

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Newport News Downtown Historic District

Other names/site number: VDHR #121-5621

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

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

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

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

___ national ___ statewide **X** local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B **X** C ___ D

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

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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>113</u> | <u>15</u> | buildings |
| <u>3</u> | <u>1</u> | sites |
| <u>3</u> | <u>3</u> | structures |
| <u>8</u> | <u>4</u> | objects |
| <u>127</u> | <u>23</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 10
First Baptist Church (121-5621-0034); St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (121-5621-0002);
Hotel Warwick (121-5621-0062); Newport News Public Library (121-5621-0064); Medical Arts
Building (121-5621-0067); Basic Construction Building (121-5621-0049)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/residence; multiple dwelling/apartment building; hotel
COMMERCE/TRADE/business/office building; financial institution/bank; department store;
professional/doctors offices
GOVERNMENT/city hall; correctional facility; government office/municipal building; post
office; courthouse
EDUCATION/school/high school; library
RELIGION/religious facility/church
RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility/arena; monument/marker
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/manufacturing facility/processing plant
LANDSCAPE/parking lot; park
TRANSPORTATION/rail-related/train depot

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/residence; multiple dwelling/apartment building
COMMERCE/TRADE/business/office building; financial institution/bank
GOVERNMENT/city hall; correctional facility; government office/municipal building; post
office; courthouse/municipal courthouse
EDUCATION/library
RELIGION/church
RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility/arena; monument/marker
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/manufacturing facility/processing plant
LANDSCAPE/parking lot; park

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19TH CENTURY/Gothic Revival

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival

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

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

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style, Art Deco, Brutalist, New Formalism

OTHER/ No Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

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

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is a 91-acre district that includes a variety of architectural styles and building types. The fully redeveloped core at the southern end features large, multistory office buildings which invoke the International, Brutalist, and New Formalism styles. Typical for these styles, these buildings demonstrate strong vertical or horizontal design with limited decorative features. Scattered throughout the district to the north along West, Washington and Huntington Avenues are a number of older buildings (including many monumental churches) which exhibit a number of more traditional styles including Gothic, Greek, and Colonial Revival, Romanesque, and early-to-mid twentieth century Commercial Style. The far north end of the district has a few pockets of remaining pre-World War II housing as well as smaller one-and-two story commercial buildings. These buildings are interspersed with parking lots and garages that supported increased reliance on the automobile. Exterior materials most commonly seen in the district are brick veneer, stone, concrete, glass, and vinyl siding on the smaller number of residential resources. The most common alterations are additions to churches that accommodated growing congregations and expanded community services, and the application of vinyl siding to the exterior of most remaining dwellings. Overall, however, most resources retain a high level of integrity. While the district has suffered from extensive demolition of its early twentieth century buildings, much of the mid-twentieth century development is reflective of urban renewal trends of the period and the city's attempts to reposition downtown and reverse the impacts of rapid suburbanization. The result is a clearly identifiable mid-twentieth century downtown focused on government and institutional core, surrounded by a considerable number of important architectural resources which offer a clear window into pre-World War II downtown Newport News. The Newport News Downtown Historic District includes 164 resources; 127 of these are contributing resources, 10 previously Register-listed properties, all of which are contributing, and 23 are noncontributing resources. The

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individually Register-listed properties are First Baptist Church (121-5621-0034; 1 building); St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (121-5621-0002; 3 buildings and 1 site); Hotel Warwick (121-5621-0062; 2 buildings); Newport News Public Library (121-5621-0064; 1 building); Medical Arts Building (121-5621-0067; 1 building); and Basic Construction Building (121-5621-0049; 1 building).

Narrative Description

SETTING:

The Newport News Downtown Historic District consists of approximately 91 acres of historic urban institutional, residential, and commercial development located within the City of Newport News. The downtown is located at the southwest corner of the Virginia Peninsula (or Lower Peninsula) where the Chesapeake Bay splits into the York River to the north and the James River to the south. These natural boundaries to the south and west left the city to grow east and north. The district is bordered to the east by Warwick Boulevard, multiple railroad lines, and Interstate 664. The district is bordered by the Newport News Marine Terminals to the south and the Newport News Shipyard and modern development to the north. The district includes the main institutional hub for Newport News including City Hall, the Circuit Court, Treasurer's Office, and other city offices. These are found between 23rd Street and 28th Street. North of this, commercial businesses and offices, as well as large religious buildings, are interspersed between a mixture of historic and modern parking lots and garages. Residential areas, including numerous apartment complexes, are found along the north and west periphery of the district boundary, most notably along the James River. The parcels for most resources are large, reflecting the monumental size of the buildings, becoming smaller for earlier residential and commercial buildings. Most buildings sit close to the streets, separated by sidewalks, some with road verges, and utility poles. The downtown is situated on a relatively low, flat land with limited vegetation due to the numerous parking lots and many buildings located close to the public sidewalks. While there are some mature trees located along the streets - especially along West Avenue - the majority of greenspace is located at Superblock Park (DHR# 121-5621-0072) near the center of the district between 28th and 26th Streets and Christopher Newport Park (DHR# 121-5621-0028) to the west along the James River. Residential areas, including apartment complexes, have more developed landscaping including mature trees and plantings.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC RESOURCES:

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

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east of the rail lines.

Within the street grid of the downtown district, small lots were divided uniformly across the city. In each block, eight lots faced the north-south streets on either end with twenty-four lots in between (twelve on each side) as visible in early Sanborn Maps. Many of these uniform lots were quickly joined to accommodate larger residential, commercial, religious, and institutional buildings, especially along the north-south streets. For instance, Hotel Warwick (DHR# 121-5621-0062), located at 2410 West Avenue, has historically occupied one parcel that spans the eight lots on the east side of West Avenue between 24th and 25th Streets. Similarly, churches like Saint Vincent De Paul Catholic Church (DHR# 121-5621-0002) sits on one parcel spanning the eight lots on the west side of Huntington Avenue between 32nd and 33rd Streets. Mid-block examples include the residential duplex at 223 29th Street (DHR# 121-5621-0042) that sits on two combined lots. The building served as the Newport News Female Seminary from 1894 to 1902, after which it was a boarding house. One street south on 28th Street, multiple small commercial spaces also occupy two combined lots.

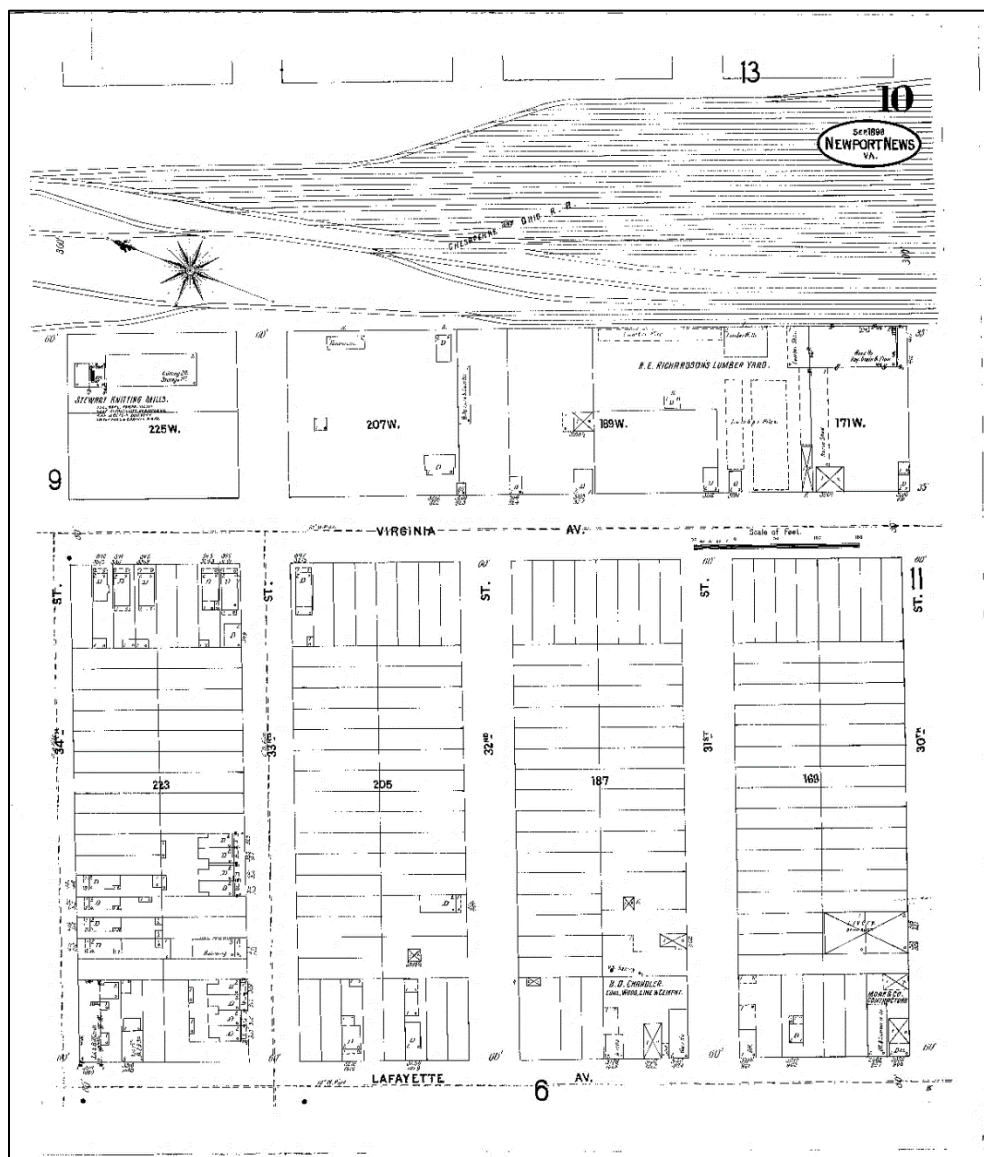


Figure 1: 1899 Sanborn Map showing the large amount of railway lines at the top along with the grid and parcel divisions originally planned for the city; Virginia Avenue is now Warwick Boulevard

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

Residential

Residential buildings in the Newport News Historic District offer a wide variety of types and styles that exemplify the developmental needs of the city. Early Sanborn Maps show entire blocks between 36th and 38th Streets along Washington Avenue filled with identical two-story duplex rowhouses located just east of the Newport News Shipbuilding Yards. These appear to be modest worker housing as there are two small dwellings on one lot. While these blocks were demolished for parking lots beginning in the mid-1960s, the building type was interspersed elsewhere in the city, and two duplexes similar to the demolished buildings remain at 319-321 and 323-325 33rd Street (DHR#s 121-5621-0006 and 121-5621-0007 respectively). These duplexes are brick clad and retain historic features such as their balance and symmetry, fenestration pattern, concrete sills and lintels, and brick detailing. Alterations include the insertion of vinyl windows and removal or replacement of porches. Similarly, other modest housing stock that remains with, the largest concentration located along 36th Street between Warwick Boulevard and Huntington Avenue. Most of these dwellings retain their historic porches, fenestration pattern, and some wood details, while common alterations include replacement in vinyl windows and vinyl siding.

Mixed with these smaller and simpler housing types were single-family dwellings that, while occupying single lots, were more elaborate and exemplary of the popular architectural styles of their time. Like the duplexes, few of these dwellings survive, but an example of such is 2904 West Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0066). This slender, three-story residence is a rare example of residential Beaux Arts in the Newport News Historic District. It is restrained in style compared to other, more elaborate, Beaux Arts examples but still features rusticated decoration at the main level, which becomes more refined on the second and third floors, and features arched and bay windows, as well as Classical design elements.

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

Another type of residential building that most likely serviced the ship building workers are the early, multi-story apartment buildings that are still found along the James River just south of the yards. Most early apartment buildings are narrow and long rectangular buildings encompassing most of the parcel. They generally feature apartment units at each floor that flank a central entrance and public corridor. The Marlborough Apartments (DHR# 121-5621-0070), located just across the street from the shipyard, is a 1915 three-story, Colonial Revival building of such a configuration. Each apartment building features its own detailing to set it apart from the rest. The Marlborough has a relatively flat façade with a deep eave and protruding fire escape and balcony on either side elevation, while another three-story building directly behind it, 96 31st Street (DHR# 121-5621-0047) features a central entrance with deep balconies at each apartment unit along the façade.

During World War II, with shipyard production and employment at its peak, many of the apartment buildings and single-family dwellings near the shipyards were replaced with larger apartment complexes to accommodate the increased workforce and their housing needs near the yards. The St. James Terrace Apartments (DHR#s 121-5621-0043 and 121-5621-0039) feature fifteen multi-unit apartment buildings. These buildings are all rectangular in form, but varying in size, detailing, and orientation. Situated along the James River, the complex begins at 29th Street and ends at 31st Street across from the shipyard. While the buildings are spaced fairly close to one another, open common areas are found along the river and at 30th Street.

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



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

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Multi-family dwellings were a critical form of housing as the population of Newport News increased during the mid-twentieth century. By the 1970s, high-rise apartment buildings became more popular in dense metropolitan areas at the time. The fifteen-story, 135-unit high-rise at 90 28th Street, currently known as Seaview Lofts (DHR# 121-5621-0029), is one such example and was designed in the International Style, also popular of its time. The building, constructed in 1972, features a lack of ornament with a regularity of principle components common in the International Style as well as flat roofs, windows flush with the walls, and use of piers at the ground level.



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

Commercial

The Newport News Historic District features a number of surviving early-to-mid twentieth century commercial style buildings, as well as several examples of mid-twentieth century commercial buildings that were part of the city's urban renewal and redevelopment initiatives. The densest concentrations of early twentieth century commercial style buildings exist along 28th Street, that are one- to three-stories with moderately intact storefronts. Most still feature their original storefront window and door configurations, and many retain their decorative details. Many two-story commercial buildings featured apartments units above the shops with large windows as seen at 3506 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0091). Due to vacancy or long-term neglect, second floor windows on many of these buildings have been boarded up or replaced with vinyl windows. The fenestration patterns, however, remain intact. The building at 3508 Huntington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0095), though altered at the storefront, retains its character-defining arched masonry façade, as well as the fenestration pattern of its upper floors. It is also likely that the storefront alterations, such as applied vinyl siding, are reversible. One of the largest examples of early commercial architecture that remains in the district is the Beaux Arts style ca. 1937 Montgomery Ward Building located at 2800 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0088).

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



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

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As part of the city's urban renewal efforts, several blocks of Washington Avenue, centrally located in the historic district, were redeveloped from their former small-scale commercial to larger commercial office buildings and financial institutions. Representative of national trends, most of these buildings were constructed in Modernist styles. Both 2700 and 2712 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0074 and 121-5621-0073 respectively) are representative of the Brutalist style. Compared to one another, they illustrate the wide variety found within the style. Both buildings feature rough, unfinished concrete, minimal windows penetrating heavy concrete walls, use of repetition with obvious irregularities, and heavy massing. 2700 Washington Street is much more symmetrical in building form and fenestration pattern, whereas 2712 Washington has more obvious irregularities. 2712 Washington Street also features more heavily textured concrete walls fluted in some areas with wooden forms while 2700 Washington has smoother, but still unfinished, concrete walls. These two examples, along with previously described commercial buildings, create the wide breadth of significant building styles, forms, and dates found throughout the Newport News Downtown Historic District during its period of significance.



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

Religious

Scattered throughout the Newport News Historic District are numerous prominent religious buildings that date from 1899 to 1949. Mostly Romanesque Revival in style, there are also examples of Classical Revival at 230 33rd Street (DHR# 121-5621-0002) and Gothic Revival at 221 34th Street (DHR# 121-5621-0004). All of the churches are constructed with heavily rusticated stone, brick, or a mixture of both and feature stained glass windows, prominent entrances that are raised from the street, and ornament surrounding the fenestrations. Trinity United Methodist Church (DHR# 121-5621-0041) is an excellent example of materials reflective of the Romanesque Revival style. Large, rusticated arches with emphasized keystones surround windows and doors with warm brick

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walls. A square tower is situated at the crux of the cross-gable roof and features terra cotta roofing tiles and bronze cornices and detailing. Many of the churches have additions attached to the main building, usually by a hyphen as seen in St. Paul's Episcopal Church (DHR# 121-5621-0004), where the rusticated stone of the main church is copied in the hyphen to a contrasting brick Colonial Revival style addition. Trinity United Methodist Church (DHR# 121-5621-0041) likewise has multiple additions surrounding the building, but are compatible with the original church structure, utilizing similar brick colors but less ornamentation to set it apart.



