DHR | Virginia Department of Historic Resources

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 123-5506

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

Pursuing registration in the National Register

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes _____ No X

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes _____ No X

1. General Property Information

Property name: Christ and Grace Episcopal Church

Property address: 1545 South Sycamore Street

City or Town: Petersburg VA

Zip code: 23805

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

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building X Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 4.5 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban _____ Suburban X Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural____

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The church is located on a large lot in suburban setting. The site include a parking lot to east of the church and another parking to the north on the site of an early twentieth-century house. This is surrounded by a random clinker-brick brick wall. The landscaped property slopes to the rear of the building and includes a small bell tower built in 1973, a small playground surrounded by a chain link fence, and a picnic shelter built in 2005. A landscaped labyrinth, built in 2008, is located to the northeast of the church.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Gothic Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Frank R. Watson and William Heyl Thompson

If the builder is known, please list here: _____

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1925; 1957

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

Description

The church is located on a parcel of combined lots on the northeastern corner of the City of Petersburg's early twentieth-century streetcar suburb of Walnut Hill, on the east side of Sycamore Street, a principal north-south route through the city. The parcel slopes down from a flat area at the center to the east and west. Parking is located just behind the church, on a lower lot to the east, and on a former residential lot to the north. The former residential lot is surrounded by a low brick wall built of Arts-and-Craft-era clinker brick. Other site features include a small, separate bell tower structure to the south of the Parish House and a stone-paved labyrinth garden to the north of the church installed in 2008.

The church site slopes from the east towards Sycamore Street, so that the basement story is above-ground at the south side and west front of the Parish Hall, facing the street and underground at the rear. The church is made up of two parts, both largely unchanged since construction: the three-story Parish House and the hyphen that extends from it, built in 1925, and the church itself, which opened in 1957. The church consists of a Gothic Revival nave with a projecting chancel located, in keeping with medieval practice, at the east end. Together, the Church and Parish House form an open quadrangle facing Sycamore Street, which has in recent decades been developed as a memorial garden. While there is a fully finished basement under the Parish House, the area under the church is only partially finished to contain a choir room in the front and a boiler room at the rear. The two sections each have separate, adjoining and interconnected boiler rooms.

The church section consists of an impressive eight-bay nave with eight-course American-bond brick walls, stone trim, and a steeply pitched slate roof with copper-colored gutters and downspouts. Stone door and window trim are, in most cases, flanked by regular stone quoins. The gable ends are faced with brick parapets topped by stone copings. All of the windows are filled with stained glass. Of the side windows lighting the nave, all but one of the north windows are filled with stone tracery. The large east and west windows are also filled with tracery. These windows have modern stained glass made by the Willet Studio of Philadelphia PA, as do the smaller windows in the chancel, balcony stairs, and the adjoining vestibules and passages. The westernmost window on the north side and all of the south windows do not feature tracery, but are instead filled with late nineteenth-century memorial windows retrieved from old Grace Church.

The side bays are separated by pier buttresses topped with gablets, each with a single set of angled stone shoulders just below. The end buttresses also extend up to small gablets which provide an architectonic support to the roof parapets. A small vestibule projects from the north at the east end of the nave. It is detailed to match the rest of the church, with a shed roof, buttresses, and a stone door surround

The main entry projects from the west front under the main roof. This section contains the narthex, which is located below a gallery, flanked by the two stairs leading to the upper level. This gabled section, which is narrower than the body of the nave, is ornamented with horizontal stone belt courses, a Celtic cross at the apex, and a pair of massive buttresses flanking the entry. Each of these is distinguished by two sets of angled stone weatherings and a stone gablet at the top. The entry bay serves to give the entire building the slender appearance of a Gothic church and conceals the bulk of the actual nave, which is four feet wider and considerably less tall than the original 1925 design. An increased sense of height is provided by depressing the floor of the narthex (and with it the main entry door) three steps below the nave.

