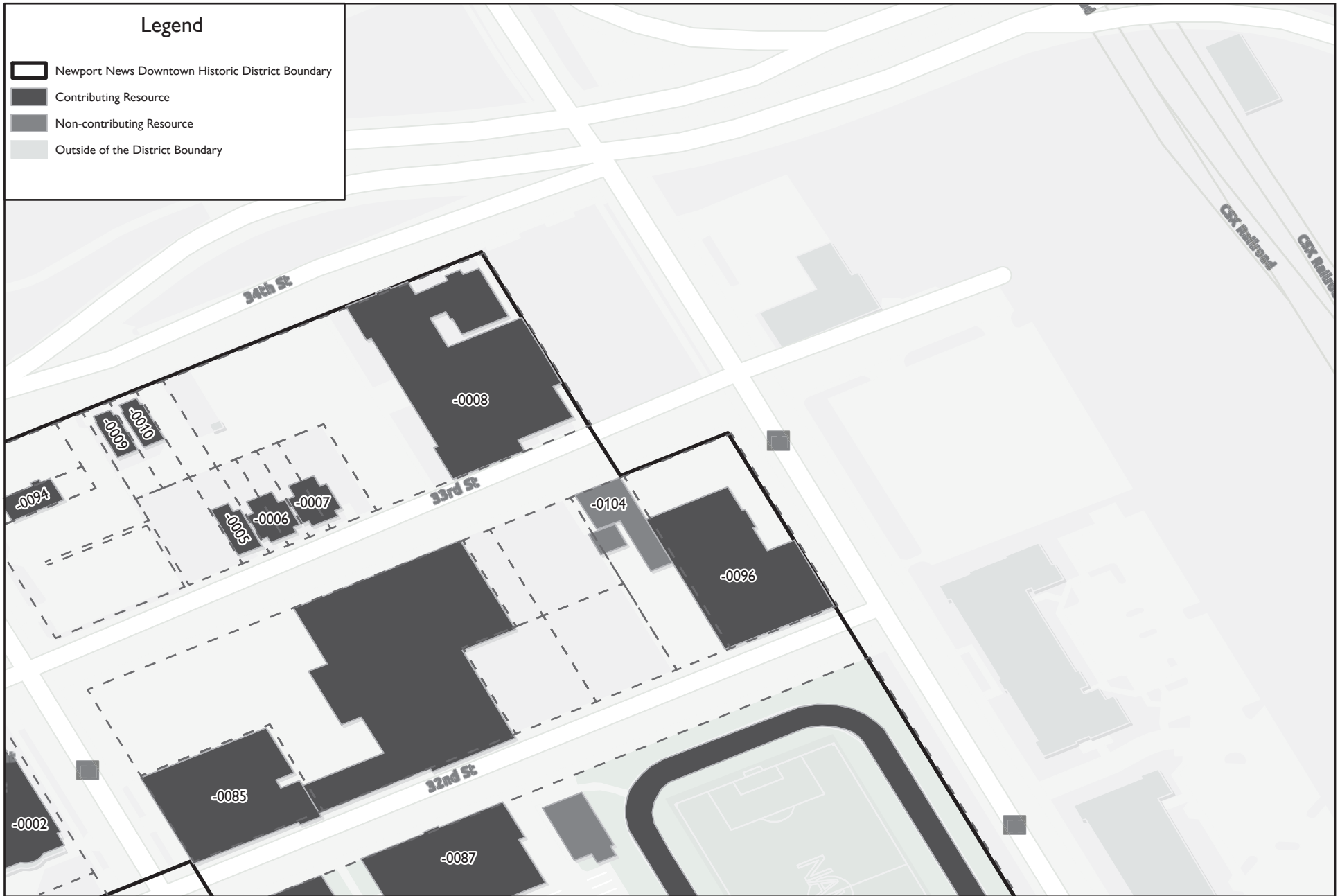
Legend

-  Newport News Downtown Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary



Legend

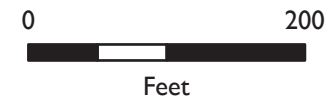
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-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary







