

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.

VLR Listed: 6/18/2020

NRHP Listed: 8/13/2020

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District

Other names/site number: 208-218 23rd Street; DHR ID 121-0076

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: 208-218 23rd Street

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Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Signature of certifying official>Title:

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ 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>3</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Warehouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Warehouse

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Industrial Commercial

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; CONCRETE; GLASS; METAL/
Aluminum

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 Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District is composed of three contributing, three-story, masonry buildings that were constructed ca. 1906 and served as several wholesale storage facilities. The buildings in the district are locally rare examples of intact Industrial Commercial-style warehouses and are some of the last remnants of the pre-Urban Renewal efforts in downtown Newport News. The resources each have zero setback from the street and public sidewalk, and cover the entirety of their respective lots. Although internal connections have been filled in, evidence of former openings, in addition to historical records, indicate that the buildings have been interconnected at different times during the district's period of significance. Narrow brick and concrete loading platforms are located at the rear of each warehouse. A small overgrown right-of-way behind the buildings separates the warehouses from the chain-link fence closing off the Virginia Port Authority property to the south. The City Hall superblock complex, an Urban Renewal project, is located across 23rd Street to the north while a two-story vacant office building is located to the east and a c.1954 one-story warehouse building is located to the west. Although the district's setting and feeling have been somewhat compromised due to the loss of historic buildings along 23rd Street, the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association. The district's resources retain the character-defining features of the Industrial Commercial style, such as minimally decorative brick cornices, segmental-arched window

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openings, parged brick arches above first-story façade door openings, and loading door openings. On the interior, the buildings feature large open plans with character-defining timber post and beam structural framing, and several retain their historic equipment associated with their warehouse function such as a conveyor belt and freight elevator machinery.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District is composed of three attached commercial warehouse buildings that are laid out in a linear pattern along the south side of 23rd Street. Located at 208-218 23rd Street, the district sits at the southeastern edge of downtown in Newport News, Virginia. The resources are located on the block between Huntington Avenue, to the east, and West Avenue, to the west. The district overlooks the storage area and shipyards of the Virginia Port Authority immediately to the south, and from which it is separated by a tall chain-link and barbed-wire fence. The Urban Renewal-era City Hall superblock complex, which includes several tall buildings and vast amounts of asphalt parking lots, is located across 23rd Street to the north. Along 23rd Street, the district is bordered to the east by a small two-story warehouse that has been converted to offices and to the west by a c. 1954 one-story warehouse. Just east of the district, 23rd Street gives way to the I-664 ramp. A small asphalt road, with parallel parking spaces, runs parallel to 23rd Street just in front of the buildings. There is minimal vegetation, which is primarily limited to small grass patches and a limited number of street trees. The warehouses are currently vacant or are used for storage.

Integrity Analysis

The Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District has integrity of location along the south side of 23rd Street in Newport News as the buildings are on their original sites and no resources have been moved into or out of the historic district. While the district retains its immediate setting in the context of its adjacent neighbors, the overall setting was greatly changed during Urban Renewal projects that included widespread demolition of other late-19th to mid-20th century warehouses that once lined 23rd Street. As an entity and regarding individual resources, the district retains integrity of design, featuring their historic form, plan, spatial relationships, structural framing, and style. While changes such as the infill or replacement of windows and the introduction of new loading or entry doors have occurred, these alterations are associated with the continuous use of these buildings as warehouses, and represent modifications that were likely necessary to accommodate changes in production, shipment, and storage capacity. The interior arrangements of space are largely intact, with the exception of the second and third floors of the resource at 212-214 23rd Street, which were lost due to roof failure. Despite some infilled and replacement windows and the aforementioned loss of some historic fabric in 212-214 23rd Street, the district retains integrity of materials and workmanship, most notably the buildings' character-defining masonry walls, brick arches (with first-story arches parged with concrete), concrete sills, interior cork insulation, wood flooring, open spaces interrupted only by heavy timber structural posts and beams, and in some cases machinery associated with historic operations. Although 23rd Street as a whole has seen the demolition of many of its warehouse buildings due to urban renewal, the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District conveys a historic

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sense of the feeling and association of wholesale warehouses dating to the early to mid-twentieth century commercial history that once characterized this area of downtown Newport News.

Inventory

The inventory below is the result of reconnaissance level survey of the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District conducted in September and October 2019. The surveyors documented all resources within the historic district. Because of the nature of the industrial district and its historic function, which were at times functionally related, individual resources were surveyed according to their historic building and/or site footprint using the Functionally Related Structures guidance provided by the National Park Service. The survey resulted in the identification of three contributing buildings.

Each entry in the inventory below identifies the primary resource, the resource type (building, site, structure, or object), number of stories, architectural style, approximate construction date, and contributing or noncontributing status and is organized by address and DHR ID (street address number used to key to attached Sketch Map). All three resources present in the historic district are contributing, and were constructed during the district's period of significance (1906-1967), are associated with the district's areas of significance, and retain architectural integrity to convey their historic associations. Alterations to contributing resources were evaluated based on the overall impact to the character-defining features of the resource. Each entry also includes a detailed architectural description.

208-210 23rd Street. (H. B Walker & Sons). Stories 3. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1906. 121-0076-0001. Contributing Building.

This three-story, four-bay, rectangular commercial building has a brick foundation and seven-course common-bond brick walls. It has a low-sloped asphalt roll shed roof with a stepped brick parapet. The façade features a denticulated and corbeled brick upper cornice. Symmetrically-placed windows with brick arches, concrete sills, and modern replacement, single-light sash are located along the second and third stories. A date plaque, with "H.B. Walker, 1906," is located just below the upper cornice on the façade. A faded brick sign band is centered on the façade between the first and second stories. On the first story, two windows have painted decorative brick hoods that appear to be intended to match the parged brick arches on the two neighboring buildings to the west. The first-story windows have been infilled with painted concrete block. The single-leaf pedestrian entrance is located in an opening that was historically for a taller door or window. The area surrounding the modern door has been infilled with parged concrete block and is surmounted by a painted decorative brick hood. Left of center on the façade is an opening with a single roll-up loading door; this opening appears to have no alterations. The west (side) elevation contains one infilled concrete block window, as well as a small opening with a steel door and a supporting exposed steel lintel. The south (rear) elevation, has a first-story entry with a single-leaf metal-slab door, and symmetrically-placed windows, with brick arches and concrete sills, on the second and third stories. The east (side) elevation abuts the neighboring building to the east (212-214 23rd Street).

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The interior of the building is largely unaltered from the historic period, particularly on the second and third floors. The first floor has a few modern partitions and finishes. Similar to the other buildings in the district, the first floor features concrete floors, exposed painted brick walls, and a large central summer beam with large square columns spanning the floor. Modern office partitions have been added in the northwest corner of the first floor and the ceiling has been finished with modern drywall. An additional partition is located at the southeast corner of the floor, where a historic cold storage/fire door is located and also provides connection to the neighboring warehouse (212-214). The second and third floors each have an open plan with wood floors, exposed brick walls, an exposed ceiling structure, and a central summer beam with large square columns spanning the space. But for the first-floor partitions, the interior historic features are still largely intact. An enclosed staircase, which provides access to all three floors, is located along the west wall towards the front of the building. Furthermore, the historic elevator shaft remains in its original location on all three floors. The elevator machinery, manufactured by the Moffat Machinery Manufacturing Company of Charlotte, North Carolina, remains intact and accessible from the elevator tower on the roof of the building.

212-214 23rd Street. (Wilkins Provisions & Company). Stories 3. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1906. 121-0076-0002. Contributing Building.

This three-story, four-bay, rectangular commercial building has a brick foundation and painted stretcher-bond brick walls. It has a low-sloped tar-and-gravel shed roof. The façade features a denticulated and corbeled brick upper cornice. Symmetrically-placed windows with modern replacement single-light and one-over-one sash and concrete sills, are located on the upper two stories. The second-story windows feature segmental brick arches. A faded brick, slightly-recessed sign band is centered on the façade between the first and second stories. The façade's first story has two square openings with paneled garage doors along with an entry with six-panel double doors. An infilled transom and parged brick hood is located above the doors. At the west end of the façade, there is a window with a one-over-one double-hung sash, concrete sill and brick parged hood. The south (rear) elevation has a first-story opening with a roll-up loading door. The south elevation windows have been infilled, but they are visible on the interior, along with the concrete sills that remain visible on the exterior. The east and west elevations abut the neighboring buildings at 208-210 23rd Street and 216-218 23rd Street.

The building's interior first floor consists mainly of an open floor plan with concrete floors, exposed brick walls, and exposed ceiling joists. In the northeast corner of the first floor, the brick walls are painted, and evidence of a former arched opening connecting to 216-218 23rd Street is located on the east wall. A modern office partition is at the northwest entrance to the first floor. A large summer beam and large square, wood columns support the first-floor ceiling. In several areas throughout the first floor, the masonry walls are covered with cork, a typical insulating material used in cold-storage buildings. At the southwest corner of the first floor, a section of the floor remains open to the second and third floors. The southwest corner of the first floor is open to the roof, due to a roof failure that resulted in the loss of the third floor and a portion of the second floor.¹ Joist pockets in the brick walls remain as evidence of the former floor location. A

¹ The building has a modern metal roof system. Current owners reported the roof failure occurred outside the period of significance. Historical record indicates that the Wilkins Provision Company at 212 23rd suffered two fires, one in

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centrally located wood staircase leads to the intact portion of the second floor. The second floor is open with wood floors and exposed walls. To prevent further damage to the building, a new metal roof was installed. Consistent with the character of the building, the roof's structural framing remains exposed.