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

Institutional

The majority of institutional buildings are grouped towards the south end of the historic district and consist primarily of banks and government buildings. These buildings, many of which are monumental in size and scale, were largely constructed during the mid-to-late twentieth century as part of the city's urban renewal efforts, with the exception of the Post Office (DHR# 121-5621-0061), which was constructed in 1904; this building continues to be federally owned. Most of the newer institutional buildings were constructed within the existing block pattern, while others resulted in consolidation of block and reconfiguration of the street pattern. The Newport News City Hall (DHR# 121-5621-0077) and the adjacent Newport News Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (DHR# 121-5621-0078) are perhaps the most visibly drastic example of this change. The buildings formed a municipal complex that encompass two former city block and became the terminating southern end of Washington Avenue at 25th Street. The tall, Brutalist building sits in the middle of the historic avenue so as to be a prominent focal point along this north-south axis. This new municipal complex also truncated 24th Street between West

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Avenue and Huntington Avenue, creating dead ends at both sides of the complex with a large parking lot along 23rd Street south of the City Hall and Court buildings. This was a radical change from the historic City Hall and Courthouse, which was constructed on a five-lot parcel at the corner of Huntington Avenue and 25th Street.



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

In addition to the wide variety of building types described above, the Newport News Historic District also includes the Victory Arch at 2501 West Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0058). The structure pays homage to the returning soldiers and those fallen. Inscribed above the arch is “VICTORY 1917-1918; Greeting with love to those who return, A triumph with tears to those who sleep.” It is situated near the embarkment and, originally made of wood, was the location where returning soldiers marched past welcoming Newport News citizens. The 1962 stone arch seen today is a close replica of the original 1919 “temporary structure of wood and plaster” that was “hastily erected with \$6,000 in fund received through public subscription.”¹

¹ “Victory Avenue: An Enduring Reminder of the Great War.” Informational Plaque at West Avenue and 25th Street, Newport News, Virginia, August 10, 2022.

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

INTEGRITY ANALYSIS:

The Newport News Historic District retains integrity that conveys a long period of significance from 1892 to 1973. The district is representative of nearly a century of the city's history, and includes its early development and commercial beginnings through the pivotal urban renewal movement that swept the nation during the mid-twentieth century. The district retains its *location* located in the historic southern core of the City of Newport News, and individual resources are located in their historic locations. The district evolved considerably during its period of significance from one that was primarily early twentieth century commercial and small-scale residential to include larger superblocs and more automobile-oriented development. Additionally, most of the historic street patterns have been retained. Therefore, the district retains integrity of *setting* associated with its areas and period of significance.

The Newport News Historic District also retains integrity of *design* both in its individual components and as a whole. As mentioned, the street grid as well as the peripheral streetscapes remain from the early twentieth century. The urban renewal and city planning influences of the mid-twentieth resulted in the redesign of the urban core, which remains in place today. Buildings in the district reflect a century of architectural design trends, and are representative of the works of several prominent architectural firms in the region.

Integrity of *materials* and *workmanship* has been retained on most buildings in the district, which has resulted in a high ratio of contributing resources. While some of the early commercial buildings have altered storefronts, most retain the open storefront configuration of large-paned windows, single pane doors, knee-walls, and parapeted

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

216-218 23rd Street

121-0076-0003

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0103

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

222 23rd Street

121-0077

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0063

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

24th Street

240 24th Street

121-5621-0059

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

25th Street

101 25th Street

121-0036

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0061

Primary Resource: **Post Office (Building), Stories 2, Style: Beaux Arts, 1904**
Federally owned by the US Postal Service Contributing Total: 1

210 25th Street

121-5621-0052

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

230 25th Street

121-5621-0078

Primary Resource: **Courthouse (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, Ca 1968**
Municipal courthouse owned by the City of Newport News Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource: **Gazebo (Structure) Non-contributing Total: 1**

27th Street

227 27th Street

121-5621-0051

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

28th Street

20 28th Street

121-0118

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0037

Primary Resource: **Sculpture/Statue (Object), Stories, Style: No discernible style, 1965**

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Contributing *Total:* 1

71-91 28th Street **121-0086**

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0035

Primary Resource: **Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 3, Style: Tudor Revival, Ca 1939**

Contributing *Total:* 1

80 28th Street **121-5621-0028**

Primary Resource: **Park (Site), Stories, Style: No discernible style, 1965**

Contributing *Total:* 1

Secondary Resource: **Fountain (Object)**

Contributing *Total:* 1

Secondary Resource: **Gateposts/Entry (Object)**

Contributing *Total:* 1

Secondary Resource: **Sign (Object)**

Contributing *Total:* 1

90 28th Street **121-5621-0029**

Primary Resource: **Apartment Building (Building), Stories 15, Style: International Style, 1972**

Contributing *Total:* 1

111 28th Street **121-5621-0030**

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1960**

Contributing *Total:* 1

115 28th Street **121-5621-0031**

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, Ca 1970**

Contributing *Total:* 1

225 28th Street **121-0090**

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0036

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1907**

Non-contributing *Total:* 1

227 28th Street **121-5621-0032**

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

231 28th Street **121-5621-0033**

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

233 28th Street **121-0091**

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0065

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

247 28th Street **121-5621-0050**

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

29th Street

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74-85 29th Street

121-0124

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0039

Primary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, 1943

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building)

Contributing Total: 4

80 29th Street

121-5453

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0049

Basic Construction Building (NRHP 2019; VLR 2018)

Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: Colonial Revival, 1945

Contributing Total: 1

87 29th Street

121-5621-0027

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

Contributing Total: 1

91 29th Street

121-0125

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0040

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

Contributing Total: 1

119 29th Street

121-0031

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0034

First Baptist Church (NRHP 2000; VLR 1999)

Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 5, Style: Romanesque Revival/Richardsonian, Ca 1902

Contributing Total: 1

223 29th Street

121-0127

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0042

Primary Resource: School (Building), Stories 2.5, Style: Romanesque Revival/Richardsonian, 1892

Contributing Total: 1

228 29th Street

121-0126

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0041

Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 3, Style: Romanesque Revival/Richardsonian, 1900

Contributing Total: 1

30th Street

75-85 30th Street

121-0129

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0043

Primary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, 1941

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building)

Contributing Total: 9

Secondary Resource: Outbuilding, Domestic (Building) Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Pool/Swimming Pool (Structure) Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Shed (Building) Contributing Total: 1

82 30th Street

121-0133

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0046

Primary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 3, Style: No discernible style, 1926

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Contributing Total: 1

87 30th Street 121-0132

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0045

Primary Resource: **Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 1.5, Style: Craftsman, 1930**

Contributing Total: 1

91 30th Street 121-0131

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0044

Primary Resource: **Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, 1935**

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: **Garage (Building)**

Non-contributing Total: 1

99 30th Street 121-0120

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0038

Primary Resource: **Apartment Building (Building), Stories 4, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1925**

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: **Garage (Building)**

Non-contributing Total: 1

122 30th Street 121-5621-0025

Primary Resource: **Meeting/Fellowship Hall (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1973**

Contributing Total: 1

128 30th Street 121-5621-0026

Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1972**

Contributing Total: 1

328 30th Street 121-5218

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0048

Primary Resource: **Gymnasium (Building), Stories 1, Style: Modernist, 1964**

Contributing Total: 1

31st Street

96 31st Street 121-0137

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0047

Primary Resource: **Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 3, Style: Colonial Revival, 1916**

Contributing Total: 1

32nd Street

215 32nd Street 121-0068

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0003

Primary Resource: **Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Gothic Revival, 1899**

Contributing Total: 1

33rd Street

230 33rd Street 121-0032

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0002

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (NRHP 2005; VLR 2005)

Primary Resource: **Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 1.5, Style: Classical Revival, 1916**

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: **Garage (Building)**

Contributing Total: 1

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Secondary Resource: Garden (Site)
Secondary Resource: Parsonage/Glebe (Building)
Secondary Resource: Shed (Building)
Secondary Resource: Shelter (Building)

Contributing Total: 1
Contributing Total: 1
Contributing Total: 1
Non-contributing Total: 1

317 33rd Street

121-0154

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0005

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1906

Contributing Total: 1

319-321 33rd Street

121-0155

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0006

Primary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1898

Contributing Total: 1

323-325 33rd Street

121-0156

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0007

Primary Resource: Multiple Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1898

Contributing Total: 1

338 33rd Street

121-5219

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0104

Primary Resource: Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, 1930

Non-contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Carport (Structure)

Non-contributing Total: 1

34th Street

221 34th Street

121-0070

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0004

Primary Resource: Church/Chapel (Building), Stories 2, Style: Gothic Revival, 1899

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Parsonage/Glebe (Building)

Contributing Total: 1

312 34th Street

121-0160

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0009

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

Contributing Total: 1

314 34th Street

121-0161

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0010

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

Contributing Total: 1

332 34th Street

121-0157

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0008

Primary Resource: School (Building), Stories 2, Style: Gothic Revival, Ca 1903

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: Classroom Building (Building)

Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: School (Building)

Contributing Total: 1

35th Street

217 35th Street

121-0166

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0011

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

Contributing Total: 1

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232 35th Street

121-5220

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0023

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

331 35th Street

121-0167

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0012

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

339 35th Street

121-5221

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0024

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

36th Street

218 36th Street

121-0169

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0013

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

Secondary Resource: Garage (Building)
Contributing Total: 1

316-318 36th Street

121-0170

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0014

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 1, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1925
Contributing Total: 1

319 36th Street

121-0172

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0015

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

321 36th Street

121-0173

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0016

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

325 36th Street

121-0174

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0017

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1900
Contributing Total: 1

327 36th Street

121-0175

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0018

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1900
Contributing Total: 1

331 36th Street

121-0177

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0020

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1900
Contributing Total: 1

333 36th Street

121-0176

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0019

Primary Resource: Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Colonial Revival, Ca 1900
Contributing Total: 1

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3310 Huntington Avenue **121-0276** *Other DHR Id#:* 121-5621-0094
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1935**
Contributing *Total:* 1

3405 Huntington Avenue **121-5621-0001** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1963**
Contributing *Total:* 1

3508 Huntington Avenue **121-0277** *Other DHR Id#:* 121-5621-0095
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1902**
Contributing *Total:* 1

3614 Huntington Avenue **121-5207** *Other DHR Id#:* 121-5621-0099
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, 1943**
Contributing *Total:* 1

Warwick Boulevard

3201 Warwick Boulevard **121-0307** *Other DHR Id#:* 121-5621-0096
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1950**
Contributing *Total:* 1

3501 Warwick Boulevard **121-0310** *Other DHR Id#:* 121-5621-0097
Primary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Commercial Style, Ca 1935**
Contributing *Total:* 1

3613 Warwick Boulevard **121-0311** *Other DHR Id#:* 121-5621-0098
Primary Resource: **Single Dwelling (Building), Stories 2, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1898**
Contributing *Total:* 1

Washington Avenue

2400 Washington Avenue **121-5621-0077**
Primary Resource: **City/Town Hall (Building), Stories 10, Style: Modernist, 1970**
Contributing *Total:* 1
Secondary Resource: **Government Office (Building)** **Contributing** *Total:* 2
Secondary Resource: **Monument/Marker (Object)** **Contributing** *Total:* 3
Secondary Resource: **Monument/Marker (Object)** **Non-contributing** *Total:* 2
Secondary Resource: **Plaza (Site)** **Contributing** *Total:* 1

2500 Washington Avenue **121-5621-0082**
Primary Resource: **Courthouse (Building), Stories 3, Style: Modernist, Ca 1990**
Privately owned property for municipal courts. **Non-contributing** *Total:* 1

2501 Washington Avenue **121-5621-0076**
Primary Resource: **Bank (Building), Stories 6, Style: Modernist, Ca 1973**

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Secondary Resource: Parking Garage (Building)

Contributing *Total:* 1
Contributing *Total:* 1

2600 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0075

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

2601-2701 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0072

Primary Resource: Park (Site), Stories, Style: No discernible style, Ca 1990

Non-contributing *Total:* 1

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

2700 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0074

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

2712 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0073

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

Secondary Resource: Bank (Building) **Contributing** *Total:* 1

2800 Washington Avenue 121-0237

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0088

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

3114 Washington Avenue 121-0081

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0086

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

3404 Washington Avenue 121-0255

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0089

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

3506 Washington Avenue 121-0261

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0090

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

3508 Washington Avenue 121-0262

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0091

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

3512 Washington Avenue 121-5621-0084

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

Contributing *Total:* 1

West Avenue

2410 West Avenue 121-0040

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0062

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Hotel Warwick (NRHP 1984; VLR 1984)

Primary Resource: **Hotel/Inn (Building), Stories 7, Style: Art Deco, Ca 1928**
Contributing Total: 1

Secondary Resource: **Commercial Building (Building) Contributing Total: 1**

2501 West Avenue 121-5621-0058

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

2591 West Avenue 121-5621-0057

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

2601 West Avenue 121-5621-0056

Primary Resource: **Apartment Building (Building), Stories 18, Style: Modernist, Ca 1976**
Non-contributing Total: 1

2801 West Avenue 121-5621-0055

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

2901 West Avenue 121-0223

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0067

Medical Arts Building (NRHP 2002; VLR 2002)

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

2904 West Avenue 121-0222

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0066

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

2907 West Avenue 121-0080

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0064

Newport News Public Library (NRHP 2005; VLR 2005)

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

3007 West Avenue 121-0226

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0069

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

3015 West Avenue 121-0227

Other DHR Id#: 121-5621-0070

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

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1892-1973

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Forest Coile and Associates

Taylor, James Knox

Simon, Louis Adolphe

Rancorn, Wildman, and Krause

Hunt, Reuben H.

Peebles, J. Kevan

Robinson, Charles M.

Ruehrmund, Carl

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

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A (Community Planning and Development) as an example of an evolved downtown heavily influenced by the mid-to-late twentieth century process of redevelopment and federal programs such as Urban Renewal. The Newport News downtown suffered a similar fate to the majority of historic downtowns in the twentieth century, with a mass exodus of citizens and business to suburban corridors. Newport News experienced multiple waves of redevelopment which resulted in a loss of many of its early historic resources. However, the current downtown is an excellent example of urban renewal and has a notable collection of contributing mid-twentieth century resources which tell the story of the downtown's transformation. Additionally, the district is significant under Criterion A (Politics/Government) for its collection of resources owned by the City of Newport News and the federally-owned post office (DHR# 121-5621-0061) stretching across most of the southern half of the district. Finally, the district is locally significant under Criterion C (Architecture) for not only its more recent architect designed office buildings, but also a still impressive small collection of earlier late-nineteenth through mid-twentieth century historic resources. The Period of Significance for the district begins in 1892, the date of the earliest extant resource, to a surge in office construction in downtown which culminated in 1973, marking the end of the period of mid-twentieth century redevelopment for Newport News' downtown district. Regarding the individually-listed properties, First Baptist Church (121-5621-0034) is listed at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of architecture while St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (121-5621-0002) is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Religion and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Both properties meet Criteria Consideration A. Hotel Warwick (121-5621-0062) is listed at the state level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Military and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The Newport News Public Library (121-5621-0064) is listed at the local level of significance under Criterion A² and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The Medical Arts Building (121-5621-0067) is listed at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, while the Basic Construction Building (121-5621-0049) is listed at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce.

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

Early History

References to some form of the name "Newport News" first appear in the Virginia Company's 1619 records, with the first official settler to the area being Daniel Gookin, Sr. on November 21, 1621. Initially the area of modern Newport News was part of the Kecoughtan division (later Elizabeth City). Eventually Virginia was divided into eight shires, including

² An area of significance under Criterion A is not included on the nomination form, but the statement of significance explains the building's significance for its association with the local Civil Rights Movement.

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Warwick River Shire in 1634, renamed the County of Warwick in 1643, the location of modern City of Newport News. Tobacco was the main driver of the agricultural economy for much of the first century of Warwick County's existence which led to later soil exhaustion and long-term agricultural decline. Other than the failed Warwicktown (established 1680 at the mouth of the Warwick River) there was little in the way of dense development in the area until after the Civil War. After the Revolutionary War, the Census of 1790 revealed Warwick County to have the second smallest population of any Virginia County at 1,690, with 990 of those being slaves; by 1830 the population had fallen to 1,570. Additionally, the almost entirely agricultural economy consisted mostly of smaller farms, rather than large plantations, and continued like this until after the Civil War.³ On January 1, 1831 Parker West purchased the 265-acre Newport News farm, part of the original Gookin parcel, which would eventually be the site of the city. A rejuvenated agricultural, and overall more diversified economy, caused the population to rebound to 1,740 by 1860.⁴ After the war the economy and social system were decimated, along with the dissolution of slavery which had supported it for several centuries. A chaotic decade was followed by the readmission of Virginia to the Union in 1870.