The projecting lower wall containing the entry door is topped by a sloping stone coping with a raised center. The double-leaf wood door is deeply set in a molded stone Gothic arch opening, surrounded by a narrow label mold, and flanked by irregular stone quoins. It is located at the top of a flight of stone steps. Two carved stone ornaments representing Christ and God's Grace, symbolizing the contributions of both Christ Church and Grace Church, are located to each side of the entry. Above the door, a large traceried, tripartite west window illuminates the west end of the church.

A matching chancel, narrower and lower than the nave, projects to the east. The three-bay wing features small buttresses and paired arched windows. Due to the intersection with the Parish House on the south side of the chancel, only one window lights the interior on that side. A large tripartite east window, filled with stone tracery, is placed high in the east end. It features stained glass depicting Christ the King ruling over heaven and earth and surrounded by the heavenly host. A small buttressed ambulatory projects from the chancel on the north side to aid in circulation on the interior.

The interior of the church is simply detailed and characterized by roughly textured plaster walls, an impressive series of timber hammer beam trusses, and pointed-arch openings to the chancel and the balcony. The otherwise plain narthex is distinguished by three internal stone steps leading up to the church and terra cotta Art-and-Crafts style floor tiles. The balcony above is fronted by a line of flush panels. The rafters are carried on widely spaced purlins. The entire roof structure was, from the start, painted "Carolina Blue" at the direction of rector Boston M. Lackey, who was a native of North Carolina. The nave contains blond-finished slip pews, carpeted aisles to the center and each side, and large, cylindrical pendant light fixtures. The relative simplicity of the nave guarantees that the eye will be immediately drawn to the stone altar and its carved reredos at the east end.

The choir portion of the chancel is separated from the nave by an arched stone opening. It is reached by three steps flanked by flat paneled rails. The pulpit, first used at Christ Church when it was located in the Parish House wing features carved tracery at the head of the flat paneled sides. It is located on the left side. A revolving lectern and baptismal font are aligned along the opposite side. Gothic hymn boards are placed to each side of the chancel arch. The marble font is from old Grace Church. Reading desks for the daily office are just behind. Choir seating is placed to each side of the central aisle, screened by continuous paneled desks. The organ console is placed behind the pulpit. The aisle is paved with sections of handmade, terra cotta, Arts-and-Crafts style floor tiles. Plain tiles are interspersed with tiles with incised ornament and surrounded by borders of cream colored tiles

The sanctuary, raised one step above the choir, occupies the easternmost bay of the chancel. The sanctuary walls are lined with ashlar stone wainscot panels. A high-backed bishop's throne, matching the rest of the church furnishings, is located to the north side of the altar, while the south is filled with clergy seats. The sanctuary is floored with panels of Arts-and-Crafts style tiles bordered with cream-colored tiles interspersed with tiles depicting religious symbols. The brass communion rail was originally from Grace Church. The central altar, raised on three steps, is linked to the window above by means of a carved stone reredos. The reredos is topped by a carved stone cornice. It features an applied wooden cross with the outer quadrants occupied by stone carvings representing the four evangelists. The outer edge is lined with a stone band carrying smaller carved shields bearing the symbols of the twelve apostles. It is flanked by recessed square-topped niches topped with filigree trim. The exposed portions of a pipe organ- most of which is concealed in a second-floor chamber to the south of the chancel- are located on a deep shelf extending from the south wall over the choir stalls.

The adjoining Parish House is built of eight-course American bond brick and is sheltered beneath a steeply sloping slate roof. It was designed to serve as a free-standing interim church building, entered by a segmentally arched doorway centered on the west end of the lower level, which has always housed a double row of Sunday school rooms. The west front is characterized by a narrow three-story front flanked by paired buttresses. Narrow two-story, transept-like projections to each side feature short cross gable roofs. The southern projection contains a broad wooden staircase that gives access to the main hall on the floor above. Another similar projection, located toward the east end of the south wall, adds architectural interest to the south front. Windows in the central part of the east end were infilled in 1955. In recent years, structural problems in the side walls forced the parish to add tie rods attached to horizontal steel bars on the exterior at both the top of the walls and the first-floor levels.