216-218 23rd Street. (Bloxom Bros.). Stories 3. Style: Industrial Commercial. Ca. 1906. 121-0076-0003. Contributing Building.

This three-story, five-bay, rectangular commercial building has a brick foundation and six-course common-bond brick walls. It has a low-sloped shed roof with a stepped brick parapet. The façade features a denticulated and corbeled brick cornice. Symmetrically-placed windows with one-over-one modern replacement sash and concrete sills pierce the upper two stories. The second-story windows feature brick arches, although some window sash are missing and the openings are boarded over to protect the interior. Remnants of a painted sign are still visible between the second and third stories. The façade's first story features a tall opening with a sectional garage door and decorative hood at the east corner, a centered entry with double-leaf, paneled-doors, infilled transom, and parged brick arch, and two windows to the right (west) of the entry. The window closest to the entry is infilled with brick but retains a concrete sill and parged brick arch. The westernmost window has the same sill and arch and a replacement one-over-one sash. A concrete access ramp, with a pipe-metal railing, extends along the majority of the façade. The south (rear) elevation appears to contain a central loading-door opening and several infilled or boarded up windows with concrete sills. The east (side) elevation features three visible infilled windows with concrete sills, while the west elevation abuts the neighboring building at 212-214 23rd Street.

The interior of the building consists largely of three open-plan floors with structural wood columns and minimal finishes. This building is unique to the district in that it features an interior loading dock and lift at the northeast corner of the first floor, which rises to meet a Rapistan Conveyor belt that transported materials to and from the second floor. The northwest side of the building includes a lobby and office partitions. The remainder of the first floor is open with a large central summer beam and square columns running the length of the section. Modern partition walls divide two small rooms near the southwest corner. The first floor features a concrete floor and a combination of painted exposed brick walls, which are covered with insulating cork in most areas. The ceiling structure remains exposed but contains evidence that suggests it may have been finished at one time. An open, wood staircase is located at the rear of the space. The second floor is also open plan with two symmetrically spaced large summer beams and large square columns running the length of the section. The ceiling structure is exposed, and the second-floor contains wood floors and painted brick walls. An enclosed staircase near the center of the west wall leads to the third floor. The third floor has wood floors, exposed unpainted brick walls, and an exposed ceiling structure. Several rows of small, square columns are located throughout. Evidence of the former lift remains on the third-floor ceiling.

1910 and another in 1950. The 1950 fire is also reported to have burned out the elevator of the Bloxom warehouse at 216 23rd St: *Daily Press*, 16 Dec 1910; 16 Dec 1950.

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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

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1906-1967

Significant Dates

1906

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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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 Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District is a small collection of three Industrial Commercial buildings located at 208-218 23rd Street in Newport News, Virginia. The historic district is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an intact, well preserved, and rare surviving collection of Industrial Commercial-style warehouses in downtown Newport News. The district is also locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with the storage and distribution of goods into and out of the region from a once-prosperous downtown commercial center. The buildings in the district were home to several locally prominent wholesale produce companies including H. B. Walker & Sons, Wilkins Provisions & Company, and the Bloxom Bros & Company, and historically backed up to C & O Railroad on the edge of downtown Newport News. The warehouses in the district are among very few resources that remain along the once thriving “warehouse row” along 23rd Street. The district is therefore, a rare survivor of the widespread demolition that occurred in the area during the mid-to-late twentieth century Urban Renewal program undertaken by the City. While this has compromised the district’s overall setting, it retains its integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association that convey its significance. The resources within the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District maintained their function as wholesale storage and distribution facilities that evolved from produce to appliances throughout the twentieth century. The district has a period of significance from 1906, when the buildings were constructed, through 1967, when Urban Renewal demolition activities began in Newport News and irrevocably changed the area’s setting.

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

Criterion C: Architecture

The Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District is locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture as a well-preserved collection of Industrial Commercial-style warehouses in downtown Newport News. The three-resource district is comprised of three attached, three-story, masonry rectangular buildings, which are representative of the few surviving historic wholesale and cold-storage facilities in the area. Prior to 1967 when the City initiated its Urban Renewal program, 23rd Street was a thriving warehouse district comprised of several blocks of one- to three-story masonry buildings adjacent to former Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad spurs. The historic district preserves the character-defining features of the Industrial Commercial style that was once prevalent along “Warehouse Row,” including large, two- to three-story masonry rectangular building forms, minimal fenestration, sash windows, a flat roof, high ceilings, and minimal brickwork ornament. The resources are also utilitarian in design and their forms on both the interior and exterior follow their function. Additionally, the warehouse interiors feature cork-lined walls, a freezer door, loading doors, a conveyor belt, and freight elevator that convey their historic uses and functions, as well as the processes and building elements that supported the wholesale industry in Newport News.

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While Newport News was once home to numerous Industrial Commercial warehouses, they are now relatively rare. In addition to the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom warehouses, two other Industrial Commercial warehouses remain extant, including the S. W. Holt & Co. warehouse at 124-130 23rd Street and the Noland Company Plumbing Supply warehouse located near the corner of 26th Street and Warwick Boulevard, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. Similar to the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District, the S. W. Holt & Co. warehouse is a well-preserved example of the Industrial Commercial style that has recently been rehabilitated. The square-shaped, masonry building features limited ornament, sash windows, and a central loading bay surrounded by decorative brickwork. Although the Noland Company building had a similar function to the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom warehouses, it is a large rectangular mass that has many large windows and is almost entirely devoid of any ornamentation.

Criterion A: Commerce

The Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A for Commerce. The warehouses in the district were home to locally prominent wholesale companies throughout the twentieth century. Each company, H. B. Walker & Sons, Wilkins Provisions & Company, and the Bloxom Bros & Company, was a leader in local distribution industry, with histories dating back to 1899 and to as recent as 1960, making them the oldest and longest-running businesses on the street. The warehouses evolved throughout the twentieth century from produce, meat, and cold storage buildings, to storage and wholesale facilities for automobile tires, electronics, furniture, and even household appliances. Following the closure of these businesses, the buildings continued to function as warehouses and distribution centers for businesses well beyond the end of the period of significance of 1967. These companies were not only representative of the significant trade of goods into and out of the city, but also the ingenuity and adaptability of their proprietors that helped see them through the Great Depression, changing markets, market competition, and advancements in technology.

H. B. Walker & Sons was founded in 1899 by Harman B. Walker, and moved into 208 23rd Street upon the building's completion in 1906. Initially, the business dealt exclusively with the wholesale of hay, grain, and feed, but it later expanded to fruits and other produce as a result of increased storage capacity and new cold storage equipment.² Walker's sons, Harman Jr. and J. Hiden, joined the business in 1918. The sons were particularly instrumental in the expansion of the business, and increased the company's storage capacity and introduced new cold storage equipment. By the 1920s, Walker & Sons diversified their wholesale product line again. As the local distributor of Dunlop's, Buffalo, and Jack Rabbit-brand tires, Walker & Son's boasted special pricing and tires to "fit every pocketbook."³ The business grew locally, but also expanded as far as Williamsburg as a result of government contracts during both world wars. The government contracts, in particular, required them to expand to the use of delivery trucks. In

² Alexander Crosby Brown, *Newport News' 325 Years* (Richmond, VA: Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation, 1946), 210.

³ *Daily Press*, 4 Mar 1928; *Daily Press*, 6 June 1928.

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1933, H.B. Walker became ill and retired. He died in 1938, but the sons continued the business until the late 1940s.⁴ By 1950, Sears had taken ownership of the building for use as their warehouse. In 1954, the Patrick & Silk Inc., an electronics and appliance retailer, moved into the building and began using it as their warehouse and service department. The building continued to be used by Patrick & Silk Inc. throughout the remainder of the district's period of significance.

Wilkins Provisions & Company operated its wholesale grocery business in the warehouse addressed 212-214 23rd Street. While the company evolved from Wilkins-Dalby Company in 1906 to Wilkins & Robinson Company in 1920, it operated for the longest period as Wilkins Provisions & Company from about 1927 through the mid-1950s.⁵ Until the late 1920s, the company also occupied the warehouse at 216-218 23rd Street. Much like H.B. Walker & Sons, Wilkins Provisions transitioned from a wholesale grocery and cold storage warehouse, to a wholesale meat and storage facility, as well as a tire distributor for Dunlop's competitor, Diamond Tires.⁶ In 1933, Wilkins Provision Company was among four members of the Wholesale Meat Distributors of Newport News. The group, among which the Wilkins Provision Company is the only extant resource on 23rd Street, boasted their cooperation with the Institute of American Meat Packers and the New Deal-era National Recovery Administration. The group advertised that they would operate under shortened business hours as "agreed upon with President Roosevelt," as part of the larger, nationwide "We Do Our Part" campaign to stabilize the market.⁷ In addition to surviving the economic hardships of the Great Depression, the Wilkins Company warehouse survived fire twice—once in 1910, which was reported as the "largest fire of the year" in Newport News, and again in 1950.⁸ In 1954, Tri-City Provision Company took over operations of the wholesale meat business in 212-214 23rd Street, and continued the warehouse function through the 1970s.

