



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 163-0022

Purpose of Evaluation

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

This property was formerly used as a church and is now used as a community and event center for the Town of Amherst. The building is in need of repairs and the non-profit organization, Second Stage Amherst, who administers the building, hopes to receive additional help for necessary repairs through grants and from corporations. The building is a landmark of the Amherst community and Second Stage wishes to keep the building in good repair and in continuous use.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes [x] No

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

1. General Property Information

Property name: Amherst Baptist Church (now Second Stage Amherst)

Property address: 194 Second St

City or Town: Amherst

Zip code: 24521

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Town of Amherst, Amherst Co.

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

Building [X] Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 1.14

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban Suburban Town [X] Village Hamlet Rural

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

The building, historically known as Amherst Baptist Church, is located in the Town of Amherst on the southwest corner of Second and Washington Streets. The building is on a 1.14-acre lot, near Second Street, on a knoll. It is separated from the street by a sidewalk and small yard on the north; there is a yard separating the church from the paved parking lot on the west. On the south is a larger yard, and it contains a 1949 brick, two-story parsonage and a single-car garage. The east yard is a gravel parking area. In 2006, the entire lot was sold to Amherst County, and for a time these buildings were vacant. In 2015, Second Stage Amherst made an agreement with the county for the re-adaptive use of the building for community service as an event site and a place for small businesses to operate. The parsonage and garage are now used by the county for storage and additional office space.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Romanesque Revival, Italianate, Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Unknown

If the builder is known, please list here: Unknown

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1882, 1908, 1925, 1955

#### **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.

#### **Setting**

The brick building, historically known as Amherst Baptist Church, stands on the northern edge of the southwest corner of Second and Washington Street in the Town of Amherst. Today, this building is a multipurpose community building known as Second Stage Amherst. The west side of the building is the principal elevation. It is separated from a paved parking area by lawn. A sidewalk from Second Street intersects with the sidewalk from the parking lot as the entry; in the parking lot there is a mature oak tree. The side walk continues to the entry on the south side of the building. There is a small garden area south of the tower with small boxwoods. Mature boxwoods are planted along the west and south sides of the 1925 addition between the building and the sidewalk. In the south yard there is a mature Magnolia. The house and garage sit to the south and southwest of the building. There are mature shrubs at the eastern side of the building.

#### **Exterior Description**

The former church building was constructed in four phases from 1882 to 1955. The main block was constructed in 1882, the entry tower on the west (front) elevation in 1908, the Gothic Revival south (side) addition with a polygonal façade in 1925, and the large two-story east (rear) addition in 1955. The original facade and entry tower are laid in stretcher bond, the 1882 section is constructed in 4:1 common bond, and the 1925 and 1955 sections were constructed in 5:1 common bond. The main block of the building has an east-west axis with a gable end on the western side of the building which is where the main entry is located. The exposed foundation of the main block is stuccoed to about a foot above the ground. The gable roof and pyramid roof of the tower are sheathed in slate. The remaining additions have flat roofs. There are a total of four brick chimney flues on the south side of the building. The building was designed with details of the Romanesque Revival style, seen primarily on the tower and principal façade, as well as elements of the Italianate and Gothic Revival styles. In addition, the front entry with paneled folding doors and fanlight transom evokes the Colonial Revival style. This is one of three churches in Amherst County that follow a similar pattern, were built around the same period but are all slightly different. They are the Amherst Baptist Church building, differentiated by its tower, the nearby Amherst Presbyterian Church (DHR# 163-5008), and the original Central Baptist Church (DHR# 005-5179), which had more Gothic detail on the front but is obscured by the newer church building. Italianate brackets remain at the tower, but the decorative brackets

seen in 1979 survey photos were removed when the church put vinyl around the exposed wooden details of the building sometime during the 1980s.