The three window bays that illuminate the side walls of the main hall are divided by brick buttresses, each with angled cast-stone shoulders. Almost all of the original metal casement windows were recently replaced. The small casements and the windows on the west front have not been replaced. The slate-covered gable roof is concealed behind a stone-coped western parapet topped by a stone cross. A delicate metal-clad Gothic miniature domed belfry rises at the center of the roof, inspired by medieval prototypes.

The main room on the first floor (originally used as the chapel) is now a large parish hall. It was labelled "Social Hall" on the 1955 plans and renamed "Lackey Hall" in honor of the parish's long-term rector. The former chancel of the chapel was converted in 1955 into a shallow stage with a segmentally arched proscenium. The area behind the stage, formerly the west end of the chancel, is now the parish kitchen. Otherwise the building was altered very little in the 1950s. Lackey Hall has an arched ceiling which conceals the scissors trusses that actually support the roof. There are three windows on each side and a balcony at the west end with a lightweight turned baluster rail. Two small openings to the south side of the balcony opening originally served motion picture projectors in a small projection room that is fire-proofed with sheet metal. The main staircase from the basement entry leads to a small narthex in the west end. Like the other staircase in the Parish House, the front stair has a closed stringer; narrow, closely set verticals, and square newel posts. The narthex is lit by a tripartite metal casement window with cast-stone tracery heads on the interior. The Parish House interior incorporates simple architrave molding, transoms' over the doors, and six-panel doors.

A wing projecting from the east end of the north side of the Parish House links it to the added church. This section contains the church offices and other support functions. A staircase is located in the hyphen adjoining Lackey Hall. Weekday entry to the church office is provided by an arched door at grade that opens onto the stairway midway between stories. A service entry to the rear is located opposite it. The service entry, served by a short handicapped ramp, was given a new brick porch with arched opening in recent decades. The first floor contains the Rector's Office, equipped with a fireplace, and other support

rooms. A large women's "guild room," now the library, in located on the second floor of this section, lit by three large wall dormers facing west.

Contributing Resources

The site includes a lot to the north of the church that was formerly the site of an early twentieth-century house. The lot, which now contains a parking lot, is surrounded by an unusual brick wall made of the kinds of clinker brick with deliberately distorted forms that was popular within the Arts-and-Crafts movement in the early twentieth century. The wall is made of regular red brick with frequently placed, randomly distributed clinker bricks projecting from the face of the wall. The wall is stabilized by taller brick piers corbelled brick caps place at the ends of the straight and curved runs. A coping is formed by a course of very irregular bricks placed vertically along the top of the wall and the piers. The wall runs around substantial sections of the north, west, and south sides of the tract. A curving section wall located in a section of the wall that lines a former alley the runs just north of the church appears to be the western half of a vehicle gate to the property.

Noncontributing Resources

Additional resources, all noncontributing, include a small, modern, brick bell tower, located to the south of the Parish House (1973, in memory of Ada Crass Pollard); a landscaped, stone-paved labyrinth garden to the northeast (2008); and a frame picnic shelter to the east (2005, given by Maureen F. and Phillip H. McClure in memory of Mildred H. and H.M. McClure).

4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as 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.)

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

William Heyl Thompson, Architect, Christ and Grace Episcopal Church, Petersburg, soon after completion in 1957.