Following Wilkins Provisions & Company's occupation of the warehouse at 216-218 23rd Street, the building was used for a short period by Southern Distributing Company. In February 1930, E. C. and F. P. Bloxom and C. L. Obrey, moved their wholesale produce business from Hampton to Newport News and began operating out of the warehouse at 216-218 23rd Street. Most of their produce was grown locally and brought in daily from surrounding farms. When not immediately sold, it was stored in one of their three refrigerator rooms, which were equipped with the latest technology for securing freshness including Sperti-Ultraviolet and Mercolite equipment (vitamin D sunlamps).² Bloxom Bros. also used equipment such as the Frigidmist, both to sell its merchandise and to sell the equipment to local retail grocers. The Bloxom Bros. warehouse also displayed the "Model M" Frigidmist, "with added canopy and mirror assembly," boasting, "modern merchandisers with Frigidmist are watching their produce profits soar as much as 100% per week."⁹ In January 1946, the Bloxom brothers retired and left C. L. Obrey, along with W. L.

⁴ Alexander Crosby Brown, *Newport News' 325 Years* (Richmond, VA: Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation, 1946), 210.

⁵ Newport News City Directories. Wilkins-Dalby and Wilkins & Robins also extended into 216-218 until 1930.

⁶ Newport News City Directories; *Daily Press*, 20 May 1920.

⁷ *Daily Press*, 9 August 1933.

⁸ *Daily Press*, 16 Dec 1910; 16 Dec 1950.

⁹ *Daily Press*, 20 April 1947.

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Hudson, who continued to grow and modernize the business into the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰ Following the closure of Bloxom Bros in the mid-1960s, the warehouse at 216-218 23rd Street remained vacant into the early 1970s.

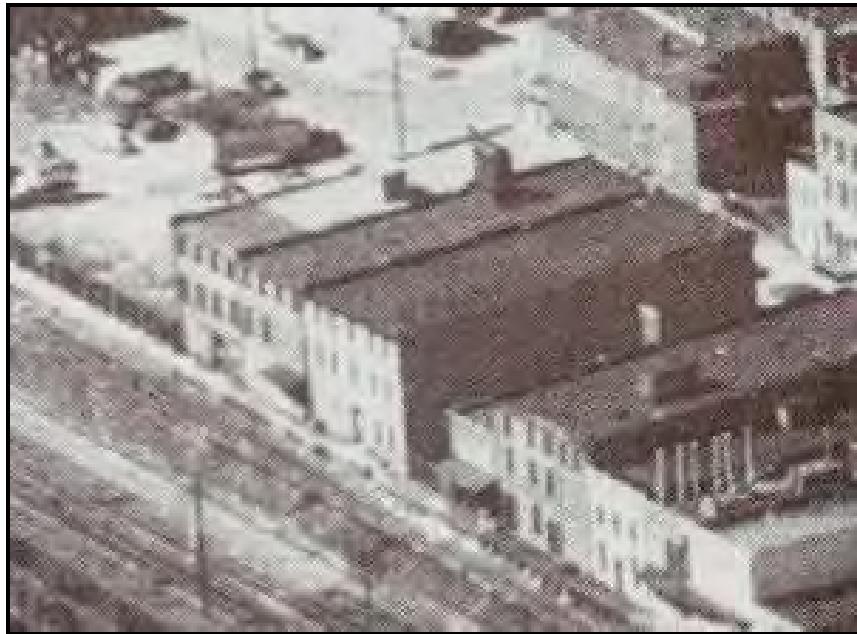


Figure 1: Aerial Photograph, March 1953, Facing Northeast, from Downtown Newport News:
Images of America

¹⁰ Alexander Crosby Brown, *Newport News' 325 Years* (Richmond, VA: Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation, 1946), 263.

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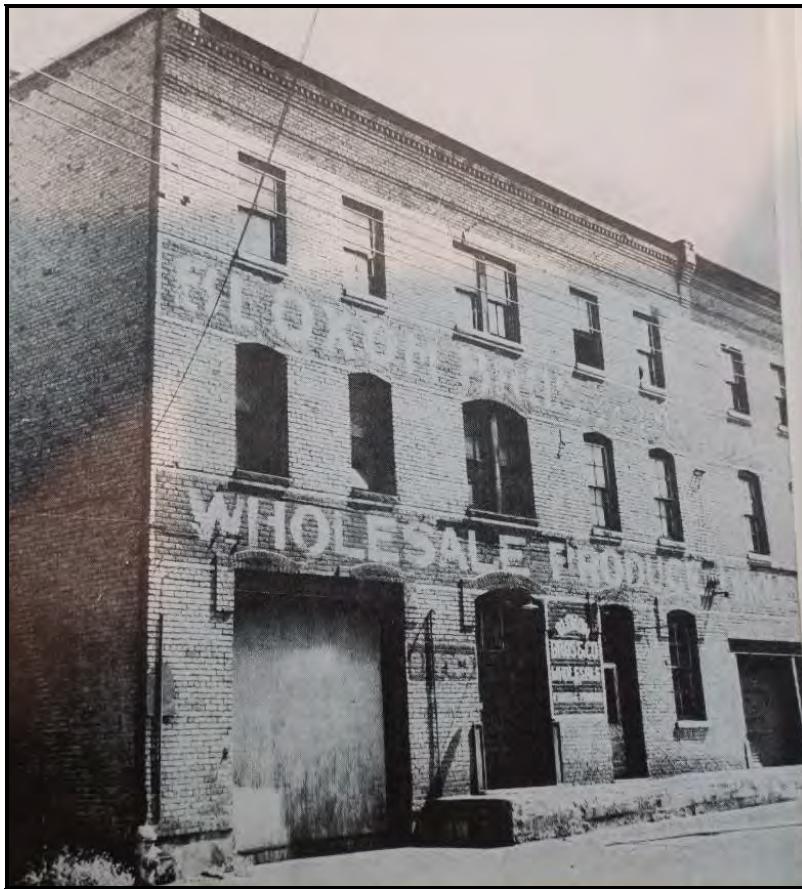


Figure 2: Bloxom Bros. Wholesale Produce Warehouse, 216-218 23rd Street, ca. 1946, in Newport News: 325 Years

Historic Context

Early Commercial and Industrial Development in Newport News

Newport News was first settled in 1621 by a pioneer named Daniel Gookin along with sixty other Irishmen. In the 1880s, when Collis P. Huntington selected Newport News as the deep-water terminal for the fast-growing Chesapeake & Ohio Railway system, as well as the site of the ship-building and repair plant, Newport News began to shift from a small fishing village to the modern industrial and commercial city that it became during the twentieth-century.¹¹ Due to the establishment of the Chesapeake & Ohio terminus and beginnings of the shipbuilding industry, a plan was set in motion for the development of the town. In October of 1880, the Old Dominion Land Company was organized to manage purchases and development options on land that had been acquired by Huntington interests. By 1881, the Company was formally established and they held title to almost all of the anticipated town land. The Old Dominion Land Company was responsible for supervising the layout of the town with numbered streets running east-west

¹¹ *Newport News, Hampton, Phoebe and Old Point, Virginia Directory, 1960* (Newport News, VA: Hill Directory Company, Inc, 1960)

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and avenues running north-south. The two principal avenues were Washington and Lafayette (now Huntington). Since Washington Avenue was where the first streetcar line was laid, it became the principal street.¹² The city of Newport News, Virginia, was incorporated in 1896.¹³

Although changes in control of the Chesapeake & Ohio railroad prevented the railroad terminus and port of Newport News from reaching the fullest potential Collis P. Huntington envisioned, the railroad still had a significant impact on the success and development of Newport News. Additionally, the shipbuilding and repair industry, which continued to grow and flourish throughout the twentieth-century, had one of the most significant impacts on the economy. Established in January 1886, Huntington's Chesapeake Dry Dock and Construction Company proved to be his most successful and the first of what became a lasting enterprise in Newport News.¹⁴

By 1899, several wholesale businesses, along with general retail shops, laundry facilities, tailor shops, a bank, a hotel, a post office, private offices, and charity organizations had developed along Washington Avenue and along 24th Street, 25th Street, and 26th Street between West Avenue and Lafayette Avenue (now Huntington Avenue).¹⁵ In the early 1900s, the shipbuilding industry expanded exponentially, which created numerous jobs as well as a severe need for additional housing and supporting services. By 1907, development along Washington Avenue, as well as the surrounding blocks, continued to expand. By this time, development of the 200 block of 23rd Street was complete with densely-packed wholesale grocers, produce, meats, and other supply businesses.¹⁶ Backing up directly to the railroad, these businesses were able to easily receive goods, as well as serve both downtown and surrounding communities.