The original 1882 construction was a rectangular building with an extension on the eastern end. The exterior walls have buttresses and most of the windows were tall nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows with a fixed-sash arch and gothic tracery atop each window. The windows have yellow tint glass. Every window is decorated with Italianate brick “eyebrows” over each window. The west or main elevation has decorative corbeling in the gable end and gable end returns.<sup>1</sup>

In 1909, the church erected an Italianate brick tower in running bond at the entry. This tower had a pyramid roof with brackets at the eaves. The main entry on the western side of the tower has narrow, paneled double-leaf doors with a round-head transom above the doors with a splayed jack arch. The north and south sides of the lower portion of the door has a single one-over-one double-hung sash window. The central section of the tower has a fixed pane single light on all three exposed sides. The upper portion of the tower has brick corbeling on three side and below the eaves are double arced, louvered vents.<sup>2</sup>

The third phase of construction was the 1925 wing onto the entire south side of the building. The two-story addition has a flat roof and three brick chimney flues. There is a decorative band around the top portion of the wall. The western elevation has a three sided bay, and the bricks are laid in running bond, like the original portion of the church. The center windows of the bay are 8/8 double-hung sash windows. On the outer sides there are three 6/6 double-hung sash windows. There is a single-leaf entry with a door having nine lights in the upper portion in the lower north side of the bay. The south elevation of this addition is laid in 5:1 common bond. There are five bays on each story. The lower windows are 6/6 double-hung sashes, and the upper story has 1/1 double-hung sash windows.<sup>3</sup>

The last addition to the building was the large three-story addition across the entire eastern end of both the 1882 and 1925 additions. The final measurements of the building are 50 X 100 feet. The walls are laid in 5:1 common bond. This addition resulted in renovations to both the exterior and interior of the building. The windows on the upper floors are all 6/6 double-hung sashes. The basement has 3/3 double-hung sashes. This section has a flat roof that adjoins the 1925 addition except where a gable was created and sheathed in slate to match the original building. This addition caused the church to enlarge the area where the apse extension existed. On the north and south elevations are two stacked single-leaf entries allowing access to the main floor and the basement. These doors have nine lights in the upper portion of the door. There is a brick stair with concrete risers leading to the main story and another set of concrete risers to the basement. The south elevation has an asymmetrical arrangement of bays. The west elevation has four bays at each story. The north elevation exhibits the extension to the original building with different colored bricks from the original wall. This extension creates a fifth bay along the original north elevation of the church. There is a clear distinction between what seems to be the old section and the 1955 addition to the building. The new section has engaged buttresses that echo those of the historic building, and has three bays across both stories.

## Interior Description

### Ante-room and Sanctuary/ Main Hall

Inside the tower on the west elevation is an anteroom. The floor has slate tile. The wall has wooden raised panel wainscot with a rail and wooden walls above the chair rail to the ceiling and a narrow crown molding at the junction of the ceiling and wall. The paneling and tile were later installations, possibly around

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<sup>1</sup> The original church part of an aerial photo of the town of Amherst taken prior to 1925 and part of the Jones Memorial Library collection. The original wall decoration is preserved behind the tower. The men who constructed the building are unknown but it is likely that they could be the same men who are mentioned in an 1885 newspaper article about the construction of Central Baptist Church. S.C. Kirkpatrick was also the contractor responsible for the 1873 Amherst Courthouse. *Valley Virginian*, February 19, 1885, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com.

<sup>2</sup> Bernice L. Hunt, and Roy E. Hunt, *History of the Amherst Baptist Church:1882-1982*, 1982, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Hunt, 9; and *Times Dispatch*, August 1, 1924, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; *Times Dispatch*, November 17, 1924, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; and *Times Dispatch*, June 6, 1925, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com.

1950 or later. On the east wall there is a double-leaf swinging door into the sanctuary/main hall. Each leaf has a single light in the top third of the door and a raised wooden panel in the bottom. The molding around the doors contain bulls-eye corner blocks.

