



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 118-5766

1. General Information

District name(s): Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District, 2026 Update and Boundary Increase

Main Streets and/or Routes: Church, Clay, Court, Main streets, 5th – 13th streets

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: City of Lynchburg

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: District ±57 acres (Increase ±7.65 acres)

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural _____

Briefly describe the district’s overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District 2026 Update & Boundary Increase extends the period of significance of the district to 1979 and expands the boundaries of the district slightly to the north, east, and west to ensure that the district is cohesive architecturally and historically. The construction dates of properties outside of the existing boundaries were reviewed to ensure that those within the new period of significance were included. Properties to be included within the new boundaries of the historic district are: 1023 Commerce Street, 700, 701, 828 and 914 Main Street, 615 and 621 Church Street, and the 900 block of Court Street. These properties are adjacent to the existing district boundaries.

The historic district is located on the promontory and lowlands of Lynchburg’s downtown. Within the existing district and the proposed boundary increases are a variety of buildings related to local government, commercial, residential, and religious uses. The dramatic change in elevation within the district continues to be its most defining natural feature, and many of the buildings and resources reflect intentional design aspects to suit them to their sloped setting.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): International, New Formalism, Miesian, Postmodernism, Commercial

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Unknown

If any builders or developers are known, please list here: Unknown

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): 1964, 1965, 1971, 1972, 1976, 1979

Are there any known threats to this district? None Known

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire historic district, such as building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district, as well as typical updates, additions, remodelings, or other alterations that characterize the district.

The original boundaries of the historic district encompassed 25 blocks along Clay, Court, Church, and Main streets between the cross streets of 5th and 13th. Boundary increases to the district in 2002 (also 118-5163) and 2016 (118-5495) expanded the boundaries to include adjacent parcels and blocks to the district's west, east, and south. A boundary increase to include 812 Main Street (118-5163-0176) was completed in 2025 and was listed in March 2026. With this update, the period of significance of the Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District will be extended to 1979, with the construction of the First Colony Life Insurance Company building. The boundaries will be expanded by approximately 7.6 acres to include 1023 Commerce Street, 700 Main Street, 701 Main Street, 828 Main Street, 914 Main Street, 615 and 621 Church Street, and the 900 block of Court Street. These properties were constructed within the expanded period of significance and are consistent with the development pattern and architectural styles of the rest of the district.

The original district enveloped the three terraces rising above the James River, with Courthouse Hill being the uppermost. The city blocks housed governmental, commercial, residential, and religious buildings dating from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. These buildings are largely of masonry construction and consist of a variety of architectural styles including Federal, Greek-Revival, Gothic-Revival, Italianate, Queen-Anne, Neoclassical, Italian Renaissance, Spanish Eclectic, Craftsman, and Art Deco. The 2002 boundary increase included residential dwellings centered on Madison and Harrison streets at 6th Street. The vast majority of buildings – of frame, masonry, and stucco construction – date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and exhibit Queen Anne, Federal, and American Foursquare styles.

An extension to the period of significance in 2016 and a boundary increase (118-5495) that same year brought in a mid-twentieth century contributing parking garage and courthouse building, as well as mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century commercial buildings of masonry construction exhibiting the Commercial style in addition to Moderne and New Formalism styles. The 2025 boundary increase to the district (118-5163-0176) brings in a previously altered late nineteenth century commercial building. Like previous expansions of the period of significance and district boundaries, the 2026 Update and Boundary Increase is not intended to add new areas of significance, but to reflect the continued and ongoing development patterns and architectural idioms already conveyed by the properties within the original district.

The buildings that will be brought into the district with the extended period of significance and boundary expansion harmonize with the architectural inventory of the existing Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District. The extension of the period of significance brings in a parking deck with a commercial component (118-5163-0077) and elevator tower (118-5163-0061) within the existing boundaries of the district that had previously been deemed noncontributing because of their late construction dates. These are masonry and steel buildings and structures. The parking deck has no discernible style, though the commercial portion of the structure exhibits Colonial Revival elements. The elevator tower has elements harkening to the Miesian style. Both the parking deck and elevator use the natural topography of the city and continue to reflect the architectural pattern of the district of adhering to, rather than altering, the landscape. The extension also brings in two earlier buildings that were previously determined to be non-contributing to the district due to alterations (118-5037 and 118-5163-0105). Though these alterations, completed in the 1970s, changed the appearance of the original buildings to various degrees, they provided the buildings with an appearance similar to other commercial buildings constructed during the 1970s.