23rd Street and the Rise of Warehouse Row

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the 100 and 200 blocks of 23rd Street, between Huntington Avenue and West Avenue in downtown Newport News, were filled with several wholesale business, several dwellings, and tightly-packed retail development situated along Washington Avenue. At this time, most of the development was concentrated in the 200 block, while much of the 100-block contained divided, but vacant, lots. Businesses included wholesale produce and meats, wholesale grocers, wholesale liquors, a wholesale confectionary, as well as laundry facilities, several restaurants and saloons, and cold storage buildings. The south side of the 200 block of 23rd Street was the most developed area, and it was filled with wholesale produce, meats, grocers, and cold storage facilities including H. B. Walker & Sons and Wilkins Provisions Company (then known as Wilkins-Dalby Co.) at 208-218 23rd Street. Throughout the

¹² Annie Lash Jester, *Newport News, Virginia 1607-1960* (Newport News, VA: The City of Newport News, 1961), 114.

¹³ Amy Waters Yarsinske, *Newport News Through the 20th Century* (Croydon, LDN: Arcadia Publishing, 2016), 4.

¹⁴ Annie Lash Jester, *Newport News, Virginia 1607-1960* (Newport News, VA: The City of Newport News, 1961), 119.

¹⁵ Newport News, Virginia [map]. 1899. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970," ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps (1867-1970), accessed via the Norfolk Public Library on August 28, 2019.

¹⁶ Newport News, Virginia [map]. 1907. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970," ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps (1867-1970), accessed via the Norfolk Public Library on August 28, 2019.

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse

Newport News, VA

In the 1910s and 1920s the commercial character of Warehouse Row became more defined as additional warehouses were constructed and more wholesale companies moved into the area. The south side of 23rd Street was a prime location for these warehouses, as the street backed up to railroad spurs of the C & O Railroad, making trade into and out of the region easy for companies along the row. By the mid-twentieth century, the south side of 23rd Street became the most densely-developed area of wholesale businesses and warehouses.

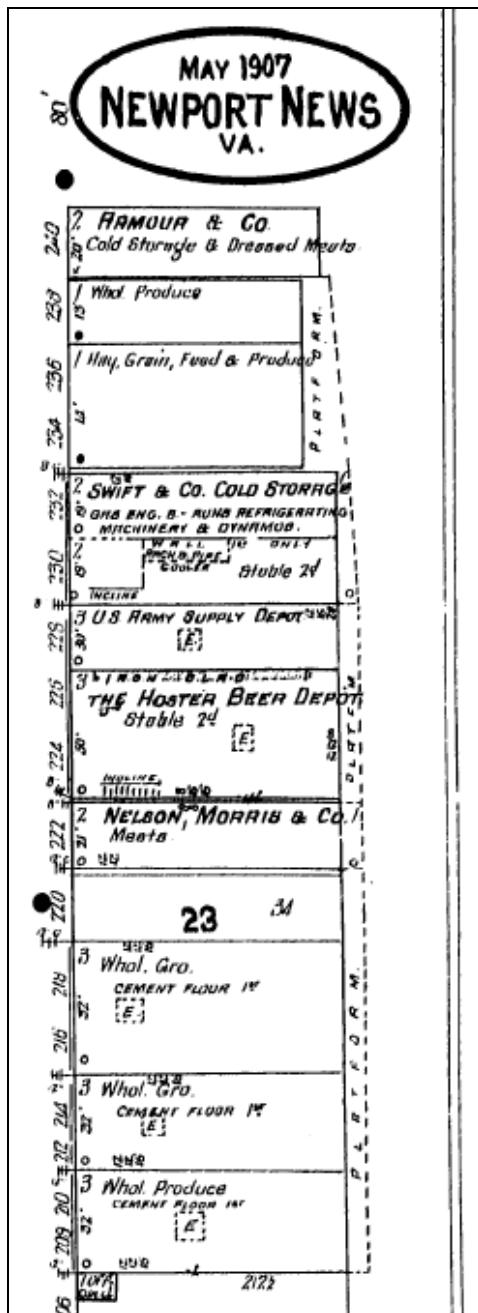


Figure 3: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, May 1907.

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Name of Property

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Urban Renewal and Warehouse Row

The 1950s through the 1970s were a period of substantial change for Newport News. Just like many other cities, Newport News began to suffer from prominent businesses vacating downtown, as well as the rise of malls and other shopping centers at the city outskirts. One of the most substantial impacts to downtown's decline was the opening of the Newmarket Shopping Center in the city of Warwick in 1956.¹⁷ As more businesses moved to new shopping centers, "more downtown buildings were vacated."¹⁸ In the early 1960s, increased motor vehicle traffic led to major modifications of the existing road system. As a result, several cloverleafs were added at prominent intersections, some streets were widened, and underpasses were added. These modifications improved traffic flow, but ultimately changed the streetscapes.¹⁹ By 1967, the city had developed an Urban Renewal plan that included office towers, a hotel, and a parking garage with the hope of reviving the commercial urban core. This plan, however, was never fully realized.²⁰ During the late 1960s, the city also began planning for a new city hall superblock that redefined the built environment of downtown. In 1969, the city began purchasing downtown blocks piece by piece as part of the Federal Urban Renewal program.²¹ The City Hall project resulted in the demolition of whole blocks of downtown from 25th to 23rd Streets. Based on city directories, the odd numbered 23rd Street buildings were all demolished by 1971. While urban renewal resulted in the demolition of much of downtown Newport News' early twentieth century historic fabric, the Wilkins, Walker, and Bloxom Warehouses survived as an important architectural landmark for its former commercial enterprises into the late twentieth century (see Figures 4-5 below).

Today, downtown Newport News consists primarily of sparsely developed multi-story, large-footprint office and civic buildings, vacant lots, large parking garages, and numerous asphalt parking lots. The densely packed two-to-three-story buildings of the pre-Urban Renewal downtown have all but disappeared from the landscape. The Wilkins-Walker-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District is, therefore, a rare, extant assemblage of resources representative of the early twentieth-century warehouse development and its impact on the city's commercial history. Furthermore, the Industrial Commercial style warehouses represent the few remaining one-to-three-story buildings, throughout the entire downtown, that are associated with commerce prior to the establishment of the City Hall superblock and Urban Renewal project of the early 1970s.

¹⁷ Melissa Simpson, "A Glance At 100 Years: A City's History 1896 – Present," *Daily Press*, June 25, 1996, <https://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-xpm-19960625-1996-06-25-9606250185-story.html>.

¹⁸ John V. Quarstein and Parke S. Rouse, Jr., *Newport News A Centennial History* (Newport News, VA: City of Newport News, 1996), 194.

¹⁹ John V. Quarstein and Parke S. Rouse, Jr., *Newport News A Centennial History* (Newport News, VA: City of Newport News, 1996), 180-184.

²⁰ Melissa Simpson, "A Glance At 100 Years: A City's History 1896 – Present," *Daily Press*, June 25, 1996, <https://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-xpm-19960625-1996-06-25-9606250185-story.html>.

²¹ Melissa Simpson, "A Glance At 100 Years: A City's History 1896 – Present," *Daily Press*, June 25, 1996, <https://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-xpm-19960625-1996-06-25-9606250185-story.html>.

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse

Name of Property

Newport News, VA

County and State



Figure 4: Photo of 23rd Street Facing Southeast, Not dated, though likely post-1972 based on streetscape. Courtesy of DHR Archives.

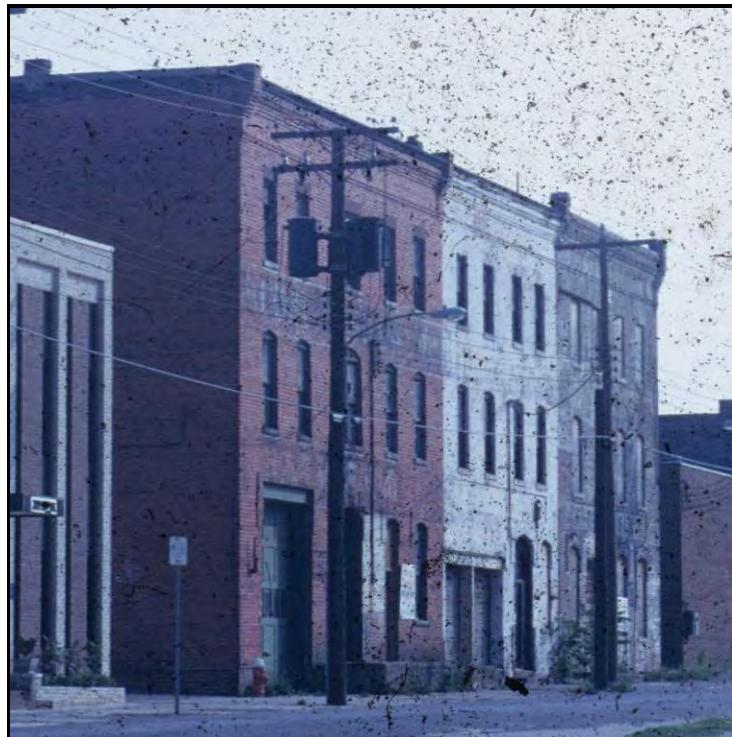


Figure 5: Close-up of Figure 4, focused on 208-218 23rd Street.