The sanctuary, now the main hall, has undergone periodic renovations beginning in 1885 to 1955. The earliest layout of the nave and apse area is unknown. There are two photos of the interior in the 1940s featured in a book on the Town of Amherst. The interior in the 1940s had a center aisle down the nave with rows of wooden pews on each side. The north end of the nave, at the apse wall, had risers and pews and was used as the choir loft. The apse wall had a rounded arch opening and the apse area was accessed by three risers from the nave floor. The rear wall of the apse featured a tripartite stained-glass window. The window opened; it was used to hide the baptistery, when it was not in use. The pulpit was set in the archway. The 1908 pressed tin ceiling was present as were c. 1930 pendant lights. The wooden pews featured a trefoil cutout and a carved top.<sup>4</sup>

### 1925 Addition

In 1925 an open stair was attached to the west wall of the nave. A balcony was created from the stair along the south wall. This stair had square wooden balusters with a square newel post and square support posts. These features remain intact. The south wall separated the original building from the 1925 addition. This wall, on both stories, had folding walls to allow the area to be divided from the sanctuary when necessary. It is believed that the original dividers were folding wood paneled walls; all of these have been removed by Second Stage. During a later renovation, the upper story divider panels were replaced by solid wall. The lower section had cloth accordion doors that were likely replaced in the 1950s. There were rooms on the southeast corner that could be accessed from the sanctuary and the addition. The second story had a room used as the pastor's office at the top of the stair on the southwest corner. The second floor had another large open room and other rooms accessed from the balcony on the southeast corner.

### The 1955 and Later Renovations

The 1955 addition and renovation completely altered the building. At some point, black and white checked linoleum was placed over the original wooden floors of the original building and the 1925 addition. A stereo system was installed in the sanctuary. The apse area was enlarged and redecorated in the Neo-Classical Revival style, which was a popular style used for Baptist Churches of that era. The floor was raised and extended into the nave from the apse wall. This created a stage-like area and contained the pulpit, and three tiered rows of risers for the choir loft. The apse wall was opened and framed by fluted pilasters with composite capitals supporting an entablature. A new, copper-lined baptistery was installed behind the rear wall of the apse and the pool area is part of the rear apse wall; it is framed by pilasters and engaged columns like those of the apse wall supporting an entablature. In the 1960s, much of the sanctuary and 1925 addition were carpeted including the apse area, stairs and balcony. New, simple, wooden pews replaced those of the 1940s photographs. There were twelve pews placed on each side of the center aisle. The c. 1930 interior pendant lights were replaced with the existing pendant lights.

### The 1955 Classroom Area

This addition had three stories. The basement was an open room with exterior access. It had a linoleum tile floor, exposed concrete block walls, and a dropped ceiling. There are two small bathrooms with original fixtures on the west wall. In the southwest corner there is a kitchen. This kitchen was renovated as part of a Boy Scout Eagle project around 2017. The main stair hall for this area is on the southwest corner. The upper floors have a hall running west from the stair and a hall running north from the stair. On both stories of the west hall, there were two classrooms on each floor. These rooms were on the south side of the hall and had partial glass walls. The north hall had three rooms on the east side, on both floors. The main

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<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Wimer, Leah Settle Gibbs, Patty Walton Turpin, Thurman B. Davis, and James D. Settle, *Amherst: from Tavern to a Town* (Lynchburg, VA: Blackwell Press, 2010), 61 and 103.

floor has two large restrooms and access to the baptistery on the west side of the wall. This area retains its original fixtures. There is another hall running west along the north wall and leads to the apse. The second floor has one small restroom on the west wall with original fixtures and another classroom which was used for a church library.

### **Second Stage Amherst**

Second Stage Amherst took possession of the building in 2015, and there were alterations to renovate and rehabilitate the building for its new uses. Handicapped bathrooms were created from two classrooms on the first floor. In the sanctuary, the risers and choir loft dividers were removed to create a stage. The pews and carpeting were removed around 2016-2017 and the black and white linoleum was exposed in the nave and 1925 addition. In 2019, a coffee bar was installed in the eastern end of the 1925 addition and the wooden panel room divider was removed. Many of the classrooms have been renovated and rehabilitated to fit the needs of those businesses using the rooms.<sup>5</sup>

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

### **Parsonage**

The parsonage, built in 1949, is a running bond brick veneer, two-and-half story house with a basement. It was designed in the Colonial Revival style. The house is located to the southwest of the church. Its position creates a courtyard at the front yard of the church property between the church and the parking lot. Only the exterior was surveyed for the PIF. The exposed foundation of the house is stuccoed. It has a gable roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. The windows are varied sizes of six-over-six double-hung sash windows at all levels except the basement. The basement windows are two-light louvered windows. There is an exterior brick chimney on the east gable end.