Led by the efforts of Collis P. Huntington, the Old Dominion Land Company was established on October 19, 1880. This company, which was the primary driver of development for several decades, purchased 18,000 acres, and proposed a map for the eventual town of Newport News, which it then proceeded to develop at a frantic pace. By 1880 the county population had grown to 2,258. In 1882 the eastern terminus of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad opened at Newport News Point and led to a complete transformation of the economy and establishment of the city. The combination of the new town and the railroad terminus led to the rapid development of a modern port with deep-water wharves, huge piers, and a massive grain elevator. These were followed by the Hotel Warwick in April of 1883 and a population of approximately 1,000, which exploded to 12,000 by 1891. Coal had become the leading product of the ports and fueled the shipping industry. While it started small with the Chesapeake Dry Dock & Construction Company (soon changed to Newport News shipbuilding in 1900) in 1886, the shipbuilding industry would eventually be a vital part of the Newport News economy surpassing all others with both commercial and naval contracts. In anticipation of the 1907 Jamestown Exposition, ferry service was established between Newport News and Norfolk.⁵

With the incredible growth of industry and the population, Newport News established its first city water system in 1891 by damming the Warwick River, but many of the streets remained dirt for horses until after World War I, and housing was substandard. The owners of the Old Dominion Land Company created the Newport News Light and Water Company in 1889 to fund

³ John V Quarstein and Park S. Rouse, Jr., *Newport News, A Centennial History* (Newport News, Virginia: City of Newport News, 1996), 12-23; J. Luther Kibler, "Newport News in Colonial Times," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 264-67.

⁴ *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 26-33.

⁵ E.O. Smith, "Collis P. Huntington: Empire Building," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 200-02; Annie Lash Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960* (Newport News, Virginia: The City of Newport News, 1961), 114, 119-21; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 54-63.

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the water system and a substantial building program of new brick houses to attract workers. The General Assembly initiated a popular referendum in 1888, approved by voters, which established Newport News as the Warwick County seat and thus host to the new courthouse. The number and variety of retail businesses, banks, and industrial companies grew steadily during this period. The 1881 weekly *Newport News Commercial* became a daily newspaper in 1894 and began an uninterrupted period of newspaper coverage for the city. The *Commercial* was eclipsed by the *Daily Press* by the turn of the century, and this paper has continued to serve the city to this day; multiple other newspapers emerged during the early twentieth century. This expansion of the press during the late nineteenth-century included three African American newspapers, led by the *Star*.⁶

The Development of the City of Newport News

The City of Newport News was officially incorporated on January 16, 1896 with voters choosing a mayor and fourteen councilmen, two from each ward. The city immediately created a formal budget for fire, police, health and street services, as well as a formal school system. Banking was established early in the new city with the creation of the First National Bank of Newport News in 1888. Telephone service followed in 1898 and the Newport News Street Railway Company in 1890, with the first electric street car service beginning in 1892. The establishment of the Citizens Railway Light and Power Company in 1900 ushered in the new era of regular power and electric light services; the company also listed ice production as one of its services. Clear evidence of the growing importance and prominence of the city was the 1904 construction of the large, elaborately designed Federal Building at the corner of West Avenue and 25th Street, which was built to house the Post Office (DHR# 121-0036), and continues to serve that purpose; it is privately owned today. Improvements to the city continued with the chartering of the Newport News General and Non-Sectarian Hospital in 1915, which was the precursor to the current Riverside Regional Medical Center. In 1898 Newport News was declared a Port of Embarkation for the first of several times in support of the Spanish-American War and, like later conflicts, the C & O Railway and its facilities were taken over by the national government to support the effort.⁷

⁶ A.M. Hamilton, "The Growth And Development Of The City Government," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 7-8, 97-106; "Newport News Waterworks," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 127-28; Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 121-22; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 63-66.

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

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World War I affected the City of Newport News, and the Hampton Roads region, much more than most American cities. The Newport News Shipyard led by Homer L. Ferguson, who was CEO from 1915 to 1953, rapidly expanded its workforce to 12,500 by 1919, and included women for the first time. For the second time in its history Newport News was declared a Port of Embarkation by the U.S. Army. The army took control of the port from C & O and established multiple staging areas including four primary bases to support the Embarkation order: Morrison, Stuart, Hill, and Alexander. The expansion of the port and the warehousing capabilities of the city served it well in future years. The population of Newport News also boomed during this period from 26,246 in 1910 to 47,013 in 1920. The desperate need to house so many new residents and workers resulted in the establishment of Hilton Village near Camp Morrison, the first government built planned community.⁸ Additionally, one of the most notable resources within downtown Newport News, the Victory Arch, was initially constructed in 1919 to honor returning soldiers from World War I. The original wood frame arch was replaced in 1962 with the current granite arch which is fifty feet high and sits at the base of 25th Street and now honors fallen soldiers from World War I, World War II and the Korean War.⁹

In 1922 Newport News entered a depression as the boom economy of World War I severely contracted. This was coupled with the International Disarmament Conference which resulted in a pledge to halt all naval construction as well as the oversupply of commercial ships created by federally supported building programs during wartime. The shipyard workforce collapsed from 14,000 to 2,200 in short order. Sporadic passenger ship orders from around the world kept the shipyard afloat until the construction of warships resumed in 1927. The shipyard won the contract for the aircraft carrier *Ranger* in 1930 which began decades of a virtual monopoly on carrier construction. During the 1920s the city annexed the town of Kecoughtan to continue its expansion. Additionally, as previously discussed, the city changed to a manager form of government in 1920 with a mayor and a five-member council. The city and the Old Dominion Land Company worked together to build the Newport News Public Library (DHR# 121-0080) building at the corner of West Avenue and 30th Street in 1929; this Colonial Revival library continues to serve the city today. While most of the country suffered greatly during the Great Depression, a rebound in commercial and naval shipbuilding carried Newport News through the worst of it with only moderate retraction and full recovery by the late 1930s. It was also during the Great Depression that Newport News became more than an industrial town with the establishment of the 880-acre Mariner's Museum in 1931 as well as what would become the War Memorial Museum of Virginia in 1936. In 1938 the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NNRHA) was created to upgrade, rebuild, and expand the city's poor housing stock.¹⁰

⁸ Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 136-43; *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 84-93.

⁹ Charles L. Hurst, "The Roll of Honor," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 213; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 172

¹⁰ Philip Hairston Seawell, "Entertainment and the Arts in Newport News," *Newport News' 325 Years, A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community* (Newport News, VA: The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation: 1946), 188-89; Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 145-46, 166-67; Hamilton, "The Growth And Development Of The City Government," 97-106; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 102-129.

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From its official 1896 incorporation until 1940, the City of Newport News completed eight boundary expansions eventually encompassing most of the southern end of the peninsula south of the current James River Bridge, bounded to the east by the extensive railroad lines which ran parallel to the shipbuilding facilities. The boundary then ran east roughly along 36th Street, south of the current Interstate 664. The end of the city in 1940 to the east was the former Village of Kecoughtan, specifically Pear Avenue, and did not include the existing Greenlawn Cemetery.¹¹ The current proposed historic district is found almost entirely within the original 1896 city boundary.

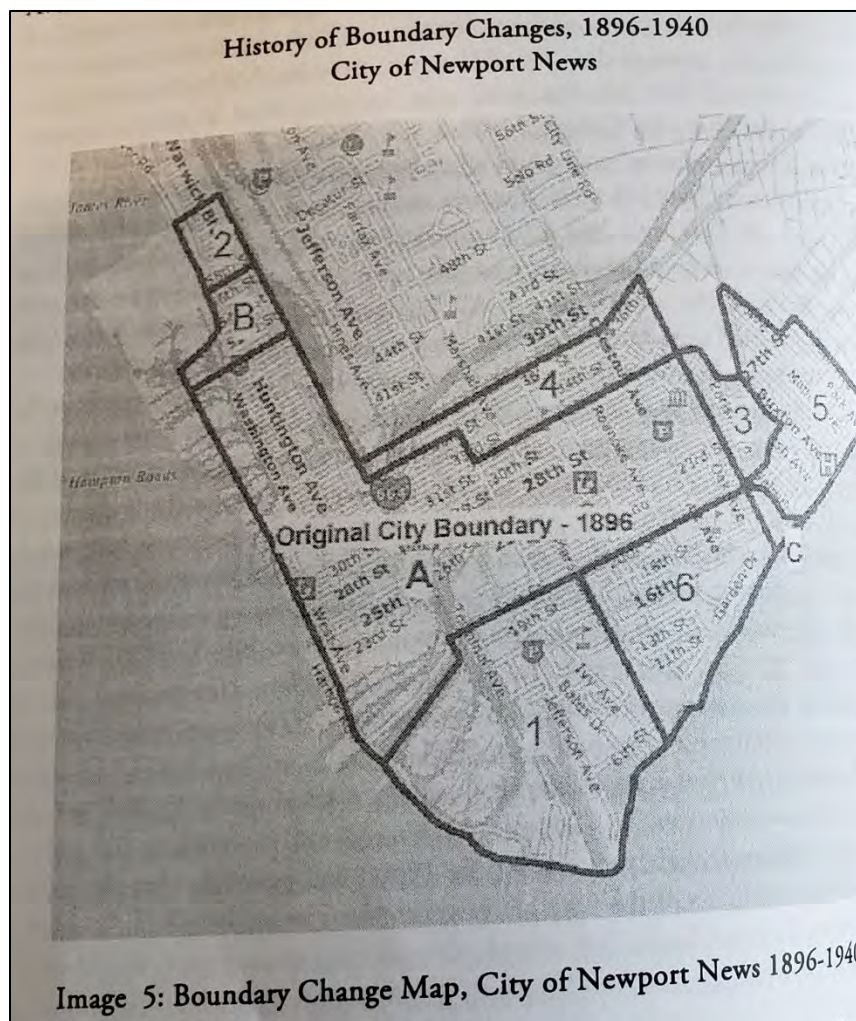


Image 5: Boundary Change Map, City of Newport News 1896-1940
Figure 13: A History of Boundary Changes, 1896-1940 from
"The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins' Newport News, 1925-1965"

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II and on June 16, 1942 the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation (one of eight national ports of embarkation) was established with Newport News again as its headquarters. As with World War I, many industrial

¹¹ A. Jack Stodghill, *The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins; Newport News* (Sarasota, Florida: First Edition Design Publishing, Inc., 2015), 46-50.

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sites were taken over by the federal government for the war effort. With all local, state, and federal funding sources taken into account, more than five billion dollars was spent on improvements to city services and infrastructure. Notable improvements included the new Whittaker Memorial Hospital and multiple expansions of Riverside Hospital. The shipyard employment peaked at 31,000 in 1943 as compared to the 1940 census recordation of 37,067 citizens for all of Newport News. Federal funding also supported housing for all of these additional workers and growing population with over 13,000 housing units built by 1945, including what may have been the nation's largest World War I housing development with 5,200 prefab homes in Copeland Park and Newsome Park.¹²

The post-World War II period brought challenges and change for Newport News. In 1946 buses replaced the trolley system, and by 1947 there wasn't a single ship under construction at the shipyard. But commercial shipping and an expansion into turbine construction kept the shipyard afloat. One of its greatest commissions of the post-war period was the huge and incredibly fast SS United States, a 990-foot passenger liner. The Peninsula Industrial Committee (PIC) was created in 1945, in an attempt to prevent a post-war slump similar to the period after World War I. The PIC brought numerous businesses to Newport News culminating in the transformation of the Copeland-Newsome Park temporary war housing project into the 811-acre Copeland Industrial Park on the border with the City of Hampton. Camp Patrick Henry was transformed into a commercial airport which opened in 1949. By the 1950s ship building had also returned to being a reliable and leading engine of growth and employment. The 1950s also saw Newport News face a population crisis with the geographically constrained city in 1950 housing 42,358 residents. Attempts to merge with Hampton were rebuffed when Hampton merged with Elizabeth City and Phoebus in 1952. Warwick incorporated as an independent city the same year, effectively blocking any expansion for Newport News.¹³

Newport News attempted various methods to revitalize the city and counteract the limits of its size, as well as the downtown population decline faced by a majority of cities during this period. Investment and planning, including a massive renovation program for city housing, resulted in renewed downtown development and investment. At the same time the City of Warwick expanded so quickly that it could not keep up with expected services from residents, many of whom worked in Newport News. After several failed attempts, the citizens of both communities approved a plan of consolidation on July 16, 1957, adopting the name of Newport News for the entire newly expanded city. Mrs. Philip Hiden, widow of the former mayor, and Mrs. Homer L. Ferguson, widow of the former longtime CEO of the Newport News Shipyard, helped cut the ribbon opening the new city on July 1, 1958; the event was accompanied by a nineteen-gun salute at Huntington Park which was the northern line between the two former cities. The result was a city of sixty-four square miles (the largest in Virginia at the time) and a population behind only Richmond and Norfolk. As other cities in the region grew and consolidated, the bridge and tunnel system was greatly expanded creating a connected, if highly competitive Hampton Roads

¹² Jester, *Newport News, Virginia, 1607-1960*, 149-54; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 132-140.

¹³ Stodghill, *The Making of a City*, 67-83; "Citizens Rapid Transit Company," 88-89; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 144-54.

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urban environment.¹⁴ As it had for most of the previous half century, the Newport News shipyard led the way in the continued success of the city's economy with numerous commercial and military commissions. Additionally, the port expanded with more industrial piers and greater merchant ship capacity and draft depth. The population continued to grow, reaching 113,662 people in post-consolidation 1960, and the city added several skyscrapers in the 1960s to emerge as a modern, fully developed city.¹⁵

The Redevelopment of the City of Newport News

Unfortunately, Newport News eventually faced the same challenge of a declining downtown experienced by the majority of cities in the United States at that time. The new, consolidated city initially saw a significant boost to downtown businesses, but this resulted in a corresponding crisis from the lack of parking. Like nearly every other American downtown, it was designed for a majority of shoppers to arrive by bus, streetcar, or on foot. The parking crisis pushed many shoppers to the malls. Suburbs and accompanying shopping centers began to emerge in the 1950s, mostly along Warwick Boulevard, well north of downtown. Longstanding businesses began to abandon downtown in the late 1960s, again mostly for the new commercial corridor of Warwick Boulevard. Businesses which left downtown during this period included Nachman's, La Vogue's, W. T. Chapin; the last major retailer to leave downtown was Sears Roebuck in 1975.¹⁶

Redevelopment and Renewal were two concepts which played a transformational role in the early historic fabric of downtown Newport News. The Housing Act of 1949 was passed with the specific purpose of clearing older, low-income "slum" areas and creating new housing for citizens. "Commercial renewal" led to a similar process for smaller businesses and older commercial buildings. The first period of redevelopment in Newport News occurred in the 1950s and resulted in over forty-five acres of homes and small businesses being cleared for new buildings to house Sears, the new Home Federal Savings and Loan building (DHR# 121-5621-0053), a new Municipal Court Building (DHR # 121-5621-0078), the 1962 Wilbern Building (DHR # 121-5621-0051), several parking lots, as well as other projects never realized.¹⁷ The acquisition costs were split between the city and the federal government, with Newport News only shouldering one third of the budget to purchase blighted properties.¹⁸

¹⁴ This was a period of consolidation for nearly all of the Hampton Roads area: the City of Virginia Beach was formed by the 1963 merger of the City of Virginia Beach and Princess Anne County; the City of Chesapeake was formed by the 1963 merger of the City of South Norfolk and South Norfolk County; the City of Suffolk was formed by the 1974 merger of the City of Suffolk and the City of Nansemond (former Nansemond County).

¹⁵ Stodghill, *The Making of a City*, 83-92; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 158-84.

¹⁶ Stodghill, *The Making of a City*, 83-92; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 92-93, 172-73, 192, 194.

¹⁷ Roberta G. Reid and Martha W. McCartney, *Reconnaissance Survey of Historic Architecture, Newport News, VA* (City of Newport News, Virginia: 1990), 158; Ada Louise Huxtable, "Many Historic Buildings Fall In Path Of Urban Renewal," *Daily Press*, May 31, 1970, A12.

¹⁸ "Downtown Redevelopment Report Indicates \$365,503 To Be Saved," *Daily Press*, February 28, 1960, 3-A.