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Name of Property

Newport News, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Newspapers

Daily Press (Newport News)

Other Primary Sources

Newport News City Directories
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Secondary Sources

Brown, Alexander Crosby. *Newport News' 325 Years*. Richmond, VA: Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation, 1946.

Jester, Annie Lash. *Newport News, Virginia 1607-1960*. Newport News, VA: The City of Newport News, 1961.

Quarstein John V. and Parke S. Rouse, Jr. *Newport News A Centennial History*. Newport News, VA: City of Newport News, 1996.

Yarsinske, Amy Waters. *Newport News Through the 20th Century*. Croydon, LDN: Arcadia Publishing, 2016.

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

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Name of Property

Newport News, VA
County and State

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR #121-0076

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .31

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: 36.976520 Longitude: -76.428810

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

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 boundary of the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District includes parcels 315010320, 315010321, and 315010322 as recorded by the City of Newport News, Virginia, and as noted in the City's real estate assessor's records. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Location Map and Sketch Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary for the Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse includes the full extent of each parcel associated with each of the three buildings within the historic district, as the

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Name of Property

Newport News, VA
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parcel lines have not changed since the buildings were constructed. The boundary encompasses the immediate setting of each resource while excluding adjacent areas that lack integrity and/or are not related to the district's areas and period of significance. All known historic resources associated with the district are within the boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kayla Boyer Halberg, Preservation Project Manager; Victoria Leonard, Preservation Associate

organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group

street & number: PO Box 11083

city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23517

e-mail: kayla@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com

telephone: 757-923-1900

date: 1-13-2020

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: Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District

City or Vicinity: Newport News

County: N/a State: VA

Photographer: Kayla Halberg (KH) & Victoria Leonard (VL)

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Name of Property

Newport News, VA
County and State

Date Photographed: September/October 2019

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

Photo Number of 32	Description	Camera Direction	Date	Photographer
1	208-218 23 rd Street, Façades	SE	10/18/19	VL
2	208-218 23 rd Street, Façades	SW	10/18/19	VL
3	208-218 23 rd Street, Rear of Warehouses	SW	10/18/19	VL
4	208-210 3 rd Street, Façade	S	10/18/19	VL
5	208-210 3 rd Street, Date Plaque	S	10/18/19	VL
6	208-210 3 rd Street, West Elevation	SE	10/18/19	VL
7	208-210 3 rd Street, West Elevation Door	SE	10/18/19	VL
8	208-210 3 rd Street, Elevator Tower	NW	9/3/19	KH
9	208-210 3 rd Street, Elevator Lift Detail	N	9/3/19	KH
10	208-210 3 rd Street, First Floor	S	9/3/19	KH
11	208-210 3 rd Street, First Floor	N	9/3/19	KH
12	208-210 3 rd Street, First Floor	SW	9/3/19	KH
13	208-210 3 rd Street, Cooler/Fire Door Detail	E	9/3/19	KH
14	208-210 3 rd Street, Second Floor	E	9/3/19	KH
15	208-210 3 rd Street, Second Floor	S	9/3/19	KH
16	208-210 3 rd Street, Third Floor	N	9/3/19	KH
17	212-214 23 rd Street, Façade	S	9/3/19	KH
18	212-214 23 rd Street, First Floor	S	9/3/19	KH
19	212-214 23 rd Street, First Floor, Arch Detail	NE	9/3/19	KH
20	212-214 23 rd Street, First Floor, Cork Detail	SE	9/3/19	KH
21	212-214 23 rd Street, First Floor View to Third Floor	S	9/3/19	KH
22	212-214 23 rd Street, Stair Detail	N	9/3/19	KH
23	212-214 23 rd Street, Second Floor	S	9/3/19	KH
24	216-218 23 rd Street, Façade	S	10/18/19	VL
25	216-218 23 rd Street, East Elevation	SW	10/18/19	VL
26	216-218 23 rd Street, First Floor	E	9/3/19	KH
27	216-218 23 rd Street, First Floor	SE	9/3/19	KH
28	216-218 23 rd Street, Conveyor Detail	S	9/3/19	KH
29	216-218 23 rd Street, First Floor Room	E	9/3/19	KH
30	216-218 23 rd Street, Second Floor	NW	9/3/19	KH
31	216-218 23 rd Street, Third Floor	W	9/3/19	KH

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Name of Property

Newport News, VA
County and State

Photo Number of 32	Description	Camera Direction	Date	Photographer
32	216-218 23 rd Street, Third Floor	S	9/3/19	KH

Historic Images Log

Figure No.	Caption
1	Aerial Photograph March 1953, Facing Northeast, from Downtown Newport News: Images of America
2	Bloxom Bros. Wholesale Produce Warehouse, 216-218 23rd Street, ca. 1946, in Newport News: 325 Years
3	Sanborn Fire Insurance May, May 1907.
4	Photo of 23rd Street Facing Southeast, Not dated, though likely post-1972 based on streetscape. Courtesy of DHR Archives.
5	Close-up of Figure 3, focused on 208-218 23rd Street.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

LOCATION MAP

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Historic District
City of Newport News, VA
DHR No. 121-0076

Location Coordinates:

1. Latitude: 36.976520
Longitude: -76.428810

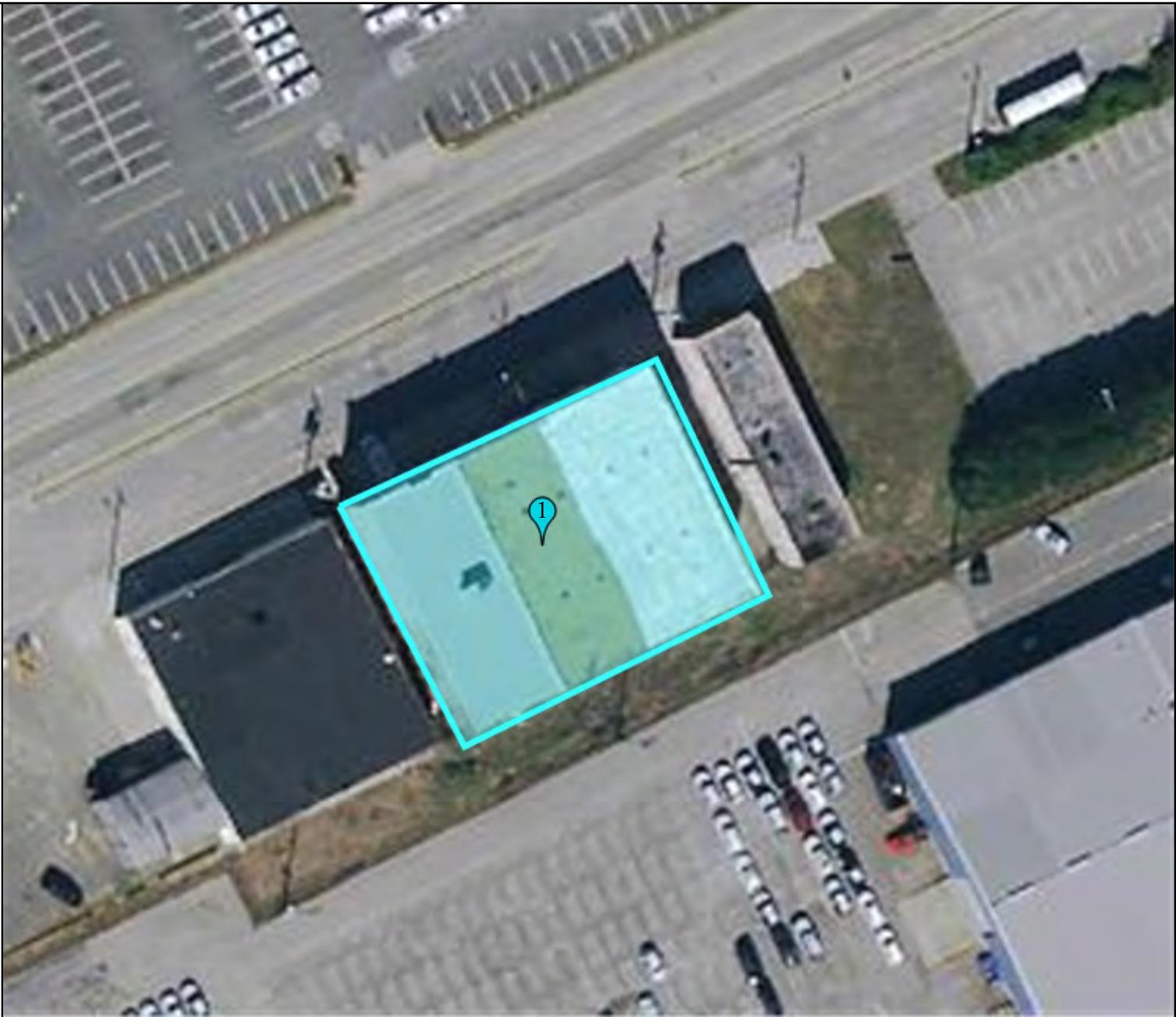


Historic Boundary



Feet

0 20 40 60 80
1:900 / 1"=75 Feet



Title: Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Location Map (121-0076)

Date: 1/13/2020

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.