Expanding the boundaries of the historic district will bring in ten additional buildings to the inventory. These include nine contributing buildings that were constructed between 1922 and 1979; the single noncontributing building was built in 2010 and is included only to avoid a jigsaw boundary. The contributing buildings include a commercial building at 1023 Commerce Street which was not included in the original boundaries despite a construction date of 1922; commercial buildings at 700 (118-5038), 701 (118-5039) and 828 (118-5056) Main Street; a parking deck at 914 Main Street; commercial buildings at 615 and 621 Church Street (118-5134); and government buildings at 905 and 915 Court Street. All of the buildings are of masonry or metal construction.

The commercial buildings at 701 and 828 Main Street have elements of the International style, with 828 Main Street also continuing the tradition of skyscrapers in the district as seen in 801 Main Street and 725 Church Street. The government buildings at 905 and 915 Court Street and commercial building at 700 Main Street exhibit the New Formalism style while the buildings at 615 and 621 Church Street have elements of Postmodernism.¹ The parking deck does not necessarily exhibit a style, however, its horizontal focus and splash of color at each level provides interest to the streetscape. Updates to the Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District bring the architectural styles forward in time without detracting from the district as a whole.

In addition to updating the status of the resources within the existing district, the Court House Hill-Downtown 2026 Update and Boundary Increase will seek to clarify errors in the V-CRIS record of particular resources (e.g. 118-5163-0062, 118-5163-0064, 118-5163-0075, and 118-5163-0087) and update the record for buildings that have been demolished since 2016.

Discuss the district's general setting and/or streetscapes, including current property uses (and historic uses if different), such as industrial, residential, commercial, religious, etc. For rural historic districts, please include a description of land uses.

The Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District consists of largely masonry buildings ranging in height from one to eighteen stories, though the vast majority of buildings are between two and four stories in height. The buildings continue their historic uses for a variety of purposes including for local government, commercial, residential, and religious purposes. One- and two-lane roads, the majority of which are paved with asphalt, serve as throughfares through the district. There is a single stretch of road along Clay Street that is brick. Many of the roads have parking spots along the sidewalks. As a reflection of the increased use of vehicles in the second half of the twentieth century, surface parking lots and parking decks of

¹ The building at 909 Court Street is the newer, noncontributing building.

varying capacities are located throughout the district. As a portion of the district is on a promontory overlooking the James River, a stairway and elevator serve as a pedestrian link between the elevations.

4. District's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the district, such as when it was established, how it developed over time, and significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

If the district is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District was originally listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) in 2000 and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2001. At that time, the traditional cutoff date of 50 years for nominations was used for the district, resulting in a period of significance extending from 1786 to 1951. This led to 130 contributing buildings, structures, and objects in the district and 18 noncontributing buildings, structures, and objects. The historic district was updated shortly thereafter (2002), at which time the period of significance was extended to 1952 and the boundaries were increased. This resulted in an additional 44 contributing buildings to the historic district; all of which were contributing. The Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District's period of significance was extended once more in 2016 to 1957. At that time a comprehensive review of buildings within the district's boundaries was also undertaken. With this effort, three newly contributing resources were added to the inventory. The boundaries were also increased that year, though due to changes in VDHR numbering policy this expansion received a new resource number (118-5495). With the boundary change, 20 buildings were added to the district. These buildings were commercial in function. The boundaries increased once more in 2025 to include a single property (118-5163-0176).

According to the original nomination for the Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District, its significance rested on Criteria A (in areas of Commerce, Industry, Politics/Government, and Religion) and C (for its Architecture). As indicated by the multiple boundary expansions and extensions of the period of significance, the history, development, and importance of the Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District did not end in 1951. Instead, Lynchburg's downtown continued to evolve, with ongoing construction and a diverse collection of architectural styles to remain relevant to city and county residents.