Sketch Map 3 of 12

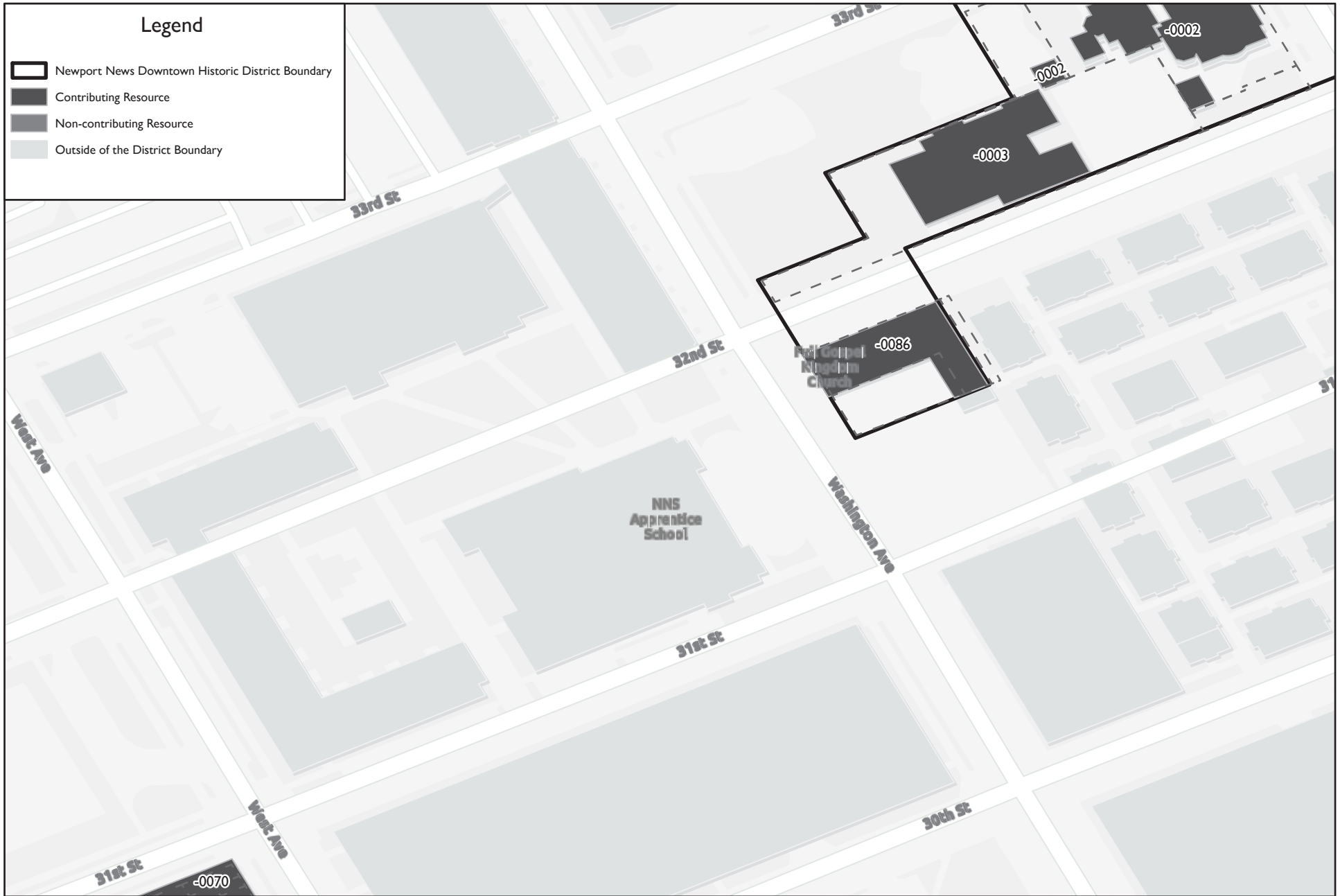
Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
DHR ID #121-5621
January 2023



Legend

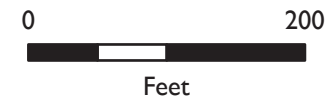
-  Newport News Downtown Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary

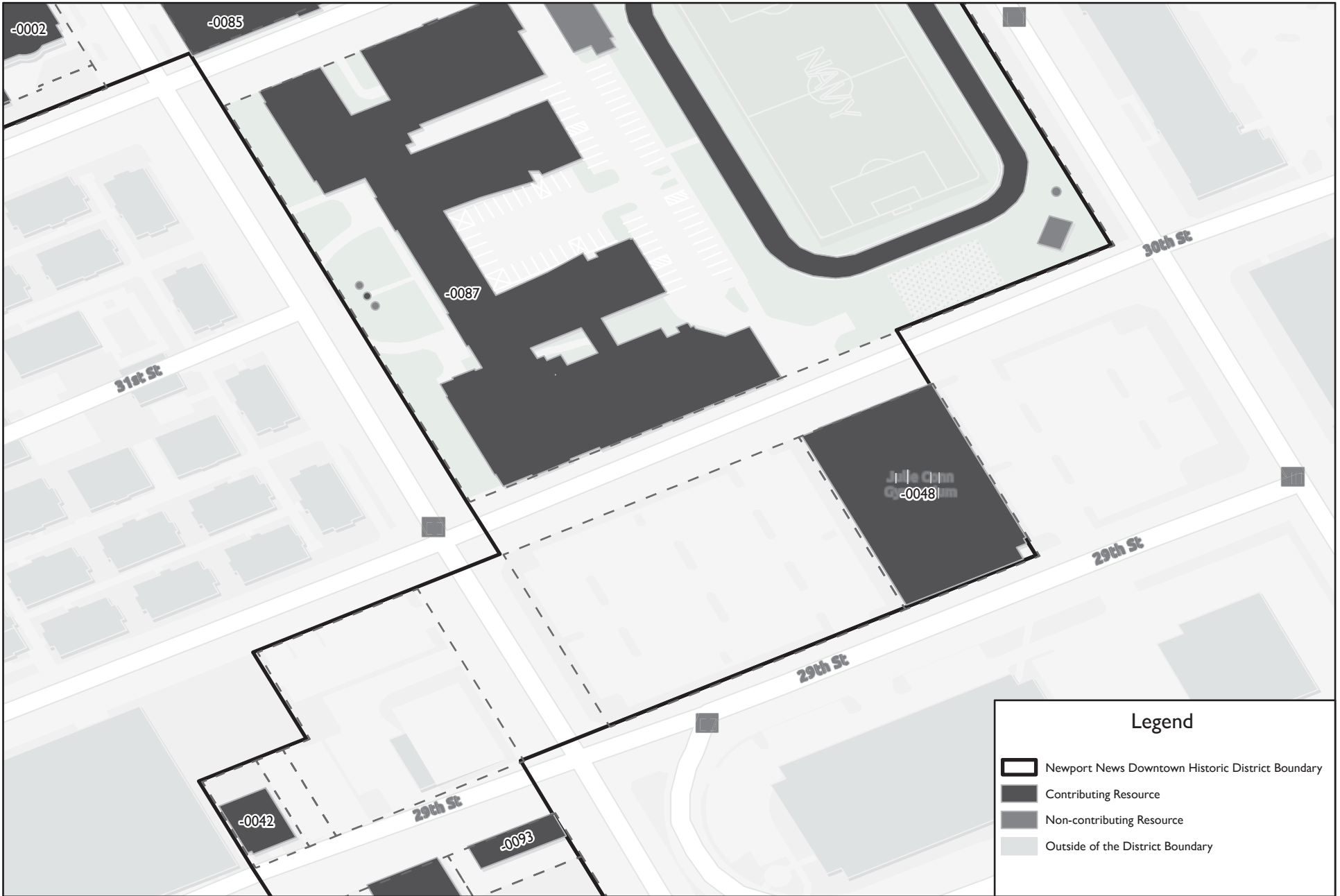


Sketch Map 4 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
DHR ID #121-5621
January 2023









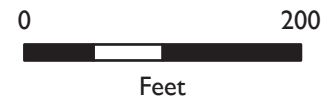
Sketch Map 5 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023