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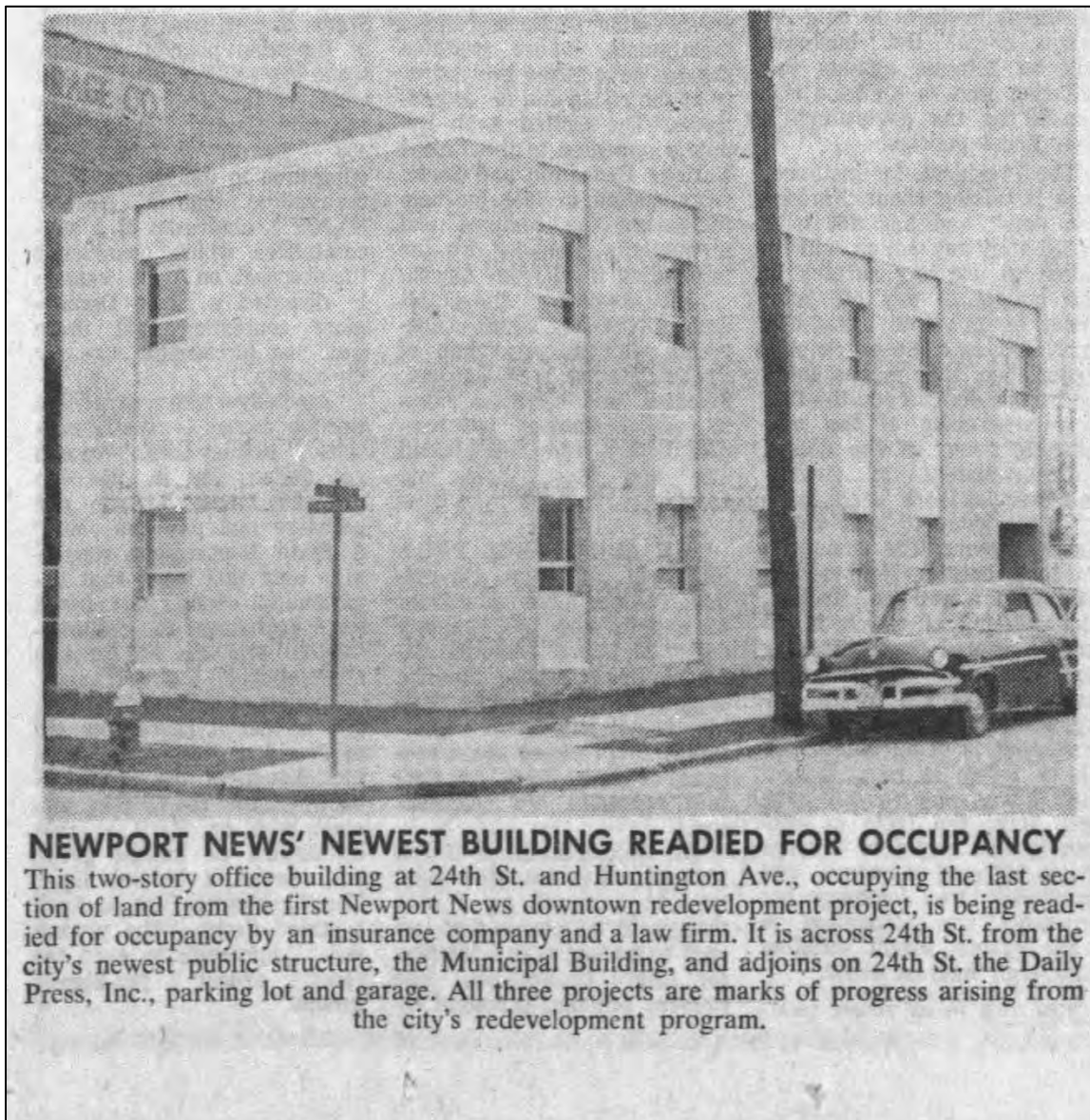


Figure 14: Photograph from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, May 2, 1964

The new three-story Sears, Roebuck building, completed in 1959 at a cost of \$1,500,000, occupied about half of the initial redevelopment project on a huge parcel between 26th and 28th Streets to the south and north, Huntington Avenue to the west and Virginia Avenue (now Warwick Boulevard) to the east.¹⁹ Today the building is still extant but the exterior has been completely re clad and features an entirely new fenestration pattern. This now office building abuts the current historic district on its eastern boundary. The Home Federal Savings and Loan building at 2715 Huntington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0053) was completed in December, 1960

¹⁹ "New Sears Store Is One Of Most Modern In Virginia," *Daily Press*, April 14, 1959, 18.

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and represented another step in the redevelopment plan for Newport News. Built in the “Colonial Williamsburg style,” the building also served as the Peninsula headquarters for the bank.²⁰

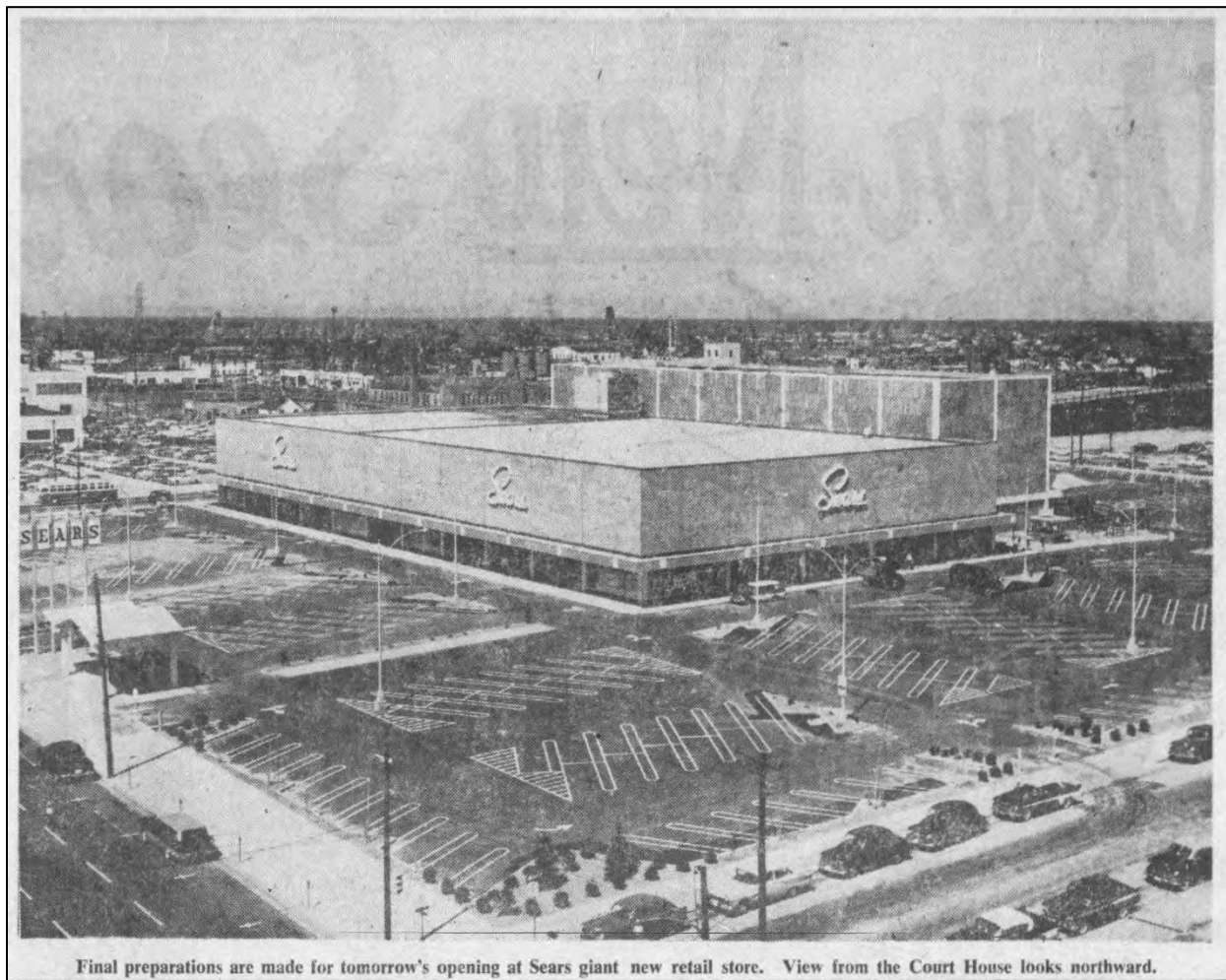


Figure 15: “New Sears Store Is One Of Most Modern In Virginia,” article from the *Daily Press*, Newport News, Virginia, April 14, 1959

As part of these early efforts at redevelopment the city already recognized the growing trends of larger commercial buildings and a tremendous demand for parking. In 1957 the city council increased the allowable height of buildings from two to three stories and voted for “liberalizing parking provisions.” Additionally, council made the creation and expansion of parking a priority of the entire first phase of urban renewal. For one particular block, the goal was to “move as early as possible to construct the huge new lot for parking...Completion in time for Christmas shoppers is the goal...”²¹ The parking lots we see today were a purposeful innovation utilized by

²⁰ “S&L Association To Start Building New Headquarters,” *Daily Press*, December 6, 1959, 3-A.

²¹ Al Coates, “2-Way Traffic Ordered Restored On Jefferson Avenue By NN Council,” *Daily Press*, February 26, 1957, 3; Al Coates, “Downtown NN Block For Parking Lot Now Next In Line For Razing,” *Daily Press*, July 20, 1957, 3.

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the city council, and as part of the national urban redevelopment movement, chosen with the goal welcoming shoppers and holding businesses downtown. Once demolition was complete, many of the parcels were resold specifically “for use in retail, wholesale, industrial and municipal purposes.”²² These four categories of land usage were maintained as the primary focus of redevelopment into the later phases of the urban renewal project in Newport News. In November of 1957 the city awarded a contract to Warwick based E.W. Muller to construct a parking lot “which will be the biggest the city has ever provided.”²³ In addition to parking lots, a focal point of the downtown redevelopment program were substantial street improvements to increase the marketability and viability of the downtown for commerce. Of the initial budget of \$1,100,000 for redevelopment, \$86,300 was dedicated to this purpose.²⁴

As the second phase of downtown redeveloped got underway, the city took on the position of obtaining commitments for “new stores and office structures before tearing down the old.”²⁵ Newport News also hired national consulting firm Bartholomew & Associates, based in Atlanta, to advise the city on the best strategies as it continued its redevelopment efforts. Fred Robinson, a partner in the firm, laid out four “primary requirements for a healthy downtown.” 1. Adequate access; 2. Good interior vehicular and pedestrian traffic circulation; 3. Sufficient parking adjacent to stores and offices; 4. Careful distribution of land use. For Newport News Robinson emphasized parking and interior circulation. Robinson called for maintaining industrial uses along the perimeter of downtown, while focusing on a central core of retail and offices surrounded by adequate parking. He also advised keeping municipal buildings downtown and expanding them into a “municipal center.” Additionally some side streets were closed and parking was eliminated on the primary arterial roads, with parking pushed to the new off-street lots. One goal of this was to specifically “put downtown merchants more nearly on a par with their shopping center competitors.”²⁶ Another change in the approach to parking in downtowns was the emergence of multi-level parking facilities; these were specifically mentioned by Fred Robinson as part of the second phase of downtown renewal.²⁷

Fred Robinson also explained the larger outlook of downtown redevelopment. First, Newport News was not unique; most downtowns were having challenges at that time. However, downtowns are worth working to save as they are often the most important part of a city’s image. If undertaken carefully, with the right combination of uses in the compact urban core, a downtown can be rejuvenated, and also contribute redevelopment investments back in the form of greater tax revenues. The increased parking should be free and provided by a combination of the city and private businesses. Additionally, while city government should be an anchor for downtown, it should be on the edge rather than in the central business district. Robinson finished with this guiding principal: “You don’t get a chance to rebuild a city twice in a lifetime; act

²² Coates, “Downtown NN Block For Parking Lot Now Next In Line For Razing,” 3.

²³ “Muller Get Contract On Parking Lot,” *Daily Press*, 3.

²⁴ “Opening Of Bids On \$1,100,000 Bond Issue Set By NN Council April 9; Early Sale Desirable,” *Daily Press*, 3.

²⁵ John Grieff, “City To Have Master Plan This Year, Christie Says,” *Daily Press*, March 1, 1961, 3.

²⁶ “Expert Stresses 4 Points To Aid Downtown Uplift,” *Daily Press*, June 28, 1962, 3, 32.

²⁷ “Planners Okay Broad Aims Of 2nd Downtown Renewal,” *Daily Press*, March 7. 1963, 3.

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thoughtfully, but boldly too.”²⁸ Early development efforts appeared to demonstrate that the city was on the right path with the city’s return on investment in the first phase already 150% by 1962.²⁹

The final contribution by Bartholomew & Associates to the redevelopment of downtown Newport News was a six-step process of potential redevelopment. The first of these steps would technically be the second phase of the official federal redevelopment process. Each step highlighted a different section of downtown to allow for redevelopment at a pace to minimize substantial dislocation of businesses. 1. 30th Street to 33rd Street; 2. 29th Street to 31st Street; 3. West Avenue to Washington Avenue including portions of 27th, 28th, 29th Streets; 4. West Avenue to Washington Avenue from 25th Street to 27th Street; 5. Upper 33rd Street to 35th Street between West and Washington Avenues; 6. 32nd Street to 35th Street between Washington Avenue and Huntington Avenue.³⁰ Much of the demolition slated for these six phases occurred, but the resulting infill development was inconsistent. The most dramatic example of this is the Super Block Park, which consists of the two full blocks bounded by West and Washington Avenues and 26th and 28th Streets. Today this is a large green space with limited public parking. However, this was originally planned to be filled with a significant development of banking and office space led by the local Basic Construction Company.³¹

²⁸ John B. Grieff, “Downtown Redevelopment Is Explained By Consultant,” *Daily Press*, 3, 54.

²⁹ John B. Grieff, “Redevelopment Paying Off For Newport News,” *Daily Press*, December 27, 1962, 3, 5.

³⁰ John B. Grieff, “3rd Downtown Redevelopment In Planning Stage,” *Daily Press*, January 8, 1965, 3, 8.

³¹ “Basic Co. Eyes Two Blocks In Downtown Redevelopment Area For Major Structure,” *Daily Press*, April 4, 1965, 3.

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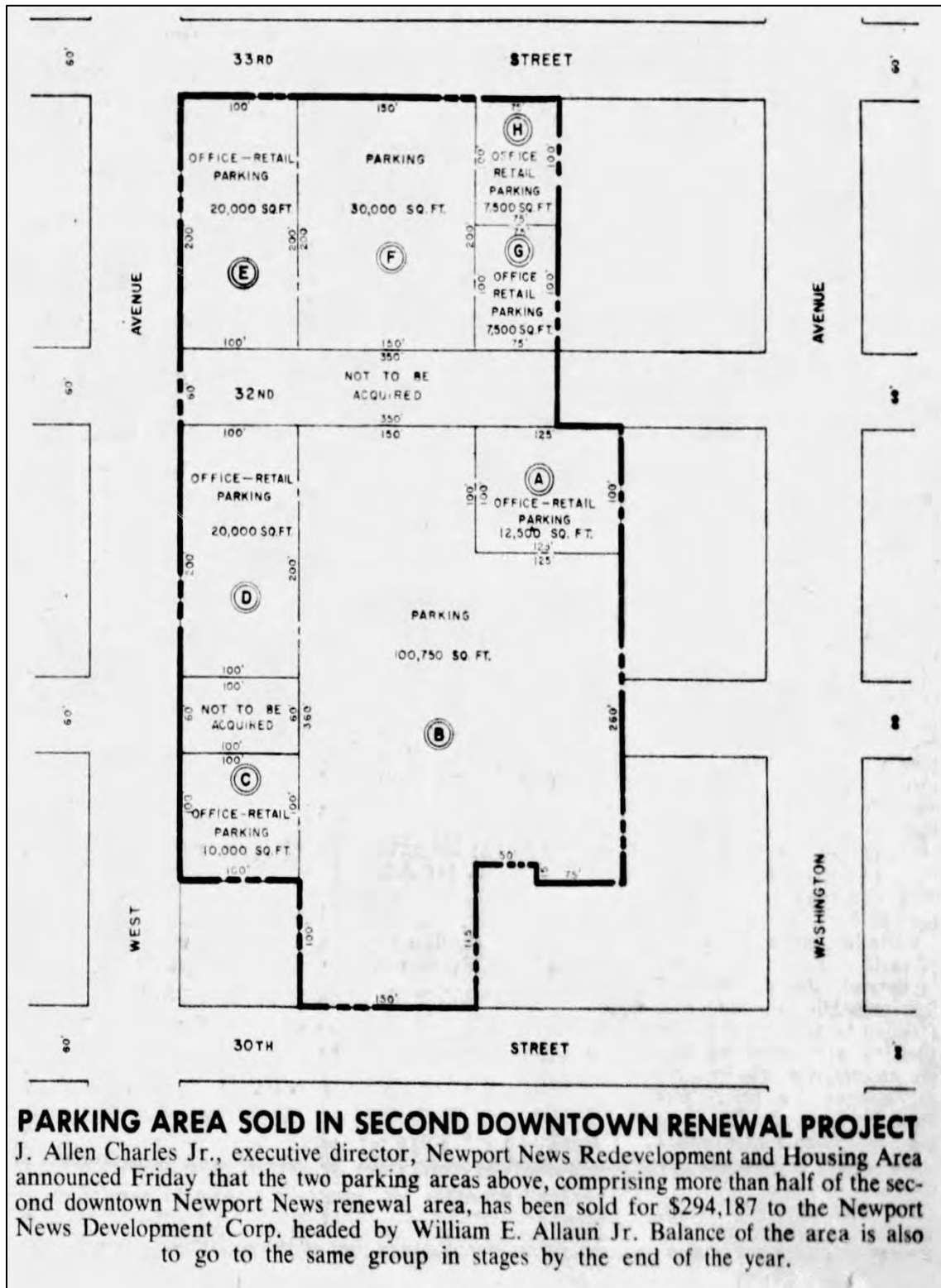


Figure 16: Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, October 2, 1965

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The second phase of redevelopment continued in 1964 with most of the three blocks between 30th and 33rd Streets being demolished in favor of the eight-story Bank of Warwick building (demolished), an addition to the La Vogue Store in 1965 (demolished), a drive-in branch for the Bank of Hampton Roads (demolished) as well as additional parking lots. The largest of these lots was an entire block (framed by West Avenue and Washington Avenue to the west and east, and 30th and 31st Streets to the south and north) and is now the site of the largest parking garage in downtown. The following year saw another round of redevelopment which led to the demolition of most buildings from 23rd to 28th Streets between Washington Avenue and West Avenue. The buildings eventually constructed in this newly cleared area included the new (and current) City Hall (1972) (DHR# 121-5621-0077), the First and Merchants Bank (1969) at 2600 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0075), Newport Towers (1972) (DHR# 121-5621-0056) at the corner of 27th Street and West Avenue and the Superblock Park from 26th to 28th Streets.³²

³² Reid and McCartney, *Renaissance Survey*, 158; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 189.