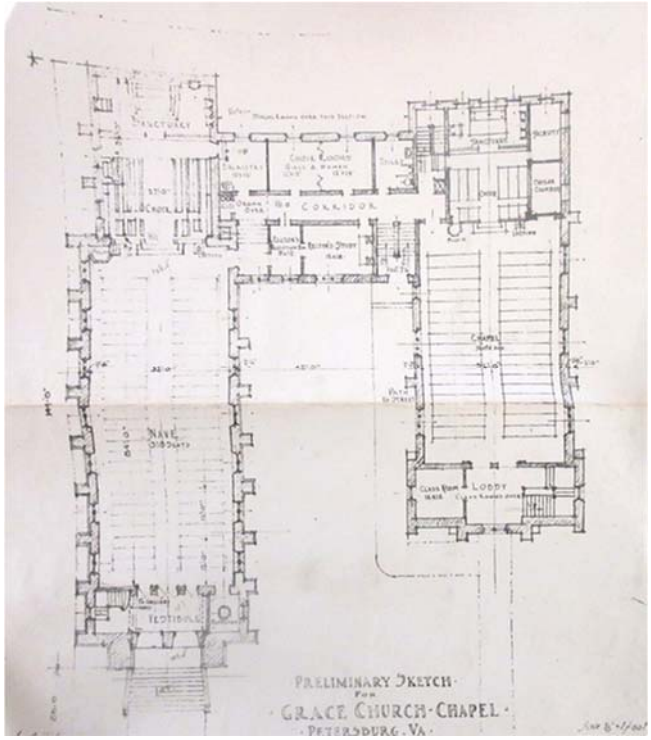
Historic Significance

Christ and Grace Episcopal Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as an outstanding example of the kinds of church designs that were commissioned by parishes of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the first decades of the twentieth century, when the Gothic Revival movement was at its height. The church is also significant as a late example of the continued use of Gothic Revival detailing in the mid-twentieth century and as the passing on of work between members of a highly respected ecclesiastical single firm over a thirty-year period. The church building is also unusual in its unaltered condition. Very few changes have been made since its two sections were completed in 1925 and 1957, respectively.

In the period leading up to the Civil War, St. Paul's Church, located on Union Street in the center of town, the descendent of the eighteenth-century Bristol Parish, was the only Episcopal church serving the city's growing population. It was replaced by a brick church on Old Street in 1851. Grace Church, Petersburg's second Episcopal church, was founded in 1841-42 as a mission on Piamingo Street in the older, working-class section of town along Old Street (now Grove Avenue). It was replaced by a brick building on Old Street, completed in 1851. The successful congregation left the Old Street neighborhood and began construction of an elaborate new Gothic Revival-style church on fashionable High Street just before of the beginning of the Civil War. The church basement was occupied in 1861, but due to the economic devastation of the war, the structure was not completed until 1870. In that year the church had 560 communicants.

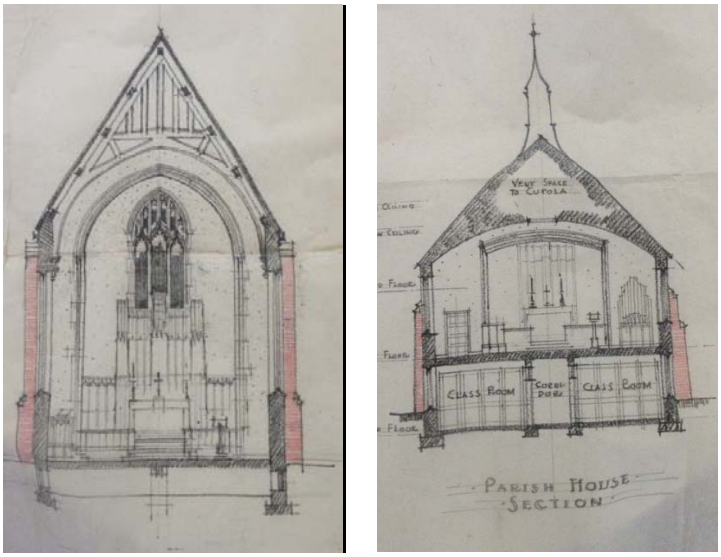
Preliminary Sketch of Grace Church Chapel by Frank R. Watson of Watson, Edkins, and Thompson, 9 August 1924 [collection of Christ and Grace Episcopal Church]. Only the portions at the center and to the right were built as designed [Christ and Grace Episcopal Church].