Legend

-  Newport News Downtown Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary





Legend

-  Newport News Downtown Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary

Sketch Map 6 of 12





Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023





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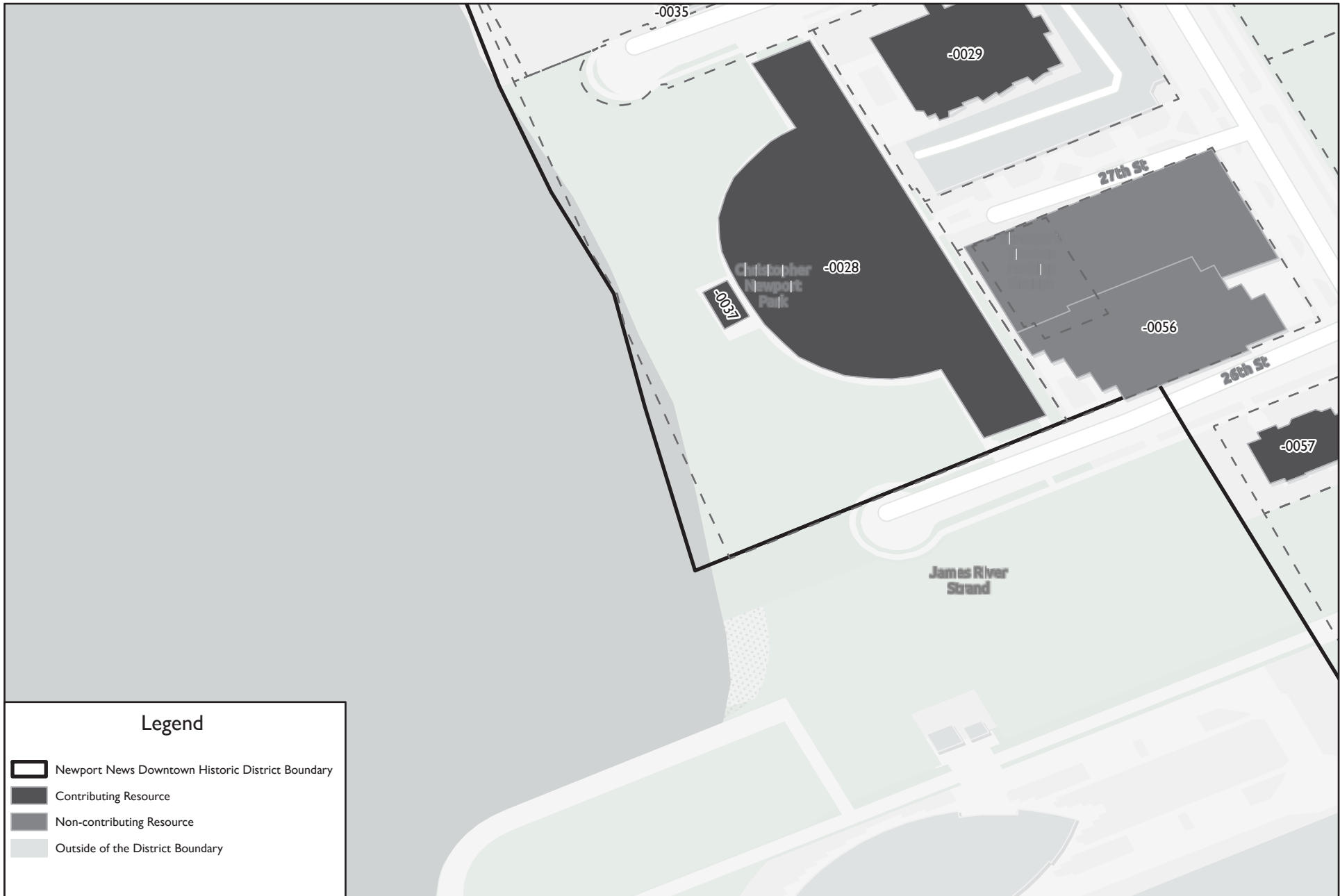
-  Newport News Downtown Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary

Sketch Map 7 of 12





Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023





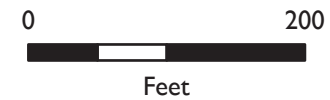
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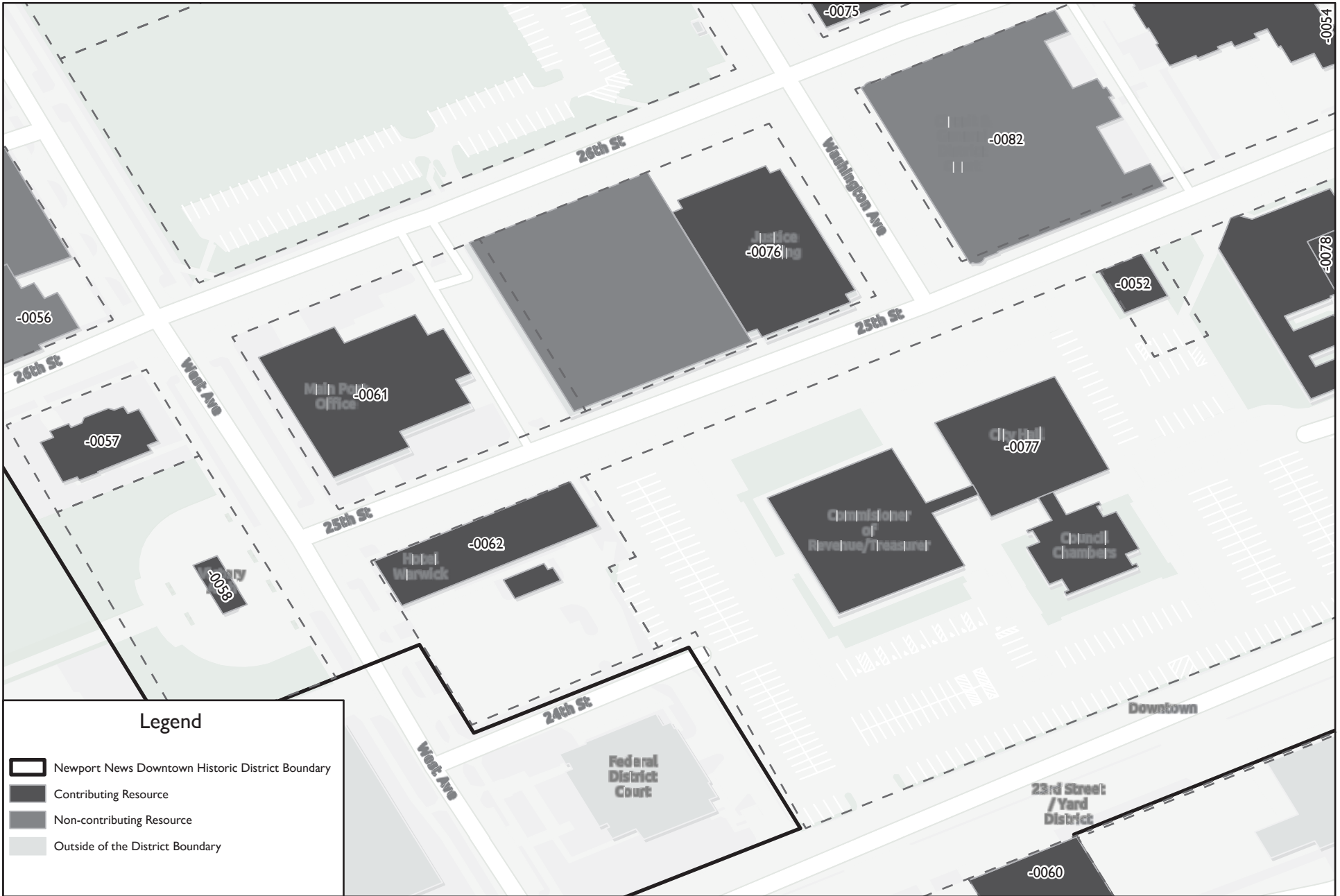
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-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary