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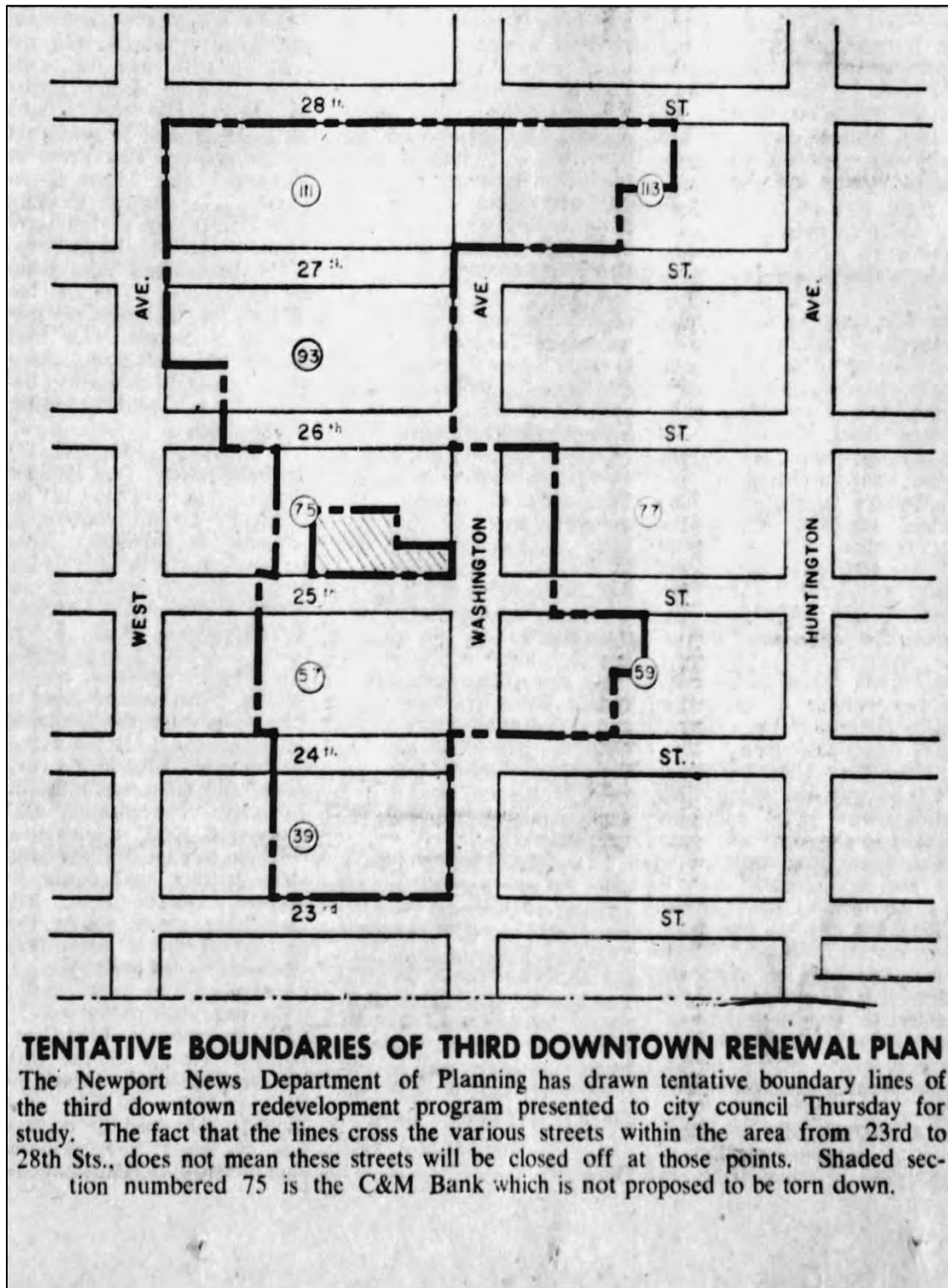


Figure 17: Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, March 8, 1965

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The detailed series of redevelopment plans proposed and carried out by the city gave large businesses, particularly banks, the confidence to construct new office buildings, including regional headquarters, in downtown Newport News.³³ The goal of the city in establishing the new City Hall downtown, placing so many government offices in downtown and encouraging large commercial businesses such as banks to follow suit, were parts of the larger plan to halt the abandonment of the downtown area. To a significant extent this goal was accomplished.



Figure 18: "New Downtown Bank Construction Planned" photograph from an article in the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, June 9, 1972

The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act (1966) amended the 1949 Housing Act to refocus urban renewal on providing housing, and required future urban renewal plans to consider historic properties and preservation as part of any larger efforts. The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act bolstered this effort by expanding the National Register of Historic Places to all potential resources and requiring all federally linked projects to take into account any effects on National Register properties.³⁴

³³ John B. Grieff, "Speakers Urge Speed For Renewal Project," *Daily Press*, November 22, 1966, 2, 34.

³⁴ Huxtable, "Many Historic Buildings Fall."

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

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

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construct a new municipal courthouse near the City Hall.³⁵ The city's continued commitment to its downtown is seen in the myriad of local government offices located within or bordering the historic district: City Hall, the Treasurer's Office, the Circuit Court, the General District Court, the City Jail, the Magistrates Office, Commissioner of the Revenue, the Sheriff's Office, the Public Law Library and multiple other local government offices and agencies. The presence of so many government offices, as well as multiple large financial buildings, contributed significantly to maintaining a viable downtown during the multiple decades of redevelopment and the large commercial exodus.

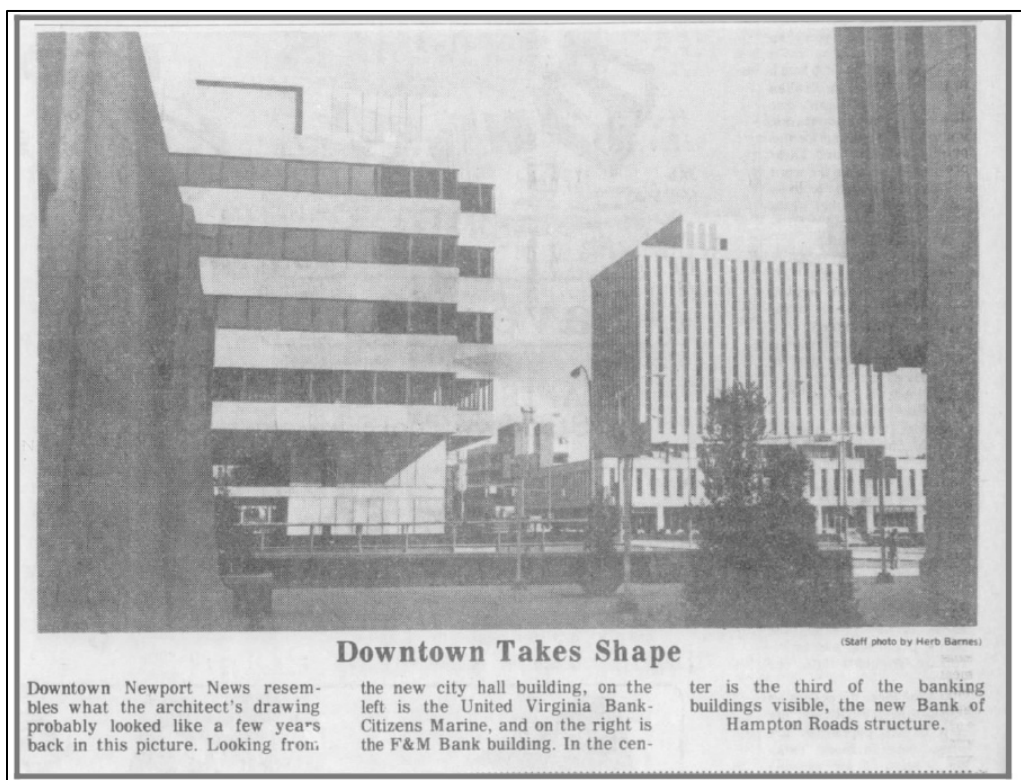


Figure 19: "Downtown Takes Shape" article from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, April 17, 1974

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant in the area of **Community Planning and Development** as a result of its association with the gradual expansion of the city from 1896 through 1949, and the eventual merger with the City of Warwick in 1958. This geographic growth of the city led directly to the movement of residents and businesses out of downtown and into the newly expanded areas of the city. The result was an extended period of Redevelopment and Renewal of the downtown area sparked by the Federal Housing Act of 1949 and resulting in multiple waves of demolition and new construction contributing to another facet of the district's association with public community planning and development. The Newport

³⁵ Reid and McCartney, *Renaissance Survey*, 158; Quarstein, Rouse, *Newport News, A Centennial History*, 202-03.

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News Redevelop and Housing Authority led these efforts with multiple rounds of redevelopment beginning in the mid-twentieth century through the 1980s with the goal of responding to the modern parking demands as well as creating more open development patterns. The lack of parking was the driving force in many businesses leaving the downtown area as well as the focal point of the city's efforts to stabilize and rebuild the downtown area. The decision by the city to redevelop so many blocks of downtown, establish several large parking lots, and focus nearly all municipal offices in a concentrated section of downtown, redefined the city of Newport News.

Criterion A: Politics/Government

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant in the area of **Politics/Government** as the location of the majority of significant local government offices and buildings. These range in time from the 1904 Newport News Post Office, Customs and Court House Building (which still serves as the post office and now is privately owned) to the purpose built 1972 City Hall and include more than a dozen local government offices and agencies spanning law enforcement, revenue, planning and most government functions. The decision by the city to not only retain its primary government offices downtown, but to expand the local government footprint over several decades, also represents another feature of the district's association with public community and planning.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Newport News Downtown Historic District is locally significant in the area of **Architecture** for its impressive collection of resources which span the history of the city from its late-nineteenth century beginnings through the mid-twentieth century period of redevelopment. The district includes a wide range of architectural styles including multiple Gothic and Romanesque Revival churches; the Beaux Arts 1904 Post Office Building; the Colonial Revival purpose-built Public Library; the mid-twentieth century Classical Revival Victory Arch and Brutalist City Hall. The collection of buildings includes many designed by prominent local architects and represents residential, commercial, religious, governmental functions spanning more than a century of development and history. Several buildings within the district already are individually listed in the area of Architecture: First Baptist Church (121-5621-0034); St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (121-5621-0002); Hotel Warwick (121-5621-0062); Newport News Public Library (121-5621-0064); and the Medical Arts Building (121-5621-0067).

Lyle Ernest Swiger

Basic Construction Building (80 29th Street)

Lyle Ernest Swiger was an architect and engineer born November 21, 1899 in Harrison County, West Virginia and died on September 26, 1948 in Newport News, Virginia. Swiger attended the College of Engineering, University of West Virginia and the Carnegie Institute of Technology, where he studied architectural engineering. He began his career in 1920 as a draftsman in Morgantown, West Virginia before working as an assistant engineer with the C&O Railway

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Company in Richmond, Virginia in the early 1930s after finishing his education. He then worked as an architect in Richmond, Virginia at several positions before moving to Newport News, Virginia to join the firm of Williams, Coile, and Pipino in the late 1940s. He is listed on his 1942 draft card as working for the Virginia Engineering Company while he lived in Norfolk, Virginia. Just before his death Swiger had established his own architectural firm in the First National Bank Building in Newport News, Virginia.³⁶ With his early death limiting the scope of his career, there are few records of his work in Hampton Roads.

Forrest Coile and Associates (Forrest W. Coile)

Basic Construction Building Addition (80 29th Street)

Bank of Hampton Roads (2700 Washington Avenue)

Forest Winfield Coile was born on September 20, 1905 in Johnstown, Ohio and died on December 25, 1994 in Newport News, Virginia. Coile studied architecture at Carnegie Institute of Technology (Pittsburgh) until 1927 and then at the Ecole Americaine des Beaux Arts Academy in France. He was a partner in several firms before forming his own firm: Williams, Coile & Pepino (1932-1941) and Williams, Coile & Blanchard (1931-1959). By 1959 Coile was head of his own firm, Forrest Coile and Associates and specialized in designing schools including approximately 120 in the greater Hampton Roads area thus tending towards an institutional design style.³⁷

James Knox Taylor

Newport News Post Office

Customs and Court House Building

James Knox Taylor (1857-1929) studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and initially worked as a draftsman in New York City. He worked for several years in private practice in St. Paul and Philadelphia before joining the office of the supervising architect of the Department of the Treasury in 1895. In 1897 Taylor took on the position of supervising architect which he held until 1912. While serving as supervising architect he declared that the “classical style of architecture” would return to federal designs; he followed this with designs which offered interpretations of neoclassical and Georgian Revival styles. In 1907 *The Brick-builder* called Taylor designed buildings to be “a splendid success in keeping abreast with the spirit of the times.” Taylor moved to private practice after his work at the Treasury Department as well as being appointed the director of the Department of Architecture at M.I.T. in 1912.³⁸

³⁶“Lyle Swiger, 48, Architect, Dies At Home,” *The Daily Press* (Newport News), September 27, 1948, p.1; “Rights Tomorrow For Lyle Swiger,” *The Daily Press* (Newport News), September 28, 1948, p.2; National Register of Historic Places, Basic Construction Company Headquarters Building, Newport News, Virginia, Prepared by Marcus Pollard, July 2018.

³⁷ John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955*, Richmond, VA: New South Architectural Press, 1997, p.92; Rogers Dey Whichard, *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia, Vol.3*, New York, 1959, p.63.

³⁸ Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 439.

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Reuben H. Hunt

First Baptist Church

Reuben H Hunt has been identified as one of the most prolific architects of the American south during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. At the age of 24, Hunt opened his own architectural firm, R. H. Hunt Company in Chattanooga, TN in 1886. Hunt designed numerous buildings in Chattanooga and has been called the city's "master architect."³⁹ Hunt designed a wide variety of building types and architectural styles. Following his success in Chattanooga, he expanded, opening a second office in Dallas, TX and designed hundreds of buildings all over the south. While skilled in designing various building types, Hunt was especially interested in church architecture, and published the three-volume *Modern Church Designs* in 1916. The books included church designs that ranged in style, scale, and price point. His work primarily followed national trends, and met the practical needs of clients. Sources estimate that at least 39 buildings designed by Hunt are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁴⁰

John Kevan Peebles

Hotel Warwick

John Kevan Peebles, originally of Petersburg, Virginia, earned a degree in engineering from the University of Virginia in 1890, and remained on staff until 1892. He is credited with designing many buildings on UVA's campus. By the mid-1890s, Peebles moved his practice to Norfolk, Virginia, where his career blossomed. He designed numerous prominent building in the Hampton Roads region, as well as other part of the state.⁴¹

Charles M. Robinson

Medical Arts Building
Newport News Public Library

Charles M. Robinson of Richmond, Virginia was among the most influential Virginia architects of the early twentieth century, particularly among educational institutions and in residential development. Prior to beginning his practice in Virginia, Robinson worked in Pennsylvania, and studied under D.S. Hopkins of Grand Rapids, Michigan, as well as J. K. Peebles of Petersburg, Virginia. From 1921 to 1931, Robinson served as the College Architect for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, and his work there has been noted as one of his crowning achievements, and influenced the popularization of Colonial Revival design of the twentieth century.⁴² Robinson's commercial designs are few, as are his Newport News

³⁹ "Reuben Harrison Hunt," Preserve Chattanooga, <https://www.preservechattanooga.com/hunt> (accessed 6 Dec 2022).