By the third decade of the twentieth century, a large portion of the membership of the church had relocated their homes from the older part of the city to the new suburb of Walnut Hill to the south. A number of members wished to build a new church in that neighborhood. The parish's new rector, Rev. Dr. Edwin R. Carter, thought that the move was a good idea and promoted it. In 1923, the membership voted to purchase a lot on Sycamore Street in Walnut Hill and build a new church. The church employed the renowned ecclesiastical architect Frank Rushmore Watson to design the new building, which was to begin as a mission called Grace Church Chapel. The first phase of a planned full-scale church was begun in 1925 with the opening of the parish hall furnished and equipped to serve as a chapel. A portion of the Grace Church parishioners began to the worship in the new location. The proposed main church section differed in detail but not in substance from what was built thirty years later: it was substantially taller and more delicate in detail. Both naves were seven bays long and both buildings featured narrow three-bay chancels. The original had a pair of doors on the front and slender twin buttress to each side.



Frank R. Watson of Watson, Edkins, and Thompson. Preliminary Sketch for Grace Church Chapel. 9 August 1924 [collection of Christ and Grace Episcopal Church].

Frank R. Watson (1859-1940), was a talented ecclesiastical architect and the designer of many Catholic, Lutheran, and Episcopal churches in the mid-Atlantic region, including Christ and St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Norfolk (1910) and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Richmond (1928). Frank R. Watson began designing Catholic churches in 1887 with the form of Edwin F. Durang. He set up his own firm in 1883, partnering with Samuel Huckel in 1902. Huckel died in 1917 and in 1922 Watson established in association with George E. Edkins and William Heyl Thompson (1892-1974). After Watson's death on 1940, Thompson continued the firm on his own, designing mostly churches, including St. James Episcopal Church in Newport DE (1949) and Calvary Episcopal Church in Wilmington DE (1946). It was natural for Rector Boston M. Lackey to return to the original architectural design and the successor architectural firm of the original architect.

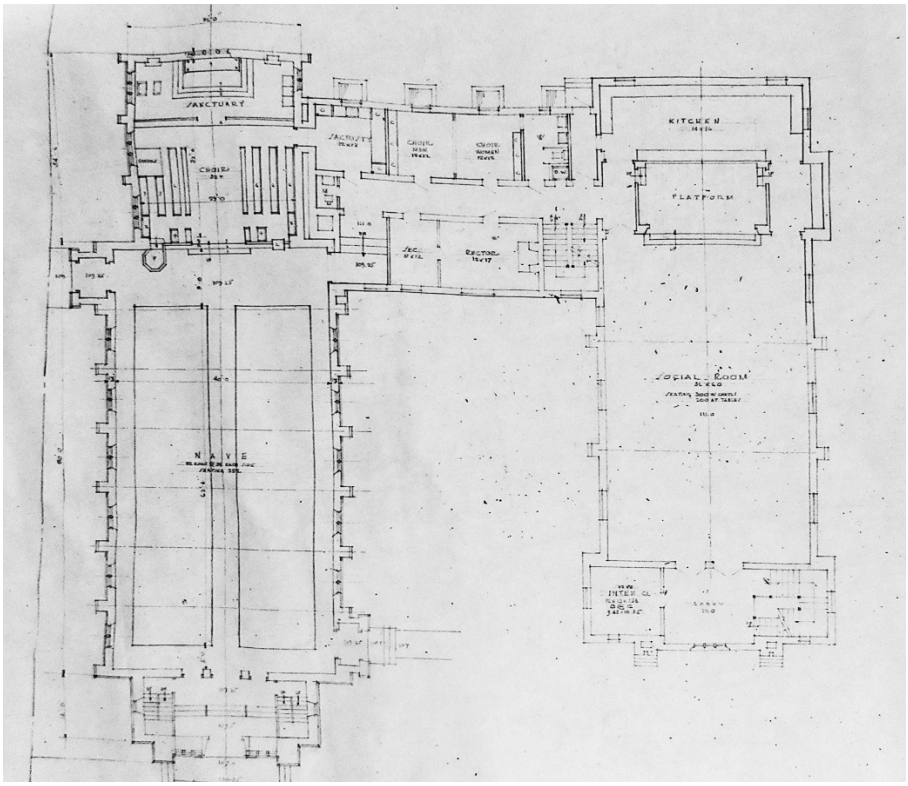


Frank R. Watson of Watson, Edkins, and Thompson, Architects, Detail of Preliminary Sketch, 9 August 1924 [collection of Christ and Grace Episcopal Church]. Section through the proposed church and the actual parish house as built.