Sketch Map 8 of 12





Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023





Legend

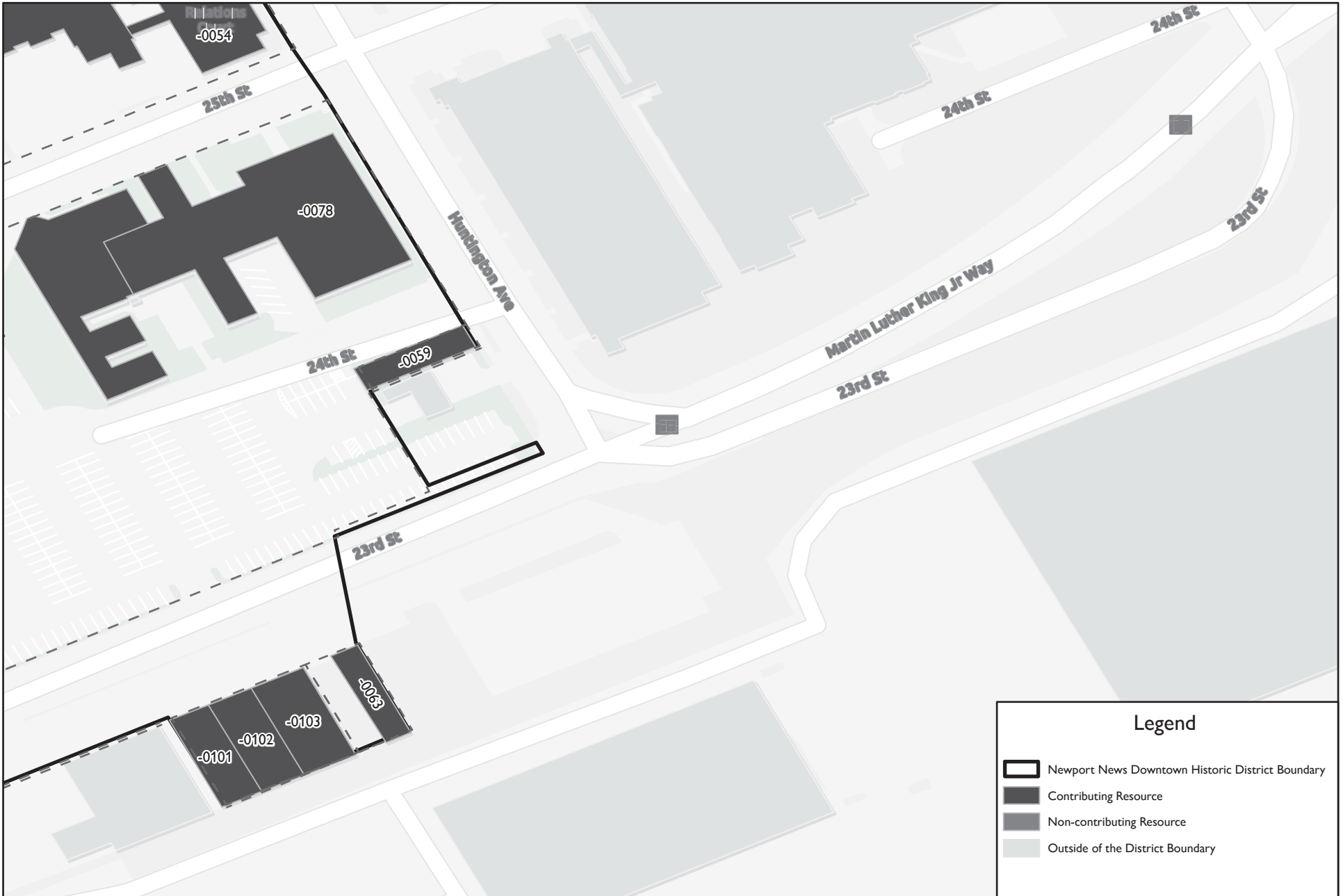
-  Newport News Downtown Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing Resource
-  Non-contributing Resource
-  Outside of the District Boundary