With the decline of the railroad and growing popularity of the automobile, the importance of Lynchburg's downtown as a commercial area deteriorated particularly after completion of the expressway through Lynchburg.² The completion of Pitman Plaza in 1961 presented clear competition to Lynchburg's downtown stores and previous commercial attractions to downtown, like Leggett Department Store, Sears and Roebuck, and J.C. Penney, relocated to midtown.³ In an effort to remain relevant to the public and more easily accommodate vehicles, parking options increased downtown with the establishment of off-street parking and construction of parking decks.

Each of the nomination updates noted that newly contributing buildings strengthened the Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District's significance. The same is true for the 2026 Update and Boundary Increase for the district. The commercial buildings at 700, 701, 828, and 925 Main Street, 615 and 621

² Alison Blanton, "Court House Hill/Downtown." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Hill Studio, PC. July 2000.

³ Thomas G. Ledford, "Lynchburg in the Decade of the 1960s." *Lynch's Ferry*. Spring/Summer 2006, 6-8.

Church Street, and 1023 Commerce Street, and government buildings at 905 and 915 Court Street continue the district's reliance on commercial enterprises and local government in its downtown. It is likely that they were not included in the original district boundaries due to their later construction dates, however, they reflect relatively ornate interpretations of contemporary architectural styles and therefore a continued commitment to a recognizable presence in the downtown streetscape. It is the construction of the First Colony Life Insurance Company building at 700 Main Street, that gives the new end date to the period of significance for the Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District 2026 Update and Boundary Increase.

The two parking lots that will be brought into the district serve as examples of Lynchburg downtown's willingness and need for adapting to the new circumstances of travel to remain relevant to area residents. Both are modest examples of typical parking deck construction, although the Colonial Revival influence applied to the supporting office space of one reflects an attempt at recognizing the prominent role of the style throughout Virginia in the mid-twentieth century. Finally, the exterior elevator uses technology to provide an easier and ADA compliant link to the government buildings on Lynchburg's downtown bluff and facilitates pedestrian movement up and down the hilly terrain of the downtown area.

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: Public\Local Public\State _____ Public\Federal _____

6. Applicant/Sponsor (Individual and/or organization sponsoring preparation of the PIF, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Susan Dolinar (Directory of Operations) & Randall Trost (building owner)

organization: MJTB Properties, LLC

street & number: 801 Main Street, 10th Floor

city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24504

e-mail: susandolinarcoaching@gmail.com telephone: 434-426-9303

Applicant's Signature: 

Date: 3-24-24

•• *Signature required for processing all applications.* ••

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Same as above

Daytime Telephone: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title: Dara Friedberg

organization: Dutton + Associates, a Timmons Group company

street & number: 1001 Boulders Parkway

city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23225

e-mail: dfriedberg@dutton-associates.com telephone: 804-897-1960

Date: March 2026

7. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager.

name/title: Wynter C. Benda / City Manager
Locality: Lynchburg
street & number: 900 Church Street
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24504
telephone: 434-455-3990

Photolog

Name of Resource: Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District 2026 Update and
Boundary Increase

City or Vicinity: Lynchburg

County: Independent City

State: Virginia

Photographer: Robert J. Taylor, Jr.

Date Photographed: March 5, 2026

Photo 1 of 16: Representative streetscape of district, view southeast on Court St. at 7th St.

Photo 2 of 16: Representative streetscape of district, view northwest on Church St. at 11th St.

Photo 3 of 16: Representative streetscape of district, view southeast on Church St. at 7th St.

Photo 4 of 16: Representative streetscape of district, view southeast on Main St. at 9th St.

Photo 5 of 16: Representative streetscape of 2016 expanded district, view northwest on
Commerce St. at 11th St.

Photo 6 of 16: Representative streetscape of district, view southeast on Church St. at 12th St.

Photo 7 of 16: Representative streetscape of district, view northeast on Court St. at 9th St.

Photo 8 of 16: Expanded boundary area at 900 block of Court St., view south.

Photo 9 of 16: Exterior elevator, view west on Church St.

Photo 10 of 16: Parking deck, view southeast on Church St. and 8th St.

Photo 11 of 16: Parking deck, view east on Church St. and 8th St.