Christ Episcopal Church, 1953 [collection of Christ and Grace Episcopal Church].

The L-shaped Parish House was built in 1925 as designed by Watson, Edkins, and Thompson. The main room (labelled "Chapel" on the preliminary drawings but clearly intended to become the parish hall after the main church was built) served as the sanctuary for the next thirty years. It contained a small, but fully equipped divided chancel, including antiphonal (divided into two facing sections) choir seating. Sunday school rooms were located on the lower level, as they still are. The north wing contained a boiler room and children's choir room on the basement level, a rector's office and choir room on the first floor, and a women's guild room on the second floor. Both the rector's office and guild room incorporated fireplaces.

When the time came for the entire congregation to make the move to the new location, many members decided that they did not want to leave their old home. The rector and about 150 members left and moved to the new location. Grace Church Chapel became a separate parish in 1928 and took the name of Christ Church at its new location. Grace Church continued operation on High Street. Grace Church, however did not prosper in its old location, probably due to Petersburg's changing demographics.



First Floor Plan, William Heyl Thompson, Architect, Christ and Grace Episcopal Church, 1955 [collection of Christ and Grace Episcopal Church].

The young Rev. Boston M. Lackey, Jr. was called as rector of Christ Church in 1952. By that time, the Grace Church congregation recognized that only fourteen of its less than 100 members were under the age of seventy. The two parishes were merged in 1953 under the leadership of Dr. Lackey as Christ and Grace Church. The enlarged congregation was able to fulfil the vision first articulated in 1924 and build a complete modern parish church. Many of the fittings and ornaments of old Grace Church were moved to the new church, including a set of nineteenth-century stained glass window, one of which is thought to have been manufactured by Tiffany Studios. The old church was rented for five years to another denomination, then sold to the nearby Seward Luggage Company, and was finally demolished in 1960.

Sources

Teschner, Juanita and Kenneth Norman. "Windows of Our Faith: Stained Glass Windows and Symbols at Christ and Grace Episcopal Church." Brochure, Christ and Grace Episcopal Church, 2016.

Neal Campbell, "A Brief History of St. Stephen's Church, Richmond VA., and its Aolian-Skinner Organ," *The Diapaison,* Dec. 2017.

"Grace Protestant Episcopal Church in Petersburg, Diocese of Southern Virginia, 1841-1941." Commemorative booklet, Christ and Grace Episcopal Church, 1941.

The Rev. Boston M. Lackey, Jr. *Christ and Grace Church History*. Christ and Grace Church, no date.

Christ and Grace Church 1841-1991. Sesquicentennial Program, 1991, Christ and Grace Church.

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

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

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: _____Rev. Robin Teasley_____
organization: _____ Christ Episcopal Church Trust _____
street & number: _____ 1545 S. Sycamore St_____
city or town: _____ Petersburg_____ state: ____VA_____ zip code: __23805_____
e-mail: _____rteasley@christandgrace.org_____ telephone: ___(804) 733-7202_____

Legal Owner's Signature: _____ Date: _____

• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: _____Rev. Robin Teasley_____
Daytime Telephone: _804 733-7202_____