Sketch Map 9 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023

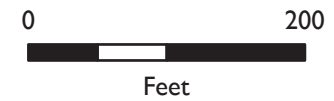


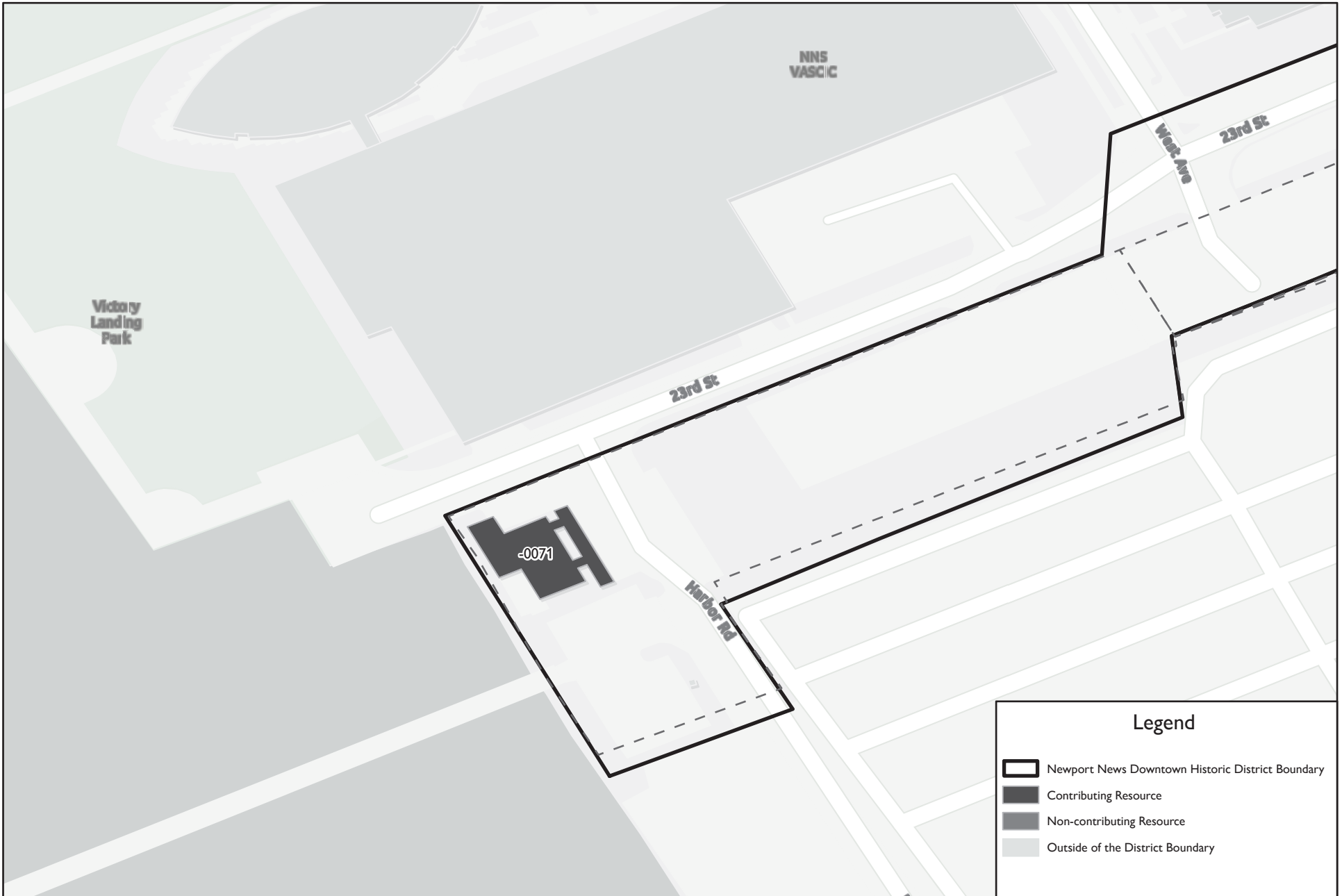


Sketch Map 10 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023

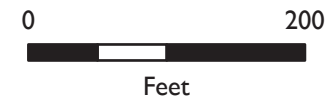




Sketch Map 11 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023

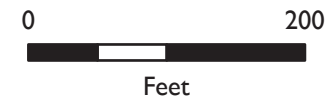




Sketch Map 12 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
 DHR ID #121-5621
 January 2023