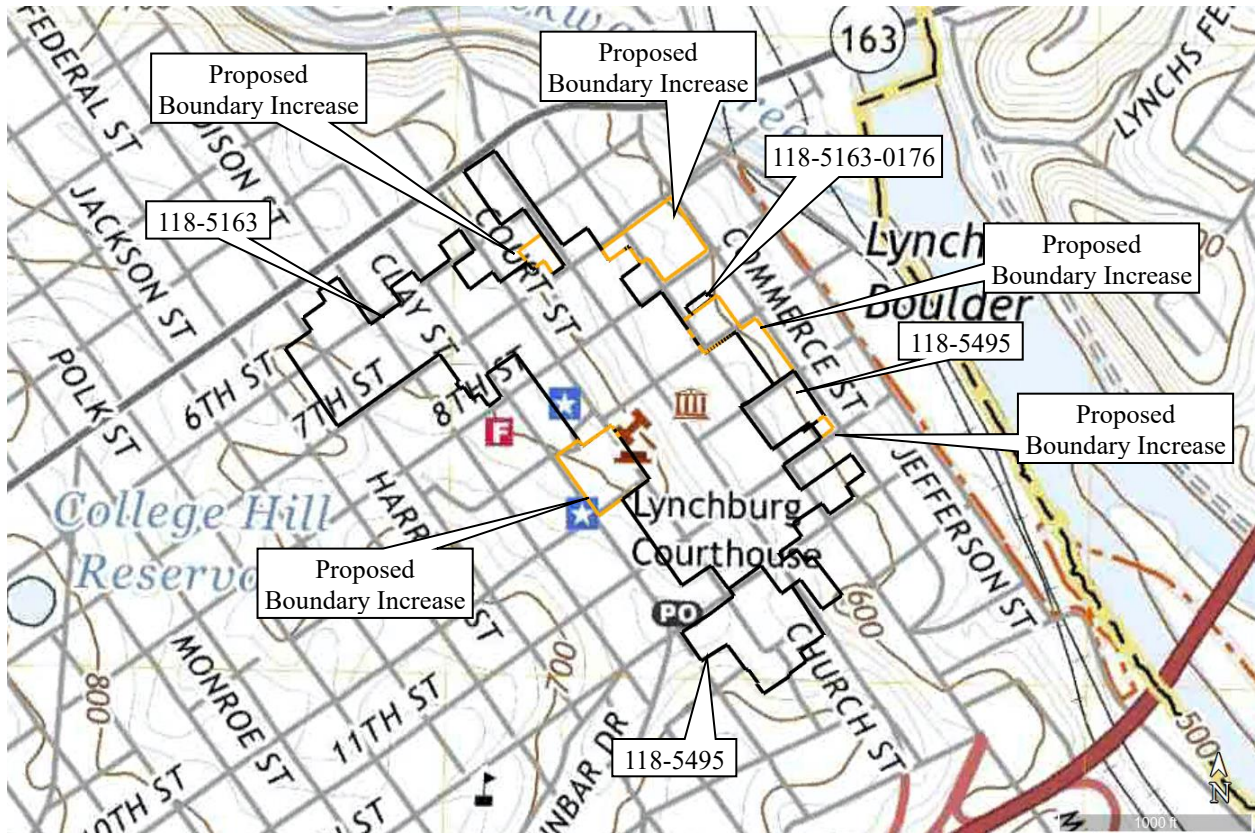
Photo 12 of 16: Expanded boundary area at 710 Main St., view northwest.

Photo 13 of 16: Expanded boundary at 914 Main St., view northwest on Commerce St. at 10th
St.

Photo 14 to 16: Expanded boundary at 615-621 Church St., view south on Church St.

Photo 15 to 16: Expanded boundary at 700 Main St., view southeast at Main St. and 7th St.

Photo 16 to 16: 925 Main St., view east at Main St. and 10th St.