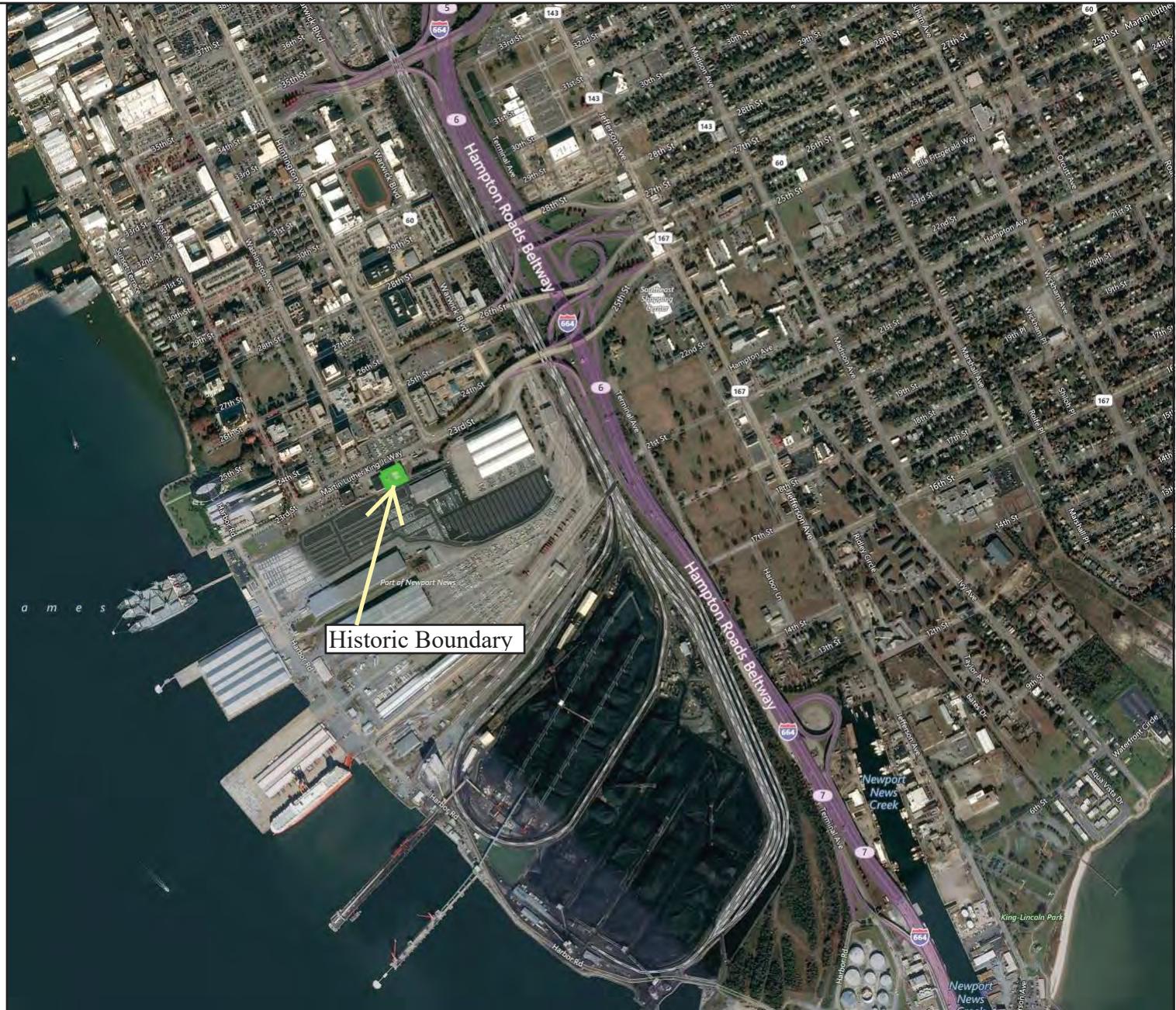
AERIAL VIEW

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Historic District
City of Newport News, VA
DHR No. 121-0076



Feet

0 500 1000 1500 2000
1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet

**Title:****Date: 2/25/2020**

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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SKETCH MAP

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
Historic District
City of Newport News, VA
DHR No. 121-0076

List of Resources:

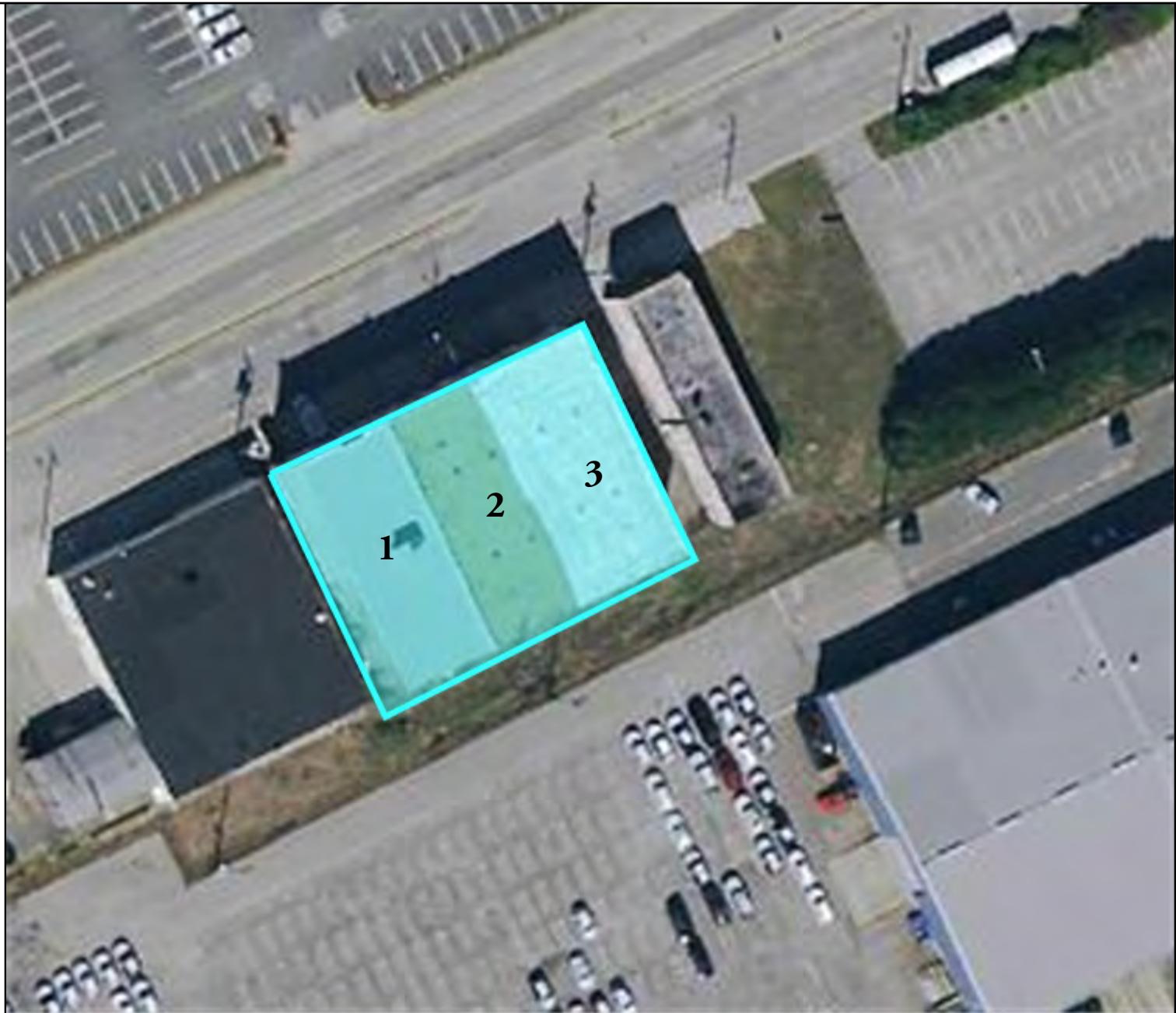
- 1 = 208-210 23rd Street (C)
- 2 = 212-214 23rd Street (C)
- 3 = 216-218 23rd Street (C)

Historic Boundary



Feet

0 20 40 60 80
1:900 / 1"=75 Feet



Title: Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Sketch Map (121-0076)

Date: 1/13/2020

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.