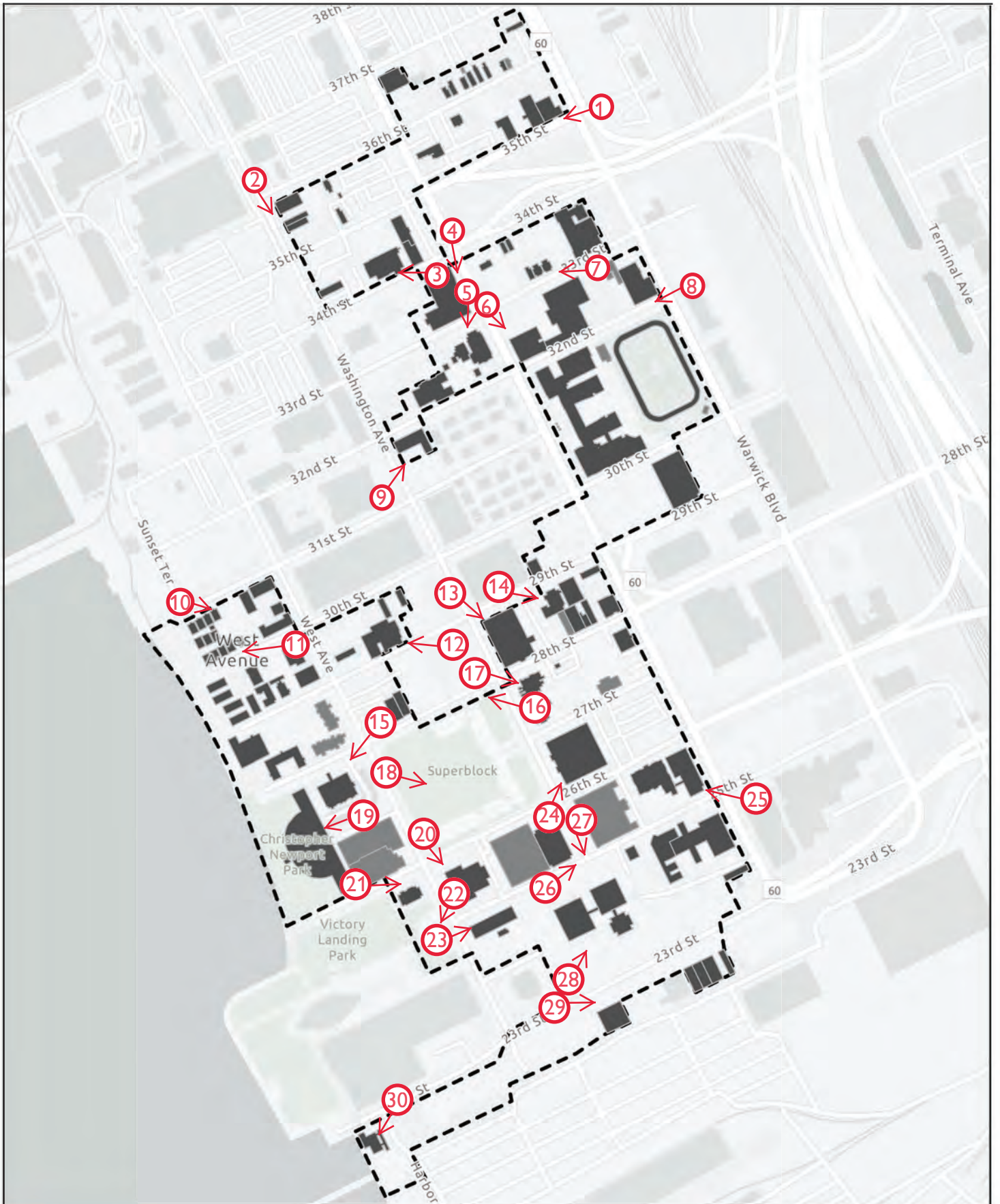


Photo Key

Newport News Downtown Historic District

City of Newport News, Virginia

DHR #121-5621

August 2022