⁴⁰ Gavin Townsend, Zoe Rhine, Laura Phillips, Catherin W. Bisher, "Ruben H. Hunt (1862-1938)," *North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000088> (accessed 6 Dec 2022).

⁴¹ Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 343-350.

⁴² Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 386.

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commissions, making the Medical Arts Building and the Newport News Public Library locally significant works of this Virginia master.⁴³

Carl Ruehrmund

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church

Carl Ruehrmund was born in Berlin, Germany in 1855 where he studied architecture and engineering. Prior to immigrating to the United States in 1881, he was employed by the German government. By 1882, Ruehrmund had moved to Richmond, Virginia, where he worked with German-born architect Albert Lybrock. Ruehrmund inherited the practice in 1886, following Lybrock's death. By 1916, Ruehrmund had entered into partnership with his son, Max E. Ruehrmund. Carl Ruehrmund designed numerous buildings in Richmond of various types including residential, commercial, religious, and institutional examples, making his design of the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church a rare example of his work in the city.⁴⁴

⁴³ National Register of Historic Places, Medical Arts Building, Newport News, Virginia, Prepared by Ashley M. Neville and Sarah Meacham, Feb 2002.

⁴⁴ Wells and Dalton, *The Virginia Architects*, 392-395; Robert P. Winthrop, "Architects of Richmond: Carl Reuhrmund," *Architecture Richmond*, <https://architecturerichmond.com/2013/10/14/architects-of-richmond-carl-ruehrmund/>.

Newport News Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register

Newport News Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

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designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 91 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Newport News Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

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

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

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the Newport News Downtown Historic District encompass the areas of the historic commercial, residential and government core that retain integrity associated with the district's areas and period of significance. The district's historic setting and all known historic resources associated with the earliest part of the City of Newport News, Virginia have been included within the historic boundary, and any areas which have lost integrity have been excluded.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Marcus Pollard, Jessica Archer, Ashlen Stump, Victoria Leonard, Ethan Halberg, Erica Howard, Kayla Halberg
organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group
street & number: 536 W 35th Street
city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23508
e-mail: marcus@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com
telephone: 757-923-1900
date: February 2023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

Newport News Downtown Historic District
 Name of Property

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- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

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

Photo Log

Name of Property: Newport News Downtown Historic District

City or Vicinity: Newport News

County: City of Newport News State: Virginia

Photographer: Marcus Pollard

Date Photographed: May 10, 2022

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

| Photo Number of 24 | Description | Camera Direction |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Corner of 35 th Street & Warwick Boulevard | SW |
| 2 | Corner of 36 th Street & Washington Avenue | SE |
| 3 | 221 34 th Street (St. Paul's Episcopal Church) | NW |
| 4 | Corner of 34 th Street and Huntington Avenue | S |
| 5 | 230 33 rd Street (Saint Vincent De Paul Catholic Church) | S |
| 6 | 3302 Huntington Avenue (Coca-Cola Plant) | E |
| 7 | 317-325 32 nd Street | W |
| 8 | Corner of 33 rd Street and Warwick Boulevard | SW |
| 9 | 3114 Washington Avenue (Palace Theatre, historically) | NE |
| 10 | 80-90 31 st Street (St. James Terrace Apartments) | SE |
| 11 | 81-91 30 th Street | W |

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| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 12 | 119 29 th Street (First Baptist Church, historically) | NW |
| 13 | 2800 Washington Avenue (Montgomery Ward, historically) | SE |
| 14 | 228 29 th Street (Trinity United Methodist Church) | SE |
| 15 | Corner of 28 th Street and West Avenue | W |
| 16 | Super Block Park from the corner of 27 th Street and Washington Avenue | W |
| 17 | 2712 Washington Avenue | E |
| 18 | Super Block Park from the corner of 28 th Street and West Avenue | SE |
| 19 | Christopher Newport Park | W |
| 20 | 101 25 th Street (Newport News Post Office) | SE |
| 21 | 101 25 th Street (former Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church) | SE |
| 22 | 2501 West Avenue (Victory Arch) | SW |
| 23 | 2410 West Avenue (Hotel Warwick, historically) | E |
| 24 | Corner of 26 th Street and Washington Avenue | N |
| 25 | 2501 Huntington Avenue (Newport News Court House) | S |
| 26 | Looking toward the Corner of 25 th Street and Washington Avenue from the Newport News Treasurer's Office | NE |
| 27 | 2400 Washington Avenue (Newport News City Hall) from Washington Avenue | SE |
| 28 | 2400 Washington Avenue (Newport News City Hall) from 23 rd Street | NE |
| 29 | 200 block of 23 rd Street | E |
| 30 | 2295 Harbor Road (former C&O Depot) | W |

Figures and Historic Images Log

- 1899 Sanborn Map showing the large amount of railway lines at the top along with the grid and parcel divisions originally planned for the city; Virginia Avenue is now Warwick Boulevard
- 223 29th Street (DHR# 121-5621-0042)
- 323-325 33rd Street (DHR# 121-5621-0007)
- 3015 West Avenue, The Marlborough (DHR# 121-5621-0070)
- 74-85 30th Street, St. James Terrace Apartments (DHR# 121-5621-0043)
- 90 28th Street, Seaview Lofts (DHR# 121-5621-0029)
- 3506 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0090) and 3508 Washington Avenue (DHR# 121-5621-0091)
- 2900 Washington Avenue (DHR#121-5621-0088)
- 2712 Washington Avenue (DHR#121-5621-0073); rear view from 27th Street
- 228 29th Street, Trinity United Methodist Church (DHR# 121-5621-0057)
- 2400 Washington Avenue, City Hall (DHR# 121-5621-0077)
- 2501 West Avenue, Victory Arch (DHR# 121-5621-0058)

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Name of Property

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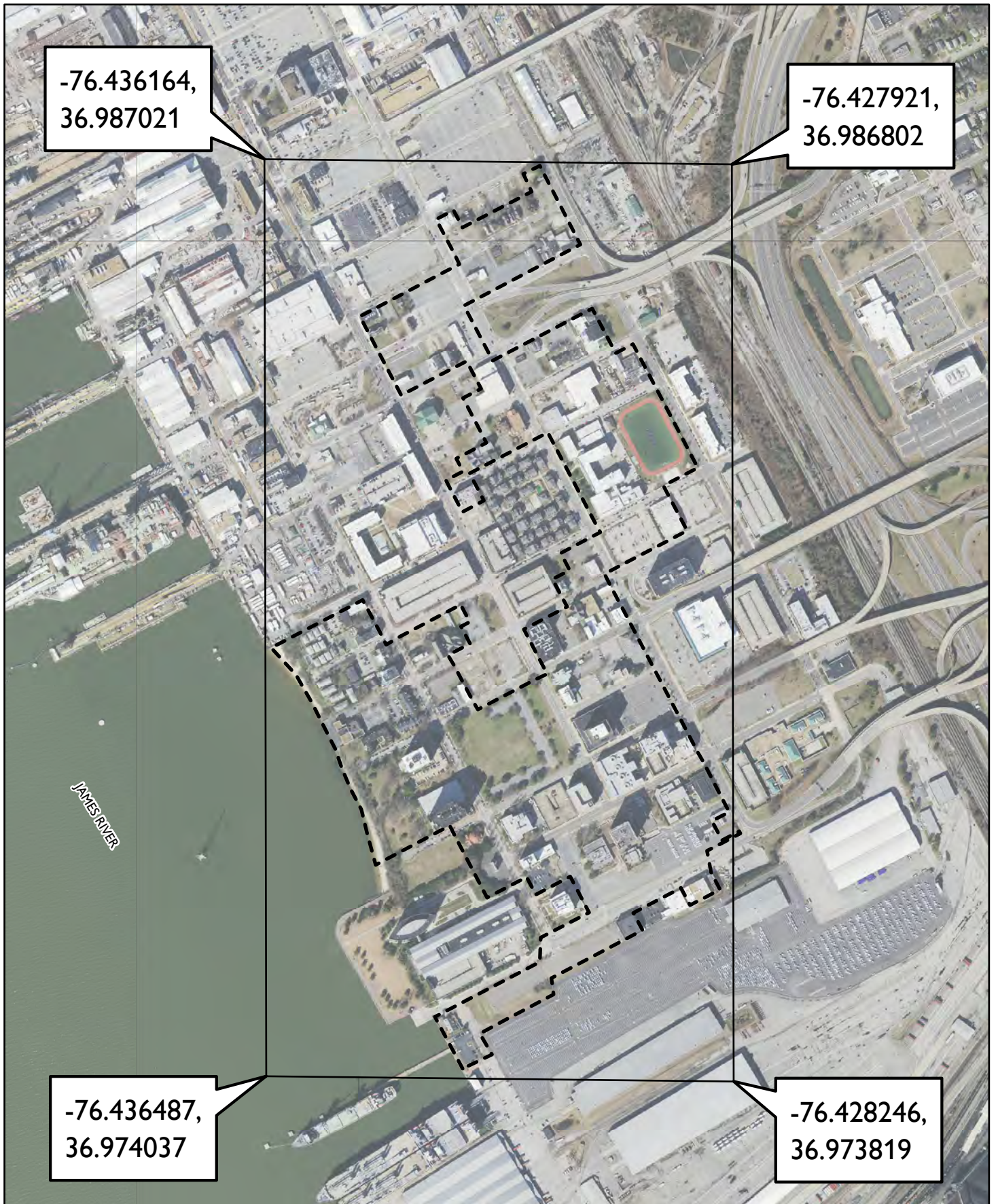
13. A History of Boundary Changes, 1896-1940 from "The Making of a City: Joseph C. Biggins' Newport News, 1925-1965"
14. Photograph from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, May 2, 1964
15. "New Sears Store Is One Of Most Modern In Virginia," article from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, April 14, 1959
16. Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, October 2, 1965
17. Image from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, March 8, 1965
18. "New Downtown Bank Construction Planned" photograph from an article in the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, June 9, 1972
19. "Downtown Takes Shape" article from the Daily Press, Newport News, Virginia, April 17, 1974

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

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

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

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



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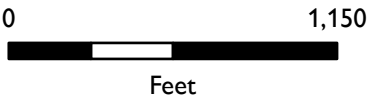
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Location Map

Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
DHR ID #121-5621
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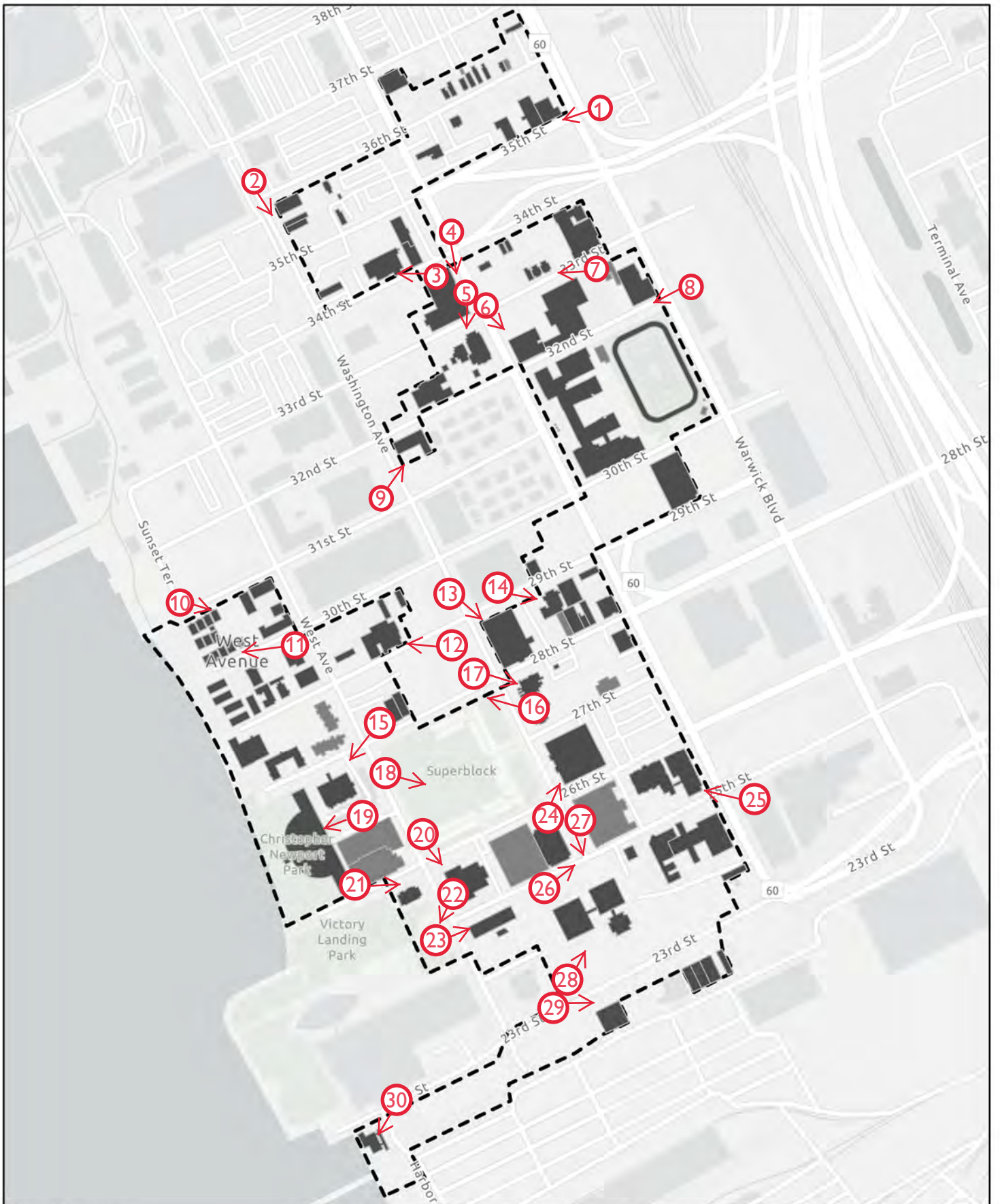


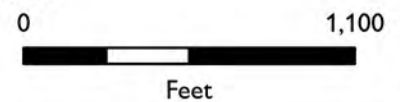
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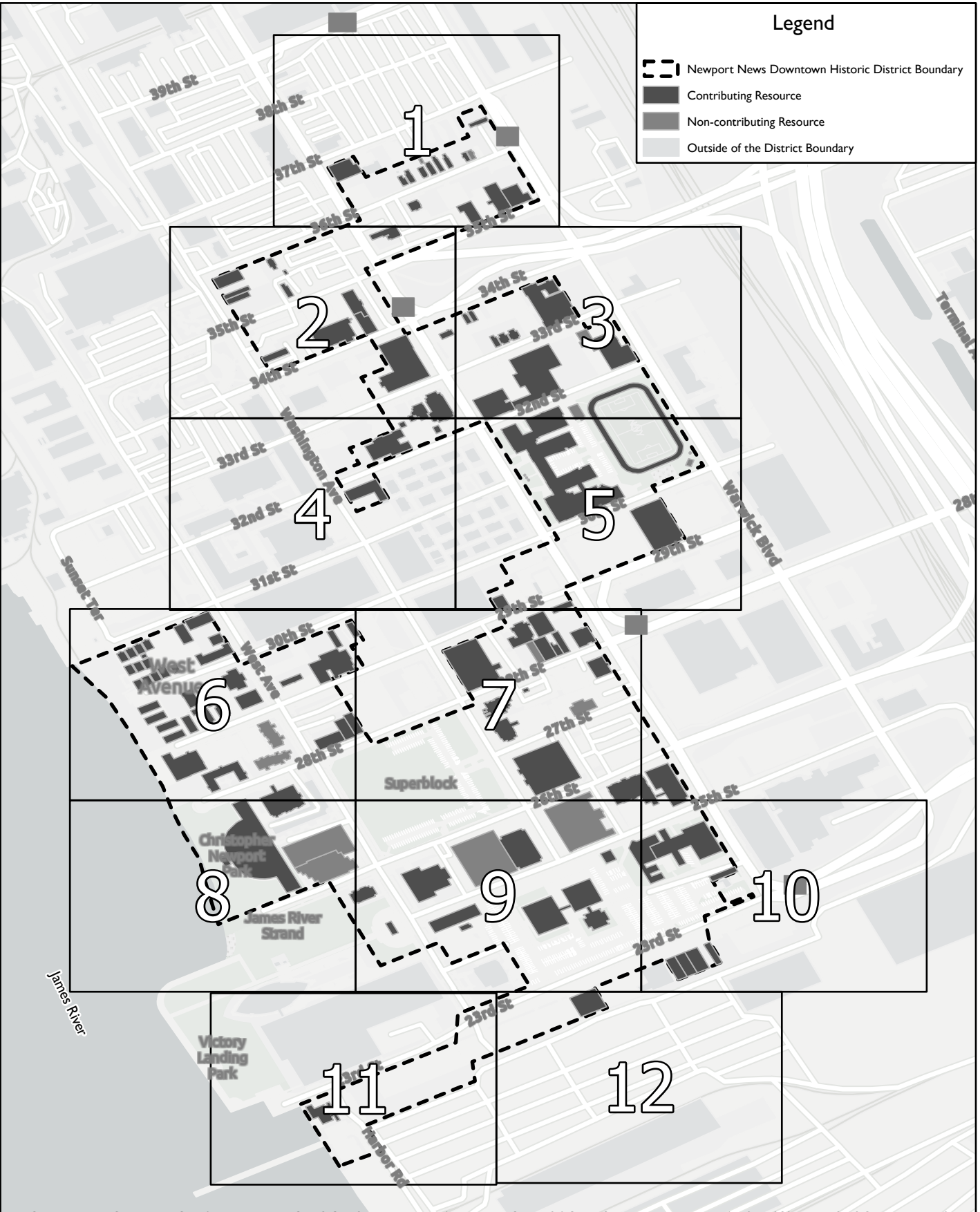
Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia

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August 2022









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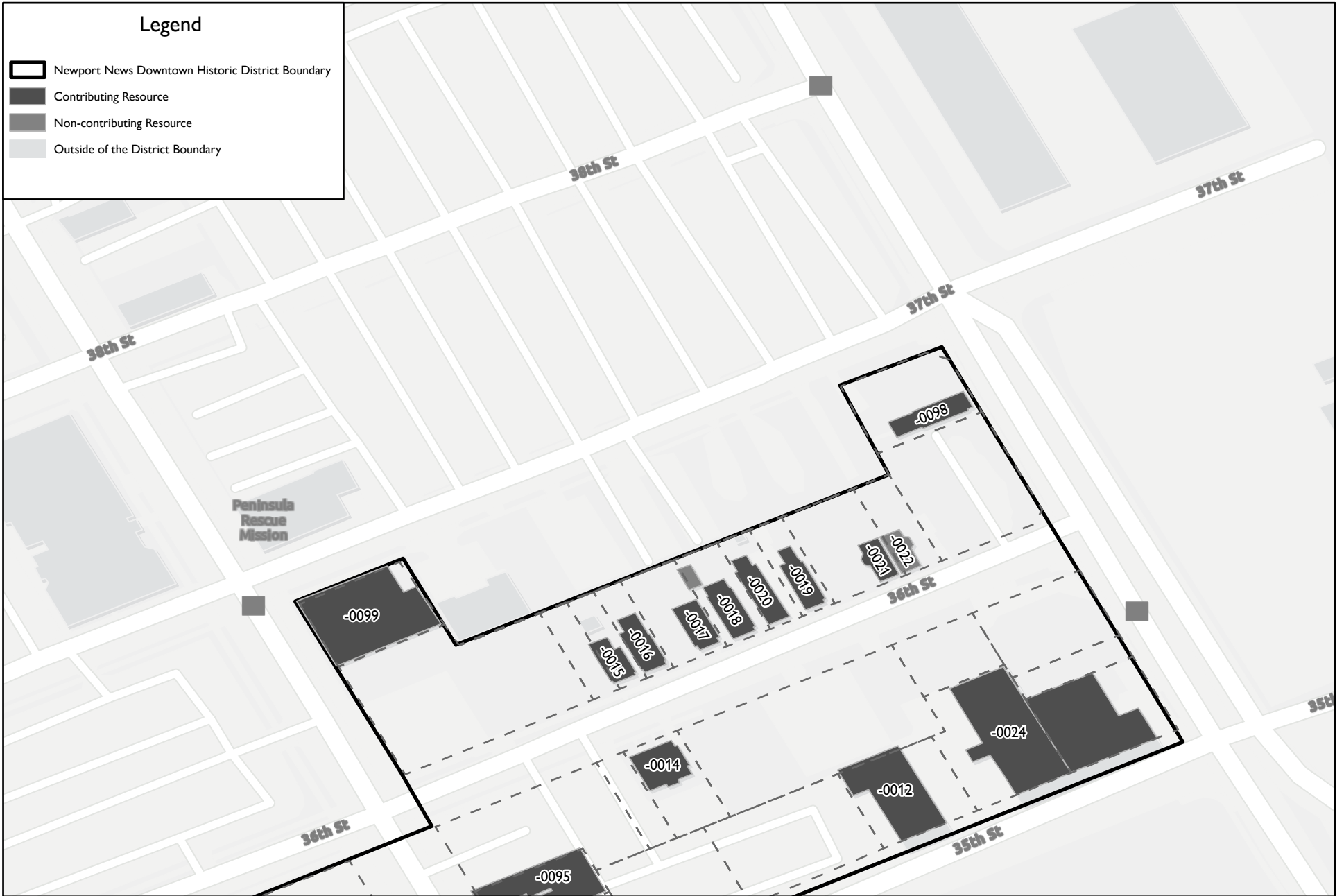
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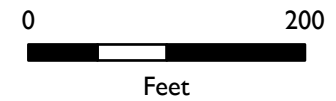
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


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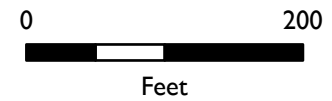
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


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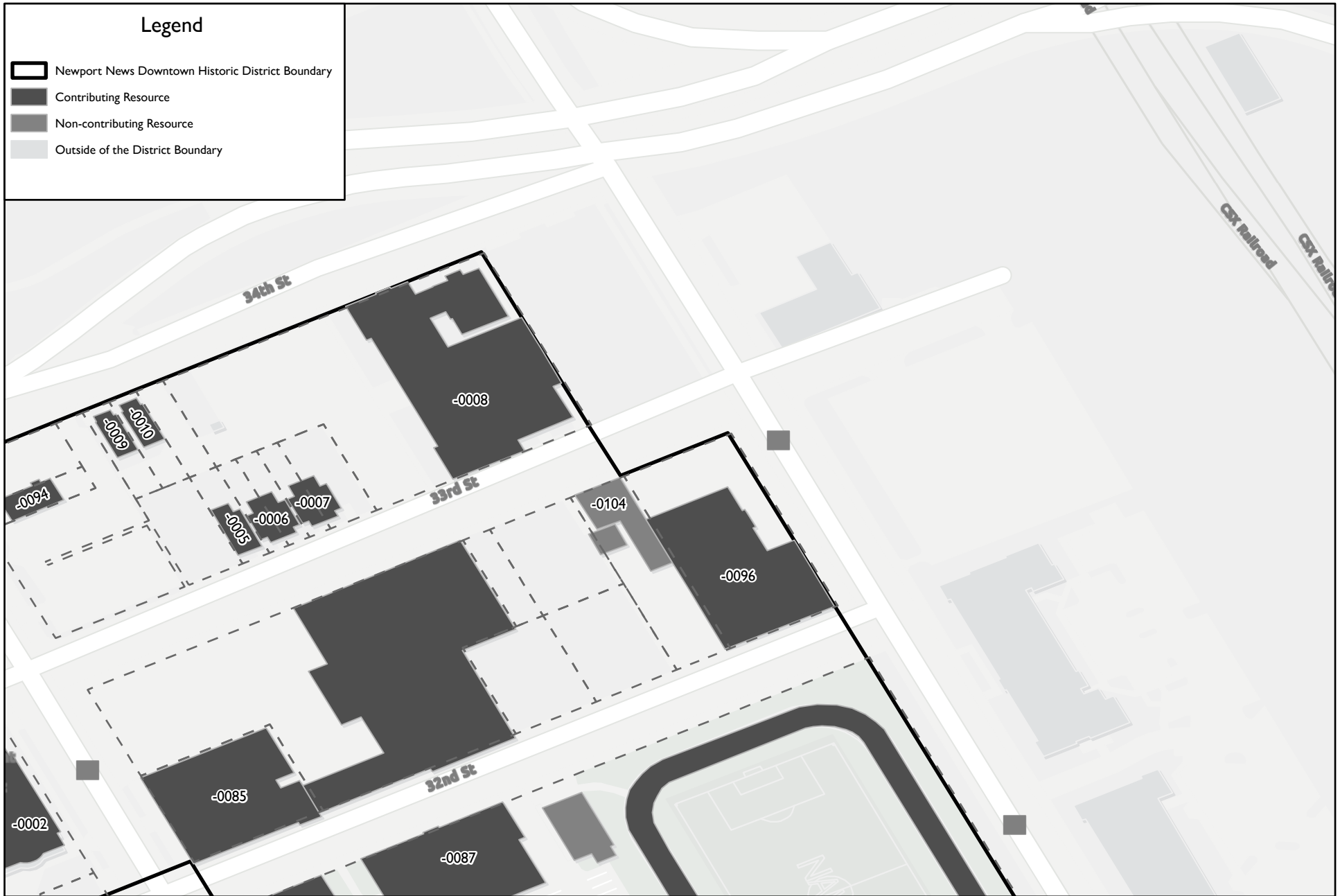
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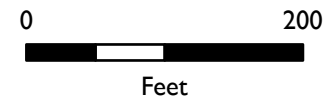
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


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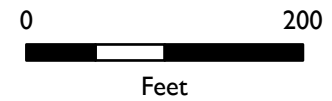
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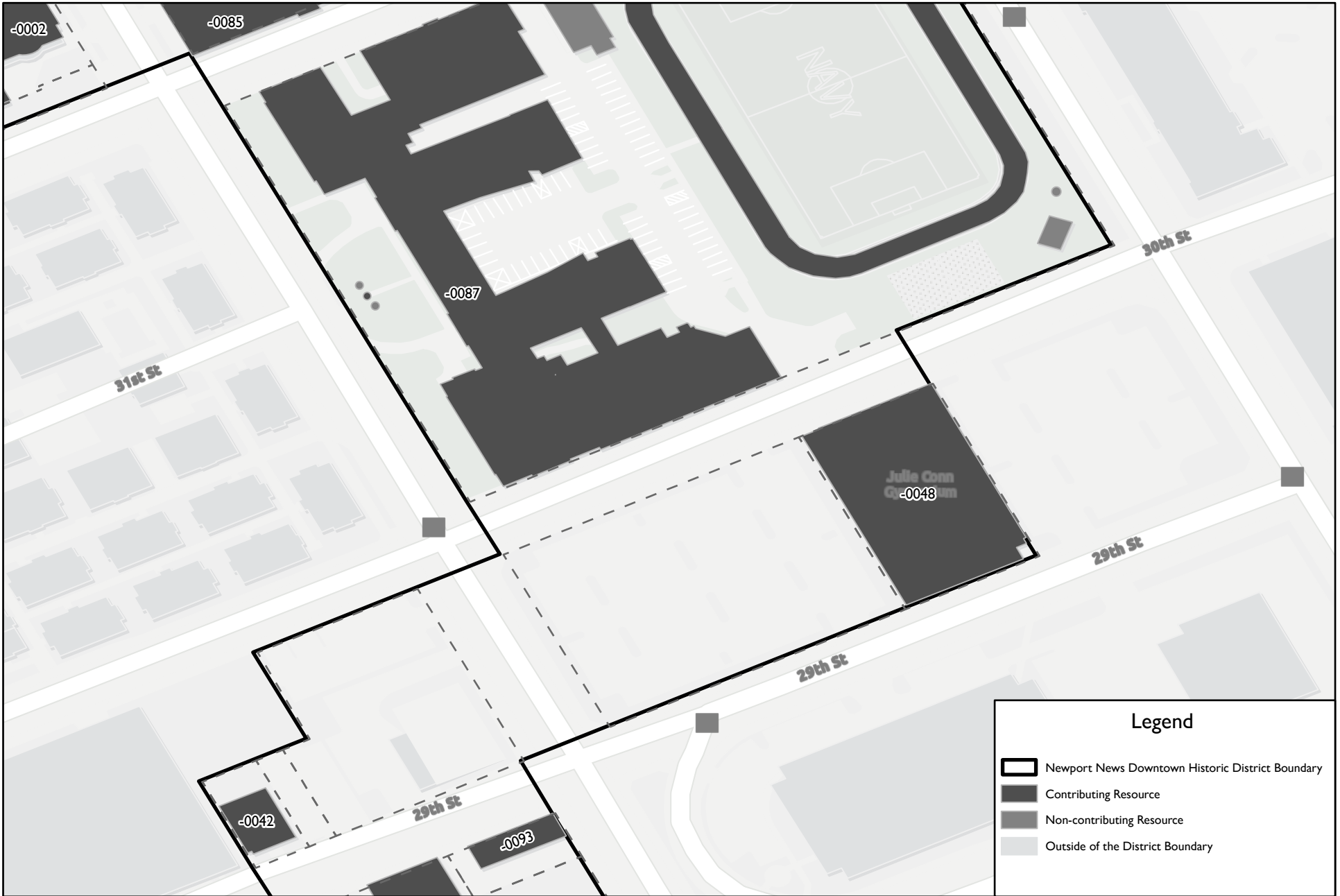


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




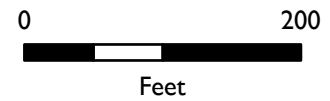
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Newport News Downtown Historic District

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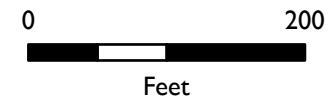
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


Newport News Downtown Historic District

Newport News, Virginia
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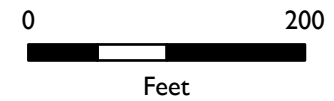
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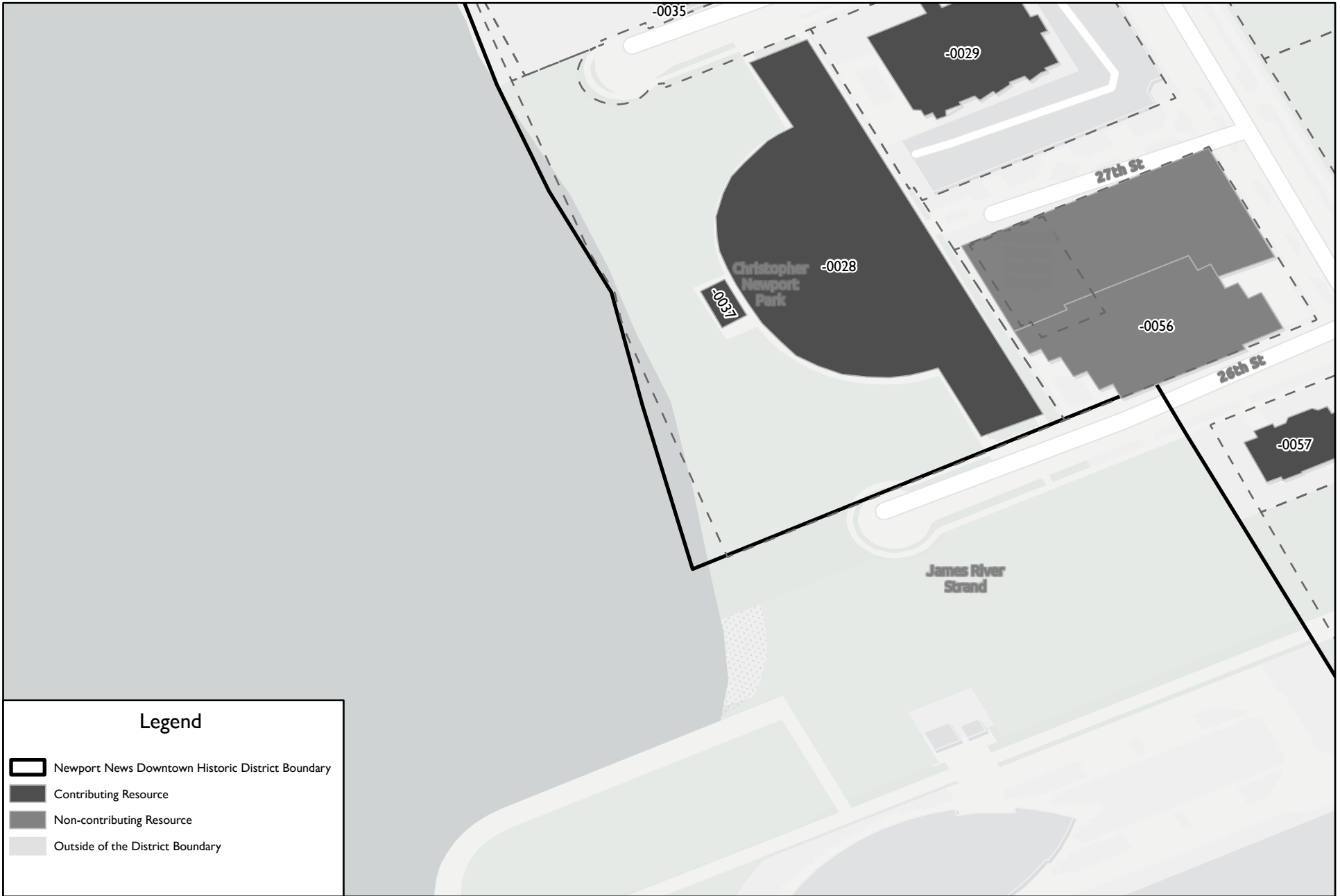
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Sketch Map 7 of 12