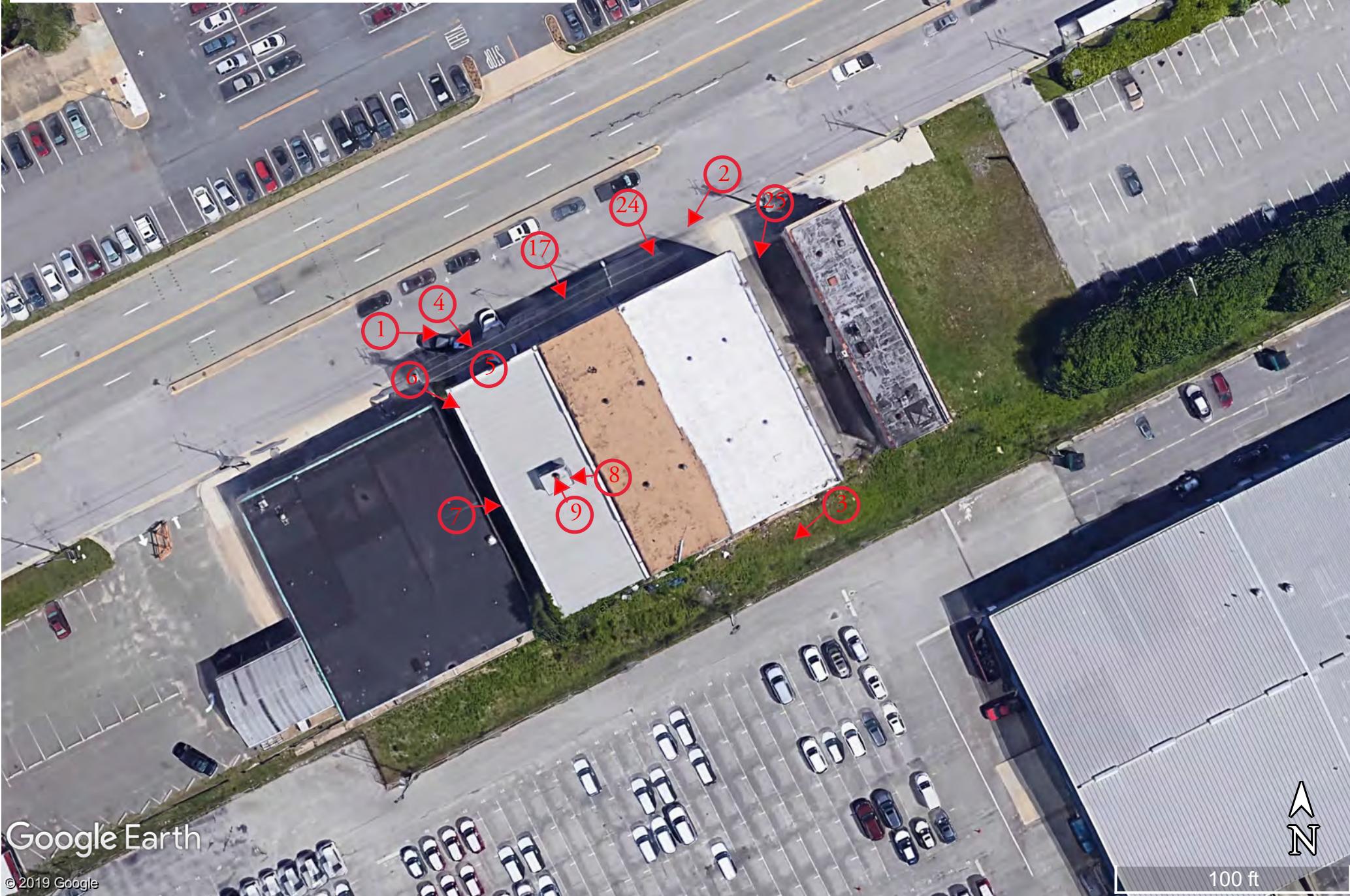
PHOTO KEY (exterior views)

Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse Historic District

City of Newport News

DHR File No. 121-0076

Legend



Google Earth

© 2019 Google

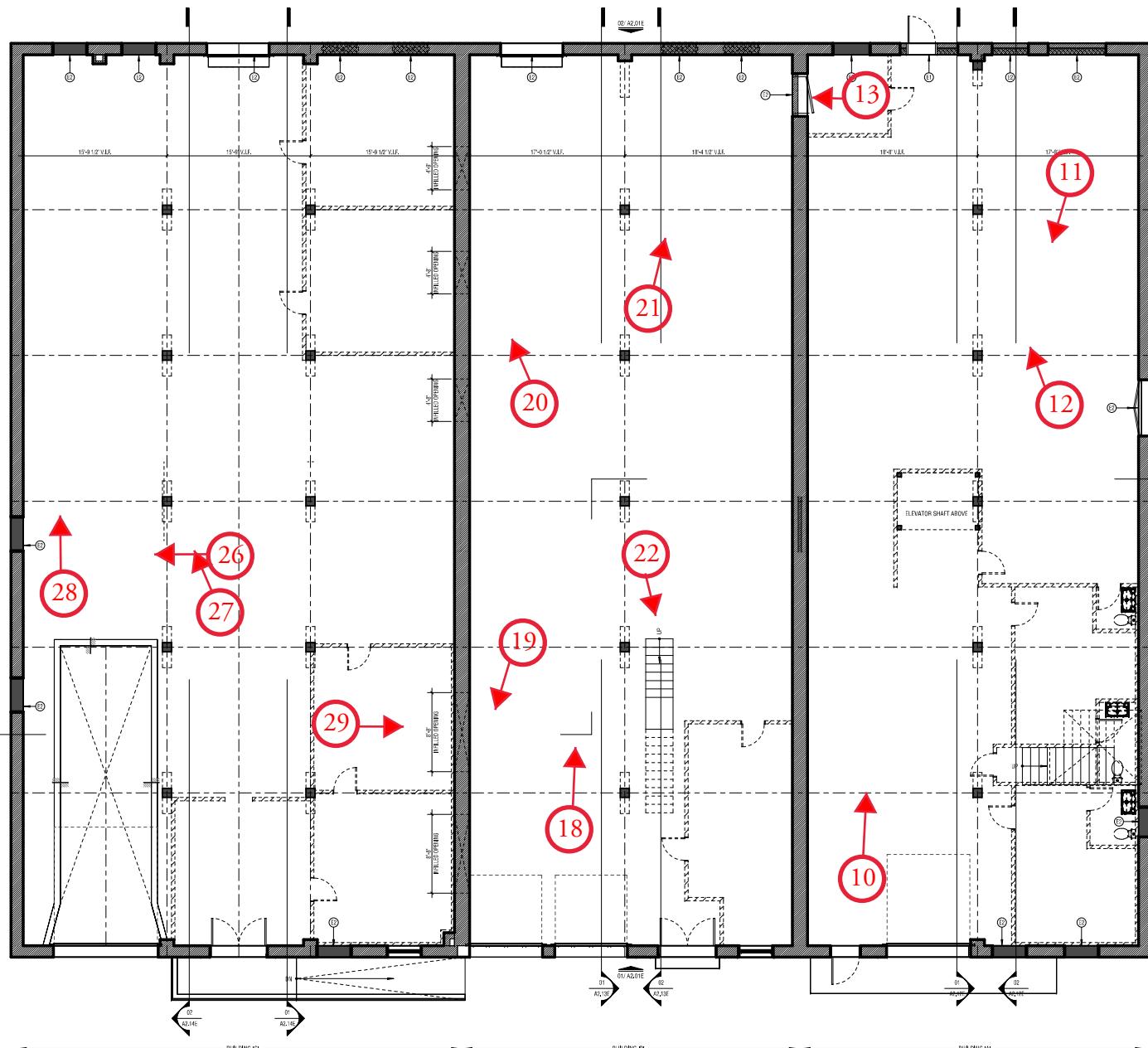
▲
N

100 ft

PHOTO KEY (interior views)
 Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom Warehouse
 Historic District
 City of Newport News
 DHR File No. 121-0076

fultzs

fultzsarchitects.com
 3412 W LEIGH STREET
 SUITE 200
 RICHMOND VA 23230



First Floor Plan

GENERAL SHEET NOTES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- E1 EXISTING NOTE - WALL
- E2 EXISTING NOTE - OPENING
- E3 EXISTING NOTE - FLOOR / STAIR / RAMP
- E4 EXISTING NOTE - ROOF
- E5 EXISTING NOTE - CEILING
- E6 EXISTING NOTE - EQUIPMENT
- E7 EXISTING NOTE - SITE
- E8 EXISTING NOTE - LIGHTING
- E9 EXISTING NOTE - CABINetry / CASEWORK / MILLWORK / APPLIANCES
- E10 EXISTING NOTE - PROJECT SPECIFIC