US Topographic Quadrangle, Lynchburg, VA 2022

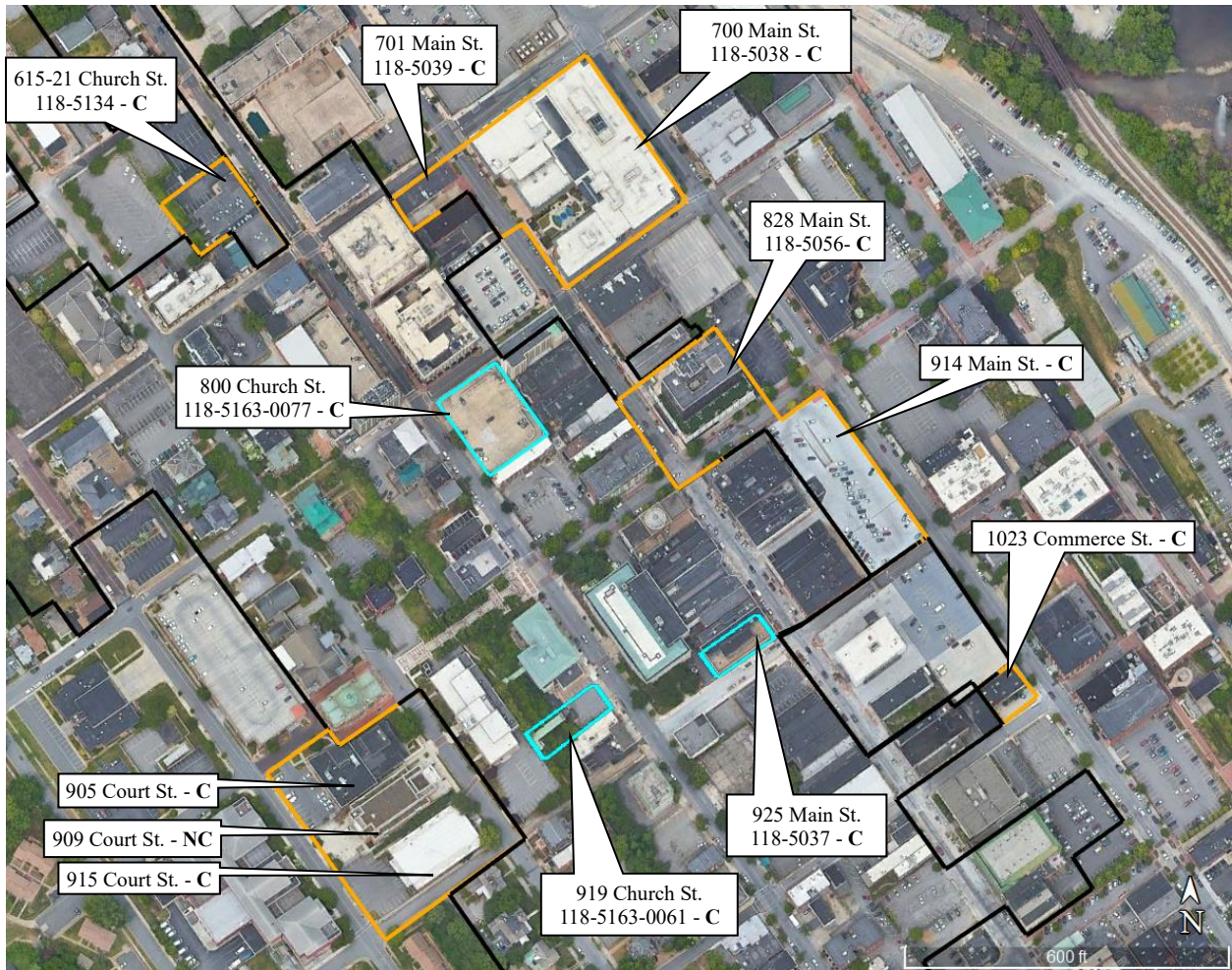
Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District