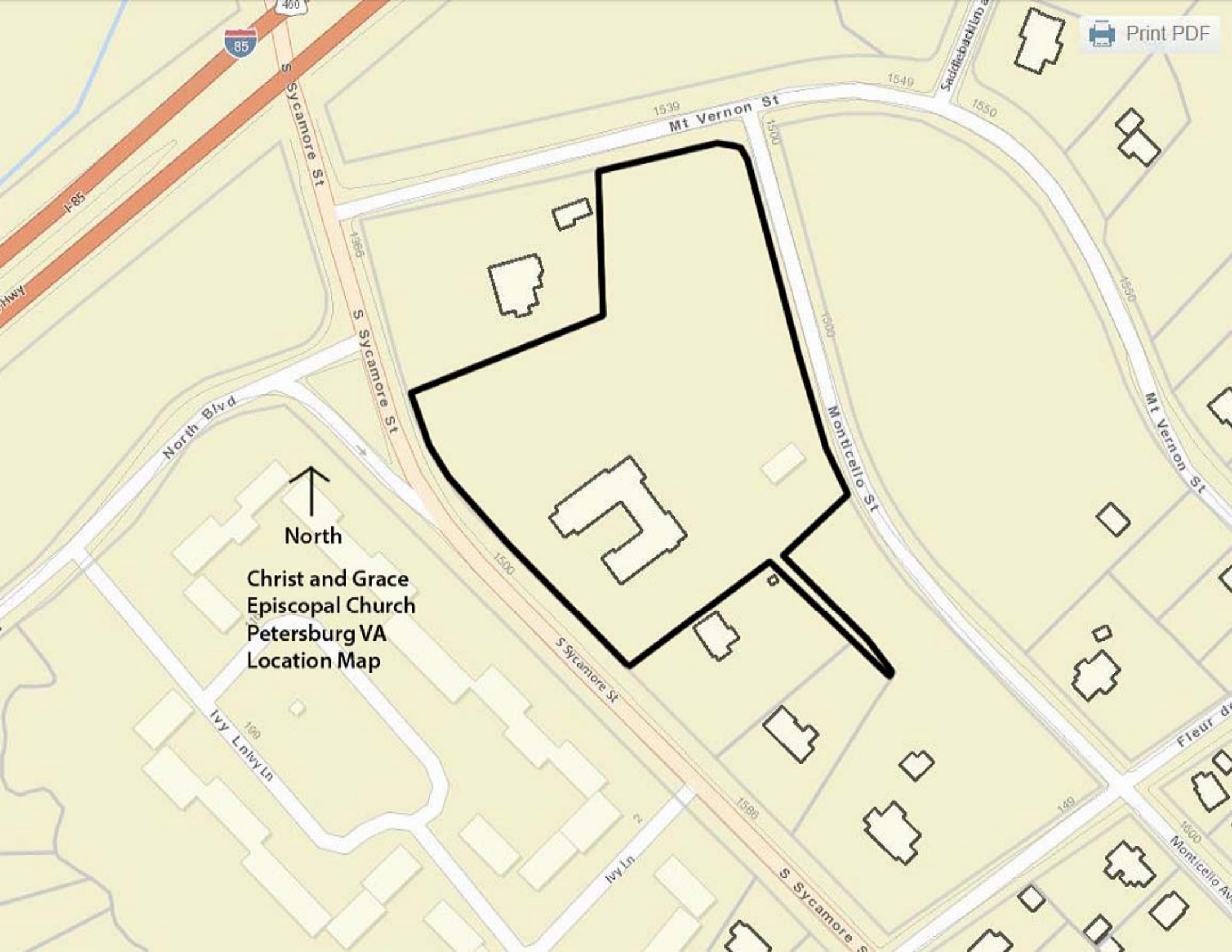
Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: _____Gibson Worsham_____
organization: _____Glave and Holmes Architecture_____
street & number: ___2101 East Main Street_____
city or town: ____Richmond_____ state: __VA_____ zip code: _23223_____
e-mail: ____gworsham@glaveandholmes.com___ telephone: __804 649-9303_____