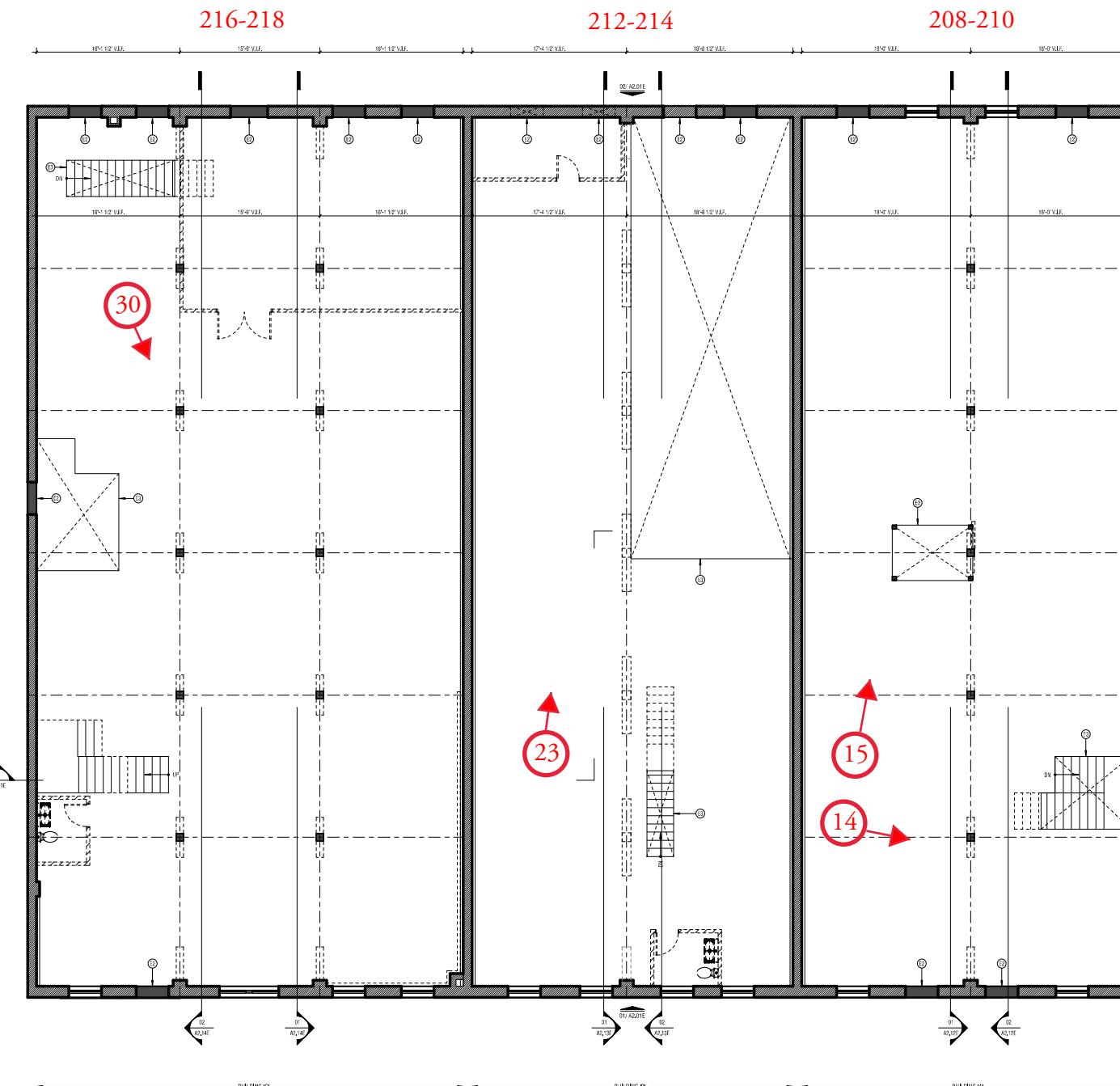
208-216 23RD STREET NPN
 208-212 24TH STREET
 NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23607

PREFACE NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION			
#	REVISION		
DATE			
PLAN LEVEL 01 -			
JOBNR / PIN	ISSUE DATE / 12/11/2019	SCALE / 3'11" = 1'-0"	DRAWN / -
SHEET /	CHECKED /	REMOVED /	-
A1.01E			

PHOTO KEY (interior views)
 Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom
 Warehouse Historic District
 City of Newport News
 DHR File No. 121-0076

fultzsing

fultzsingarchitects.com
 3412 W LEIGH STREET
 SUITE 200
 RICHMOND VA 23230



Second Floor Plan

GENERAL SHEET NOTES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- E1 EXISTING NOTE - WALL
- E2 EXISTING NOTE - OPENING
- E3 EXISTING NOTE - FLOOR / STAIR / RAMP
- E4 EXISTING NOTE - ROOF
- E5 EXISTING NOTE - CEILING
- E6 EXISTING NOTE - EQUIPMENT
- E7 EXISTING NOTE - SITE
- E8 EXISTING NOTE - LIGHTING
- E9 EXISTING NOTE - CABINetry / CASEWORK / MILLWORK / APPLIANCES
- E10 EXISTING NOTE - PROJECT SPECIFIC

208-216 23RD STREET NPN
 208-212 216 23RD STREET
 NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23607

FREQUENTLY NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION			
#	REVISION		
DATE			
PLAN LEVEL 02 -			
EXISTING			
JOH NUMBER / PIN	ISSUE DATE / 12/11/2019	SCALE / 3'16" = 1'-0"	DRAWN / CROSSED OUT /
SHEET /			
A1.02E			

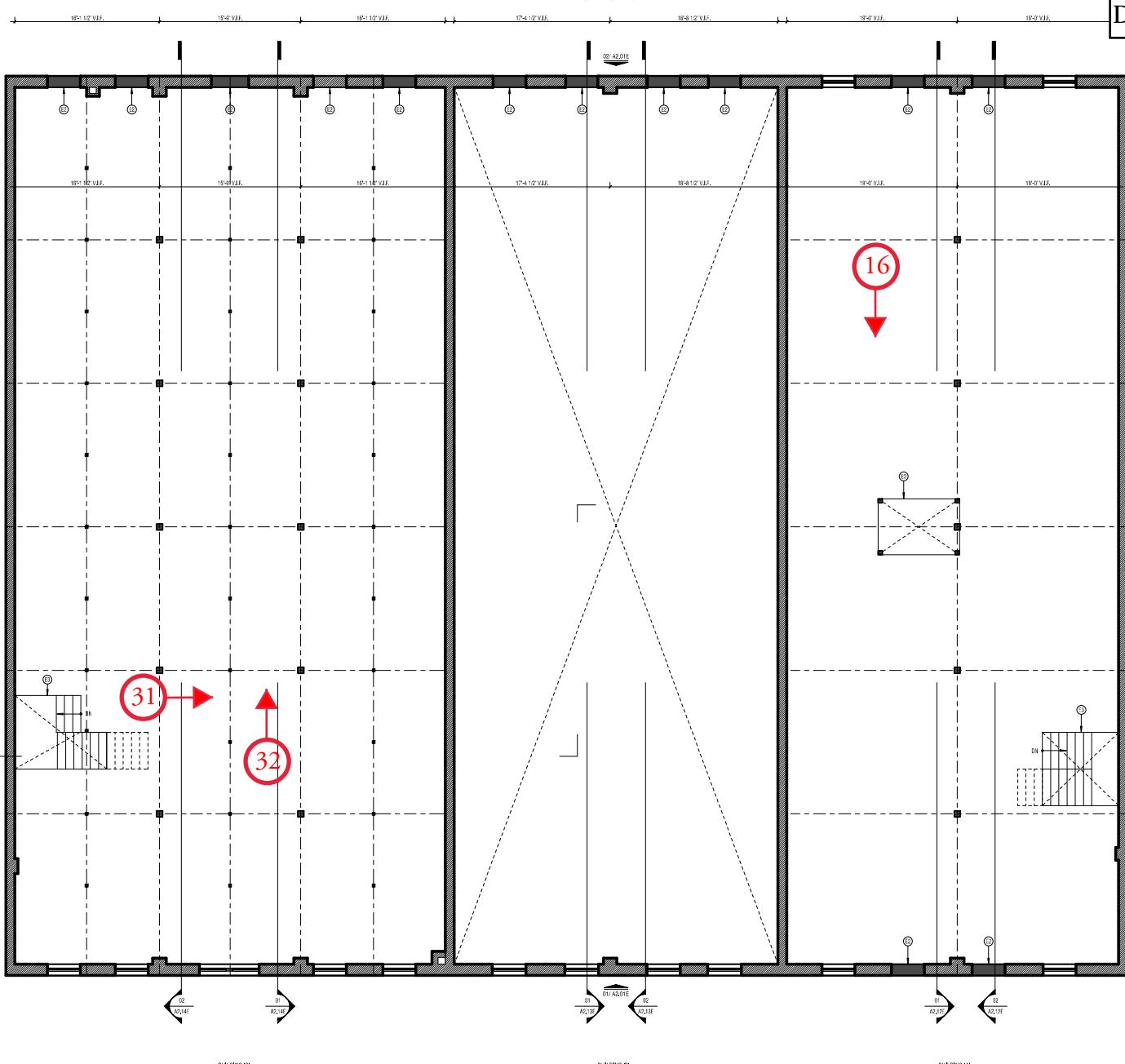
PHOTO KEY (interior views)
 Walker-Wilkins-Bloxom
 Warehouse Historic District
 City of Newport News
 DHR File No. 121-0076

fultzsingh

fultzsingharchitects.com
 3412 W LEIGH STREET
 SUITE 200
 RICHMOND VA 23230

208-216 23RD STREET NPN
 208-212, 216 23RD STREET
 NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23607

PRELIMINARY NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION	
#	REVISION
DATE	
PLAN LEVEL 03 - EXISTING	A1.03E



Third Floor Plan