The main elevation faces north. It has three symmetric bays across the first and second stories. The single-leaf entry is centered between the windows of the first floor. The entry is accessed by an open concrete stoop. The door surround has an arched molding with dentils over the door supported by fluted square pilasters on flanking the door. The windows have attached decorative louvered shutters. The east elevation has a one story, two-bay concrete, shed-roofed porch with access to the porch by means of a concrete stair of four risers from the north. There is a single-leaf entry on the northeast corner of the house. The rear or south elevation has an asymmetrical arrangement of the bays on all stories. There is a single-bay stoop with a stair to the main floor and a single-leaf entry. The single-leaf entry to the basement is beneath the stoop. The west elevation has a window to the half-story in the gable.

### **Garage**

The single-car garage, built in 1949, is located to the southeast of the parsonage. An access road from the front parking lot to the rear parking lot separates the garage from the house and church yard. It is built of brick in the running bond pattern. It is built on the ground, without a foundation, and has a gable roof with asphalt shingles. The gable end entry faces east and has a solid double-leaf entry. The north and south elevations are solid. The west elevation has a single window with a two-light fixed-pane sash.

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<sup>5</sup> In the first floor meeting room, the table in that room was made with the wood from some of the pews removed from the main hall.

#### 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.

The former Amherst Baptist Church building is significant for architecture. It is an excellent example of the Italianate style of architecture. It is the only one of three churches erected in the style, all with Gothic Revival accents, that has a tower. The other churches are the Amherst Presbyterian Church, c.1880 (DHR# 163-5008) and Central Baptist Church, c.1885 (DHR# 005-5179). From the similarities in the form and style, it is possible that they were all constructed by the same masons and carpenter. An article in the newspaper in 1885 noted the mason and carpenter for the Central Baptist church, and these men were also known to be active in the town of Amherst. One of the men mentioned was S.C. Kirkpatrick (1839-1901) who was the contractor for the construction of the new courthouse in 1873. Each of the churches have decorative brick corbeling, but differ in decoration, on the main elevation. All are about the same size. A small atrium was added to the front of the Amherst Presbyterian Church and the original Central Baptist building was obscured by the new building constructed in the 1950s-60s.<sup>6</sup>

The former church building and the church itself were an important part of the Amherst courthouse village community. It was a house of worship and was used during the early years of the Amherst High School for graduation ceremonies. In 1906, the church used the courthouse green for an event spanning a few days in April. Today, this building is a multi-purpose community center. It is used for special events, a coffee shop, and a variety of small businesses, artisan shops, and a small church.<sup>7</sup>

The site was purchased in 1875 from John Thompson, Jr. (1789-1879), a local attorney and landowner. Local lore states the transaction took place in the memory of his wife, Caroline, who was a Baptist. The lot was located to the east of the courthouse. The area around the church would be developed into a residential area, and it would be joined by the Amherst Presbyterian church. The county would build a school on the opposite corner from the church. This area was to be developed into a grand neighborhood, but due to a bad economy in the early part of the twentieth century the plan was abandoned.<sup>8</sup>

The congregation that built the church was known to have been a small gathering group in the 1830s through the 1850s. Those living in the courthouse village of Amherst likely attended one of the two older Baptist churches: Mount Moriah which was located to the northwest of the village and Ebenezer to the west. The congregation was formally organized around 1875, under the leadership of Rev. William Allen Tyree (1824-1884). Tyree was a native of Amherst and attended Mount Moriah. He returned to the area with the hope that the mountain air would improve his health. Various newspapers described his problem as dyspepsia, consumption, or some form of heart and lung disease. Tyree served as an under shepherd for Mount Moriah, but he built a home just to the west of the village. It was called Tyreanna (or Locust Grove, DHR# 005-0124). Tyree worked to make sure the house of worship was complete, and due to his poor

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<sup>6</sup> *Valley Virginian*, February 19, 1885, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com.