118-5163 District Boundaries

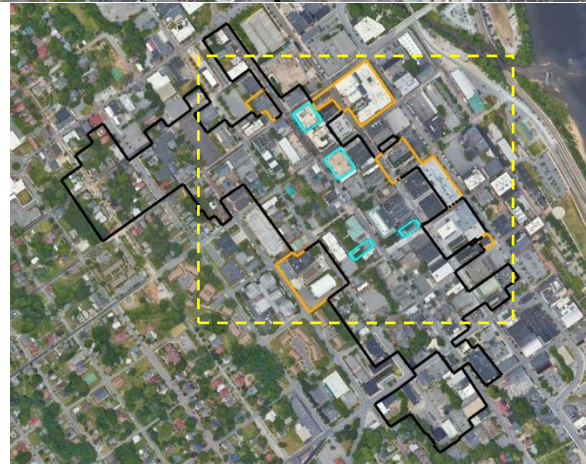
2016 Boundary Increase 118-5495

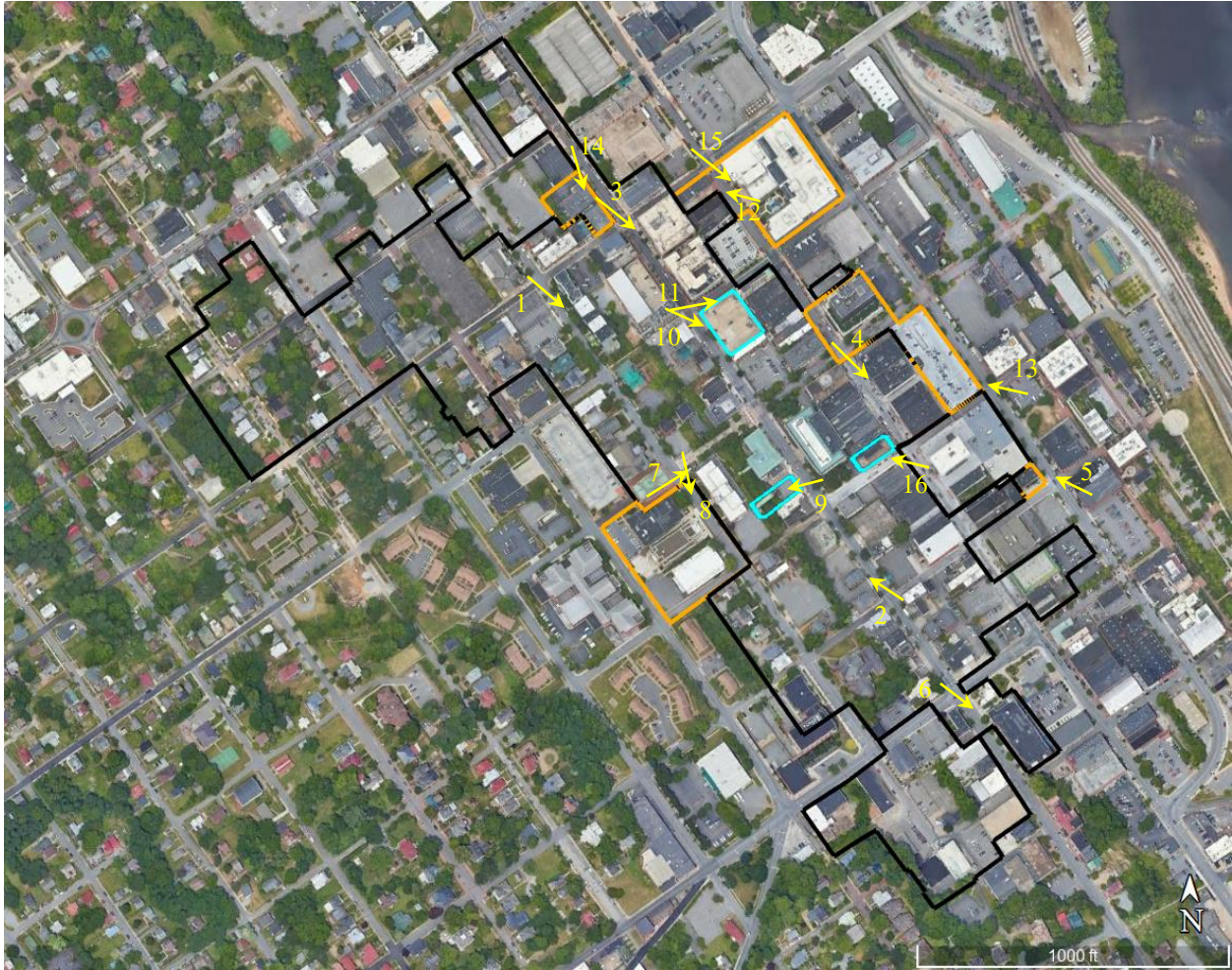
2025 Boundary Increase 118-5163-0176

Proposed Boundary Increases



Aerial Photograph (GoogleEarth 2021)
 Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District
 Newly Contributing Buildings





Aerial Photograph (GoogleEarth 2021)
Court House Hill-Downtown Historic District Photo Locations























Parking
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↓





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