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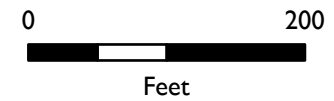
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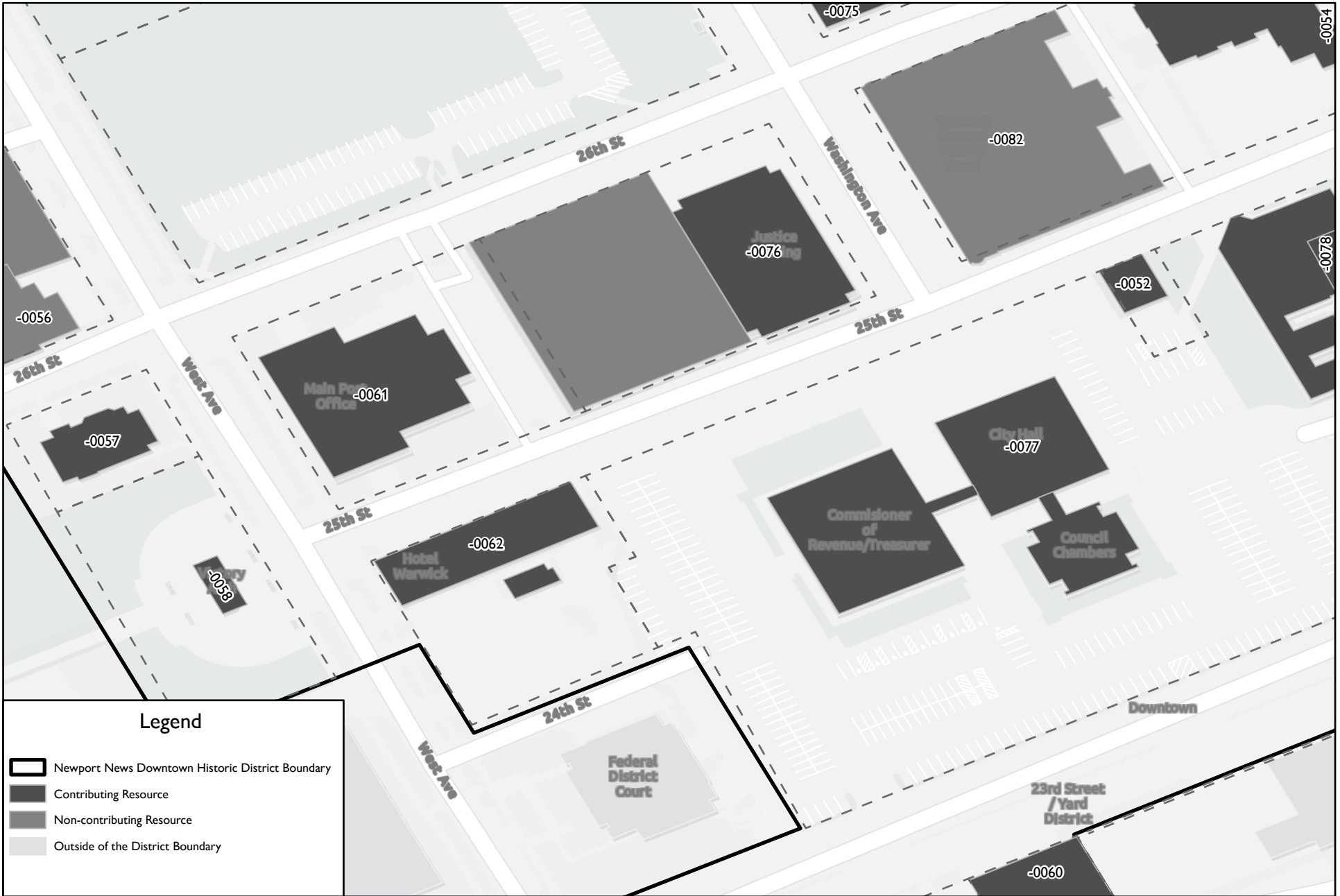
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Sketch Map 8 of 12





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Newport News, Virginia
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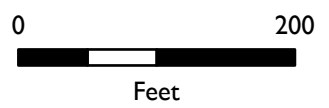
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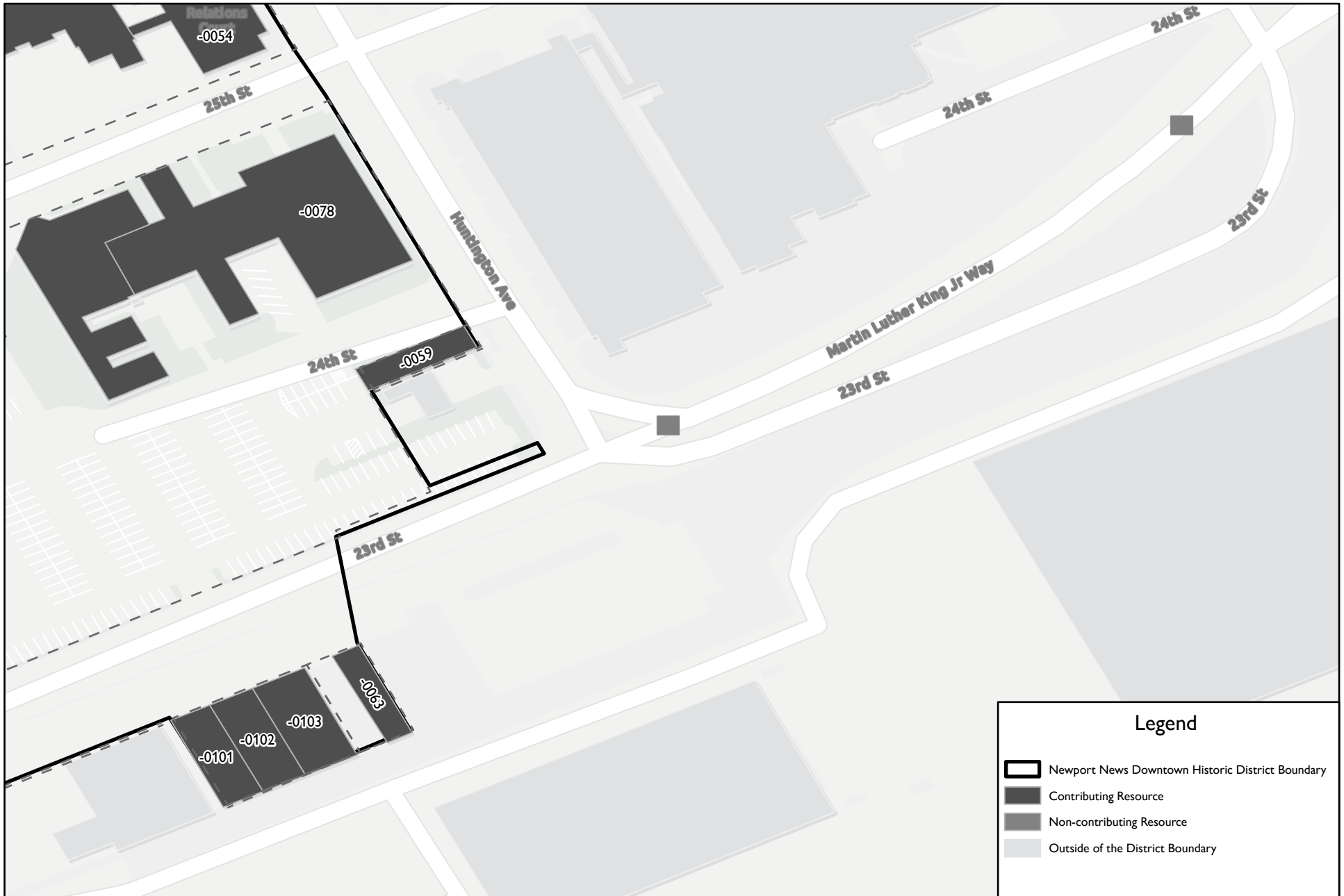
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Sketch Map 9 of 12

Newport News Downtown Historic District

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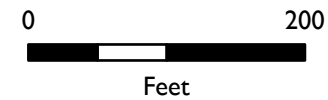


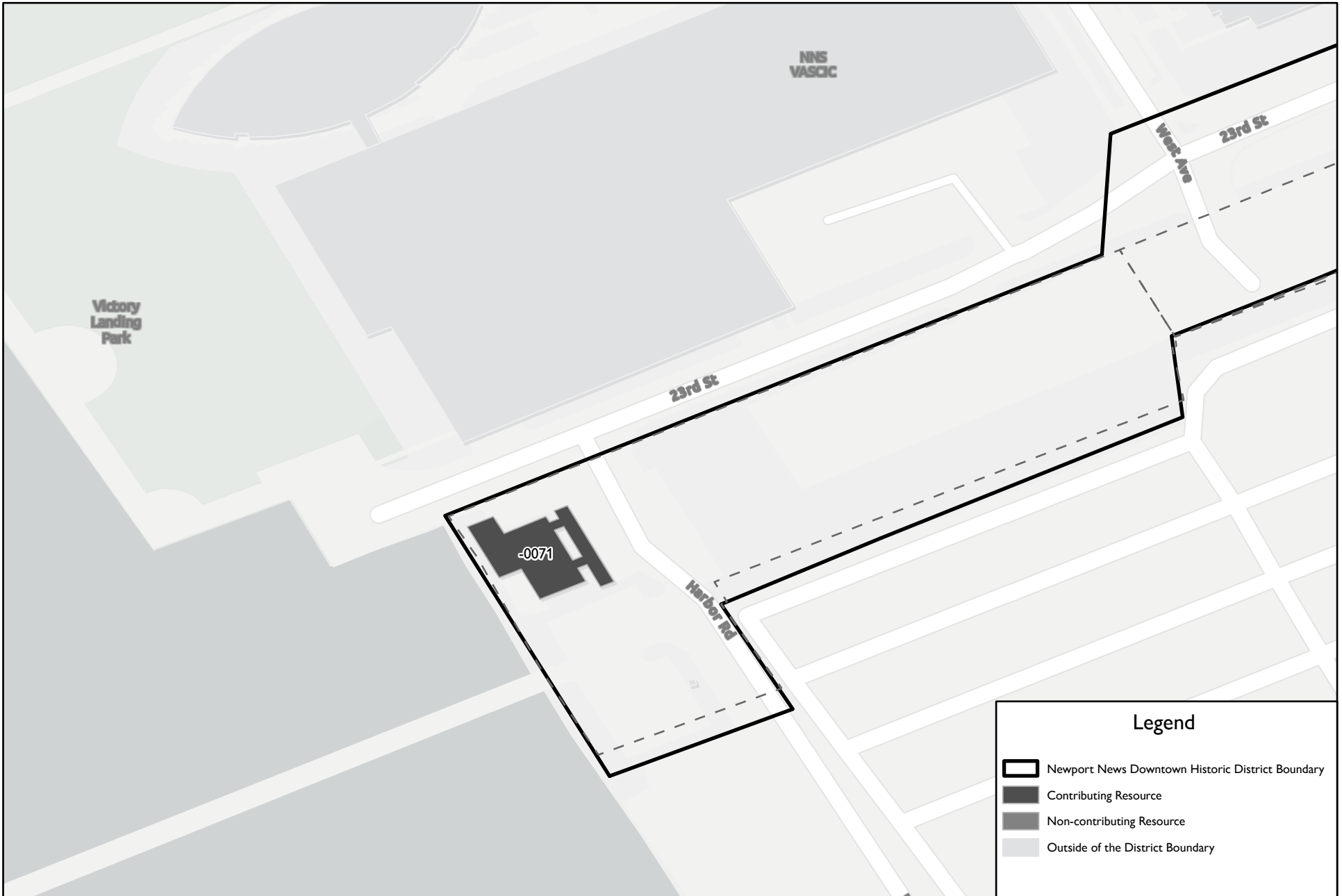


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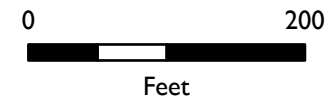


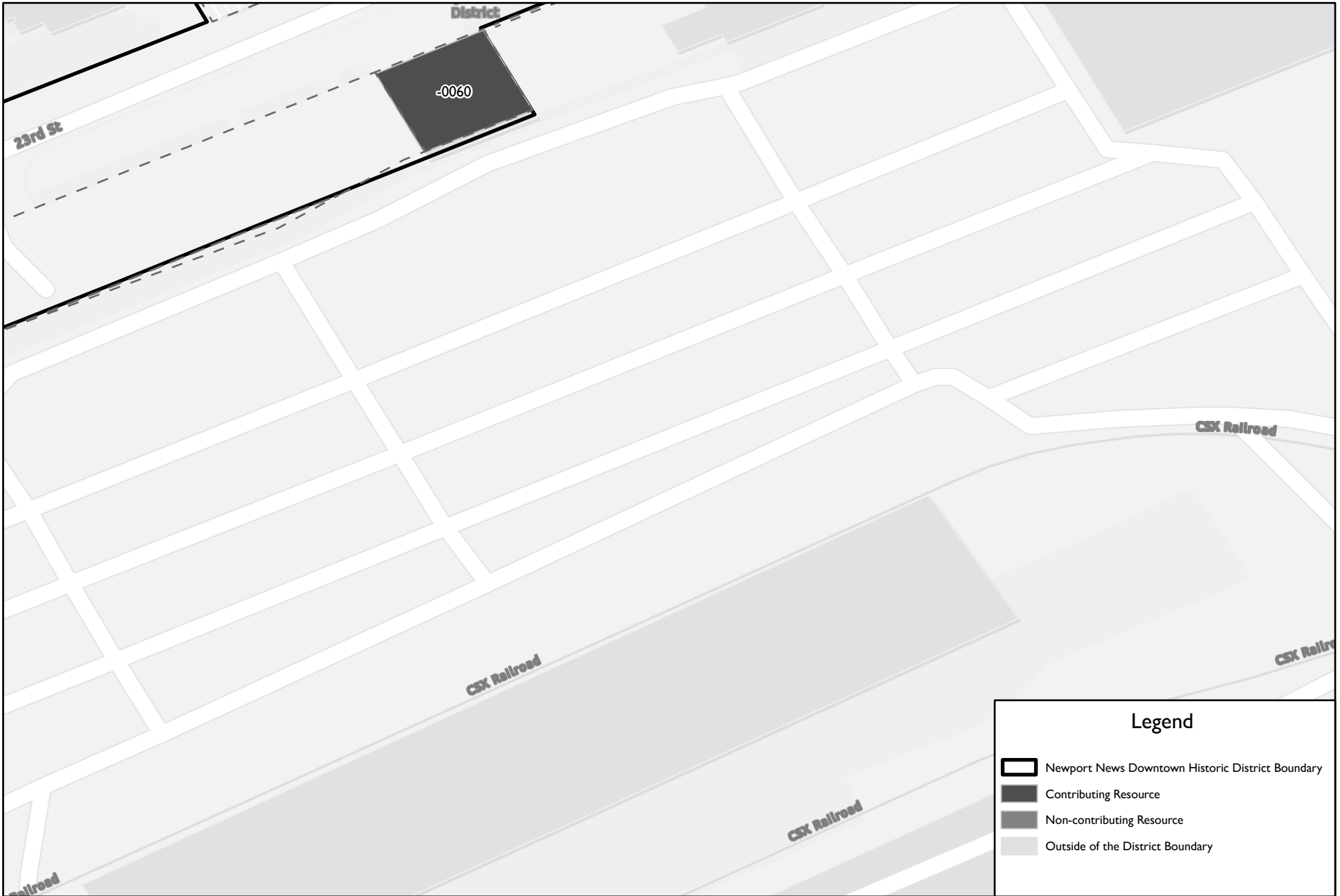


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