<sup>7</sup> *Times Dispatch*, June 6, 1925, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; *Times Dispatch*, June 3, 1928, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; *Amherst County Board of Supervisors Minutes*, Vol. 1, 602; and "Large Attendance at Association Meeting," *Times Dispatch*, August 16, 1906, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com.

<sup>8</sup> *Amherst County Deed Book* KK,137; and Rose K. Bruner, ed., *A History of the Churches in the Piedmont Baptist Association of Virginia* (Lynchburg, VA: CRI-Mutual Press, 1976), 9-10.

health, he died soon after the church was complete. His son, also named W. A. Allen, took over his duties at Amherst just before his death.<sup>9</sup>

W. A. Allen, the son, did not stay long and they would soon call another minister to their pulpit. The Amherst congregation had the financial ability to support a full-time minister and hold weekly services. The membership of the church would grow, and by 1925 more space was needed in the sanctuary and for classrooms. A new two-story addition was constructed at the cost of \$4500. Around the time of the Great Depression, the church suffered financially and was unable to support a full-time minister. They began to share a minister with several other churches in the county and did not have weekly service. They shared a minister until around the end of World War II.<sup>10</sup>

In 1948, the church constructed a new two-story parsonage and single-car garage on the church property to house the pastor. This home was in use as the pastor's home until 1981. In 1982, the church purchased the adjoining property with a c.1873 house on the land for the new parsonage. It was sold in 2005. The church again needed additional teaching and meeting space. The parsonage soon became an annex building. This situation worked until around 2000. The congregation had outgrown the existing church, and the property could not handle further expansion of the existing building. The church found a new site, ironically on property that was adjacent and once belonged to Tyreanna.<sup>11</sup>

In 2004, the church moved to the new building and put their old church on the market. It was empty for a several years, and in 2006 the county acquired the building. The original idea was to use the building as additional office space. In 2015, a nonprofit group, Second Stage Amherst, approached the county government requesting to use the building as a community center. The building is in constant use for special events, gatherings, meetings and small businesses including a coffee shop. The building remains an essential part of the Amherst community.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bruner, 10-11; Hunt, 5 George Braxton; Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Men, Third Series* (Richmond, VA: JP Bell Co., 1912), 379-380, accessed April 25, 2020, books.google.com; *Richmond Dispatch*, June 11, 1875, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; "W. A. Tyree," *Richmond Dispatch*, December 17, 1884, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; and "W. A. Tyree," *Richmond Dispatch*, December 9, 1884, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com.

<sup>10</sup> Hunt, 6-11; *Times Dispatch*, August 1, 1924, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; *Times Dispatch*, November 17, 1924, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 28, 1925, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com; and *Daily Press*, January 29, 1925, accessed April 25, 2020, newspapers.com.

<sup>11</sup> Hunt 11-13; *Amherst County Deed Book* 140, 73; *Amherst County Deed Book* 1016, 579; *Amherst County Deed Book* 846, 544; and *Amherst County Deed Book* 1064, 388.

<sup>12</sup> *Amherst County Deed Book* 1088, 511.

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

Private: \_\_\_\_\_ Public\Local   x   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:   Dean Rodgers/County Administrator  

organization:   Amherst County  

street & number:   P O Box 390  

city or town:   Amherst   state:   VA   zip code:   24521  

e-mail:   dcrogers@countyofamherst.com   telephone:   434-946-9400  

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

name/title:   Sandra F. Esposito  

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number:   140 Cradon Hill Ln  

city or town:   Amherst   state:   VA   zip code:   24521  

e-mail:   sandiesposito@icloud.com   telephone:   540-529-0205  

**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:   Dean Rodgers/County Administrator  

locality:   Amherst County  

street & number:   P O Box 390  

city or town:   Amherst   state:   VA   zip code:   24521  

telephone:   434-946-9400

## Bibliography

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- “W. A. Tyree.” *Richmond Dispatch*, December 9, 1884. Accessed April 25, 2020. newspapers.com.