6. 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: _____Aretha Ferrell-Benavides, City Manager_____
locality: _____
street & number: ___ 135 N Union St # 202, Petersburg, VA 23803_____
city or town: __Petersburg_____ state: ___VA_____ zip code: __23803____
telephone: ___(804) 733-2301_____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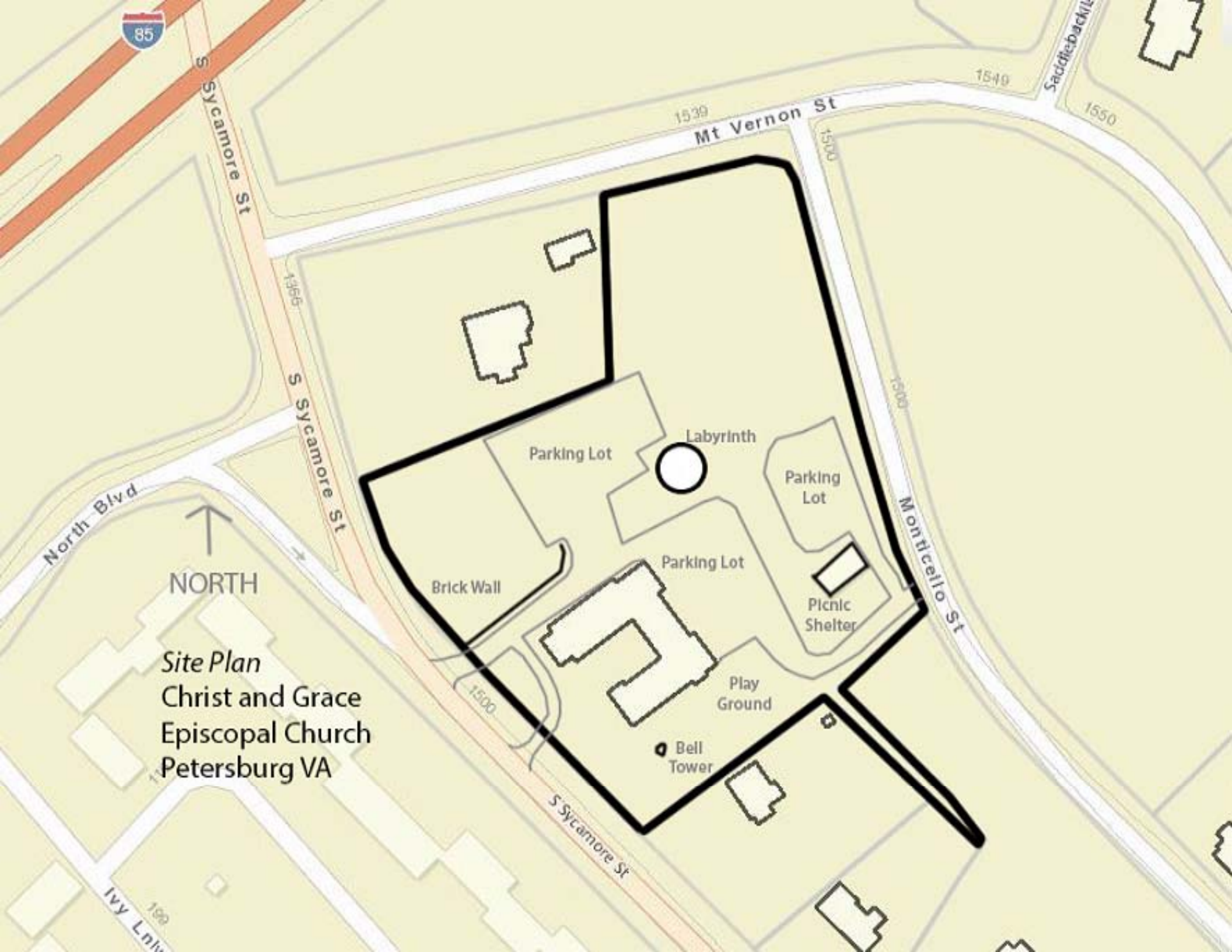

Site Plan
Christ and Grace
Episcopal Church
Petersburg VA