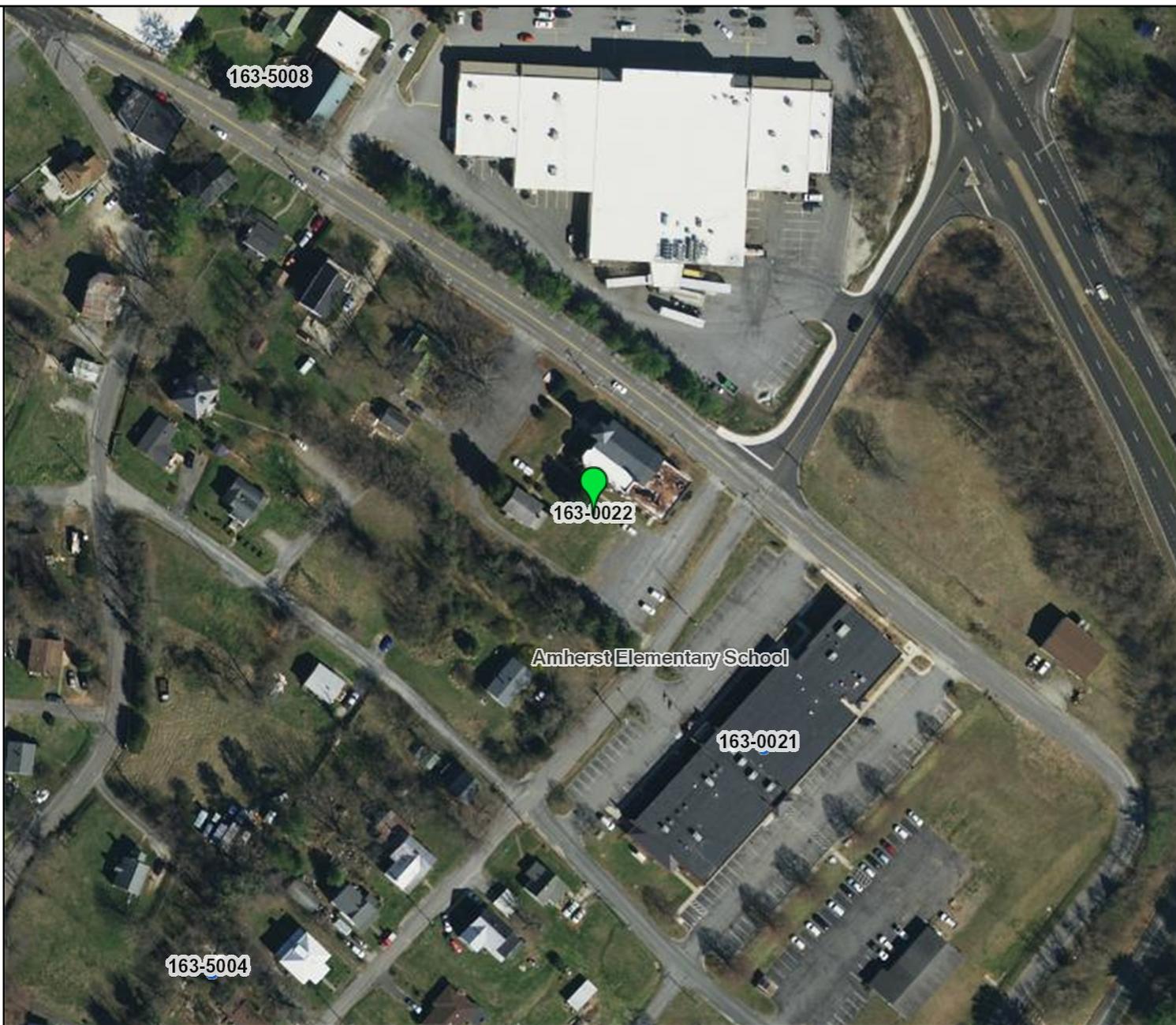




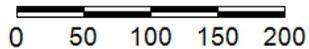
**Legend**

- Architecture Labels
- Architecture Points
- ☑ Historic Districts
- USGS GIS Place names
- County Boundaries

Second Stage Amherst/  
Amherst Baptist Church  
194 Second Street  
Amherst, VA 24521  
VDHR # 163-0022



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

**Title: Second Stage Amherst/Amherst Baptist Church**

**Date: 5/16/2020**

*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.*