



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 149-5010

1. General Information

District name(s): Vinton Downtown Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: S. Pollard Street, Lee Avenue, Jackson Avenue

City or Town: Vinton

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

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: approximately 7 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town X Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural _____

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

The proposed Vinton Downtown Historic District is located within the incorporated Town of Vinton in Roanoke County, Virginia. The approximately 7-acre district is located at the northwest end of town. Centered around the intersection of S. Pollard Street and Lee Avenue, the proposed historic district encompasses approximately four blocks of commercial buildings constructed from ca. 1900 through the 1980s. The district is characterized by curbs and sidewalks with gooseneck streetlights. The main artery through the district is S. Pollard Street, which extends north-south. The side streets, running east-west to form a grid, are Lee Avenue and Jackson Avenue. The district is generally bound by Walnut Avenue, Washington Avenue, Maple Avenue, and Jackson Avenue. The terrain is relatively flat along S. Pollard Street, with Lee and Jackson Avenues gently sloping from east to west.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Commercial Style, New Formalism

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

If any builders or developers are known, please list here: N/A

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): ca. 1890 - 1985

Are there any known threats to this district? N/A

Narrative Description:

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

The proposed Vinton Downtown Historic District comprises the downtown area bounded by industrial and residential areas and an active railroad line. Centered around the intersection of S. Pollard Street and Lee Avenue, the streets are laid out in a grid pattern with curbs and public sidewalks. The one- and two-story buildings in the district post-date the formation of the town in 1884 and are of brick or concrete block construction. Construction has continued into the present as the area continues to function as the commercial hub for the town. The buildings throughout the district reflect a palette of hybrid commercial styles. Common detailing includes corbelled brickwork, decorative pressed metal cornices, and rockface block facades. While some modifications have occurred over the years, they are generally limited to remodeled storefronts and some contemporary exterior cladding. On July 2, 2022, a fire occurred at 101 E. Lee Avenue. Due to structural damage from the fire, the building at 101 E. Lee Avenue (149-0047), along with the buildings at 103 E. Lee Avenue, 107 E. Lee Avenue, and 208 S. Pollard Street (149-0048) have all been demolished and the lots at the southeast corner of E. Lee Avenue and S. Pollard Street are vacant.

An early example of vernacular commercial construction is the ca. 1900 commercial building at *131 E. Lee Avenue* (149-0044), at the east end of the district. One of the earliest buildings in Downtown Vinton, this two-story, masonry building features decorative, pressed tin cornices at the parapet and above the storefront. The rockface block walls are laid in a pattern resembling Flemish bond with blocks of varying shapes of block. The central, recessed entrance is flanked by wood-frame storefront windows and transoms. A furniture store and a drugstore historically occupied the building.

Several other buildings within the district feature painted rockface block walls, including the nearby commercial buildings at *129 E. Lee Avenue*, *118 E. Lee Avenue*, and *116 E. Lee Avenue*. The ca. 1922 First Baptist Church at *111 W. Jackson Avenue* is also constructed of painted rockface blocks, which were handmade by local tradesman, Albert Woods. This church was organized by black congregants in 1883 and the current building replaced an earlier church building on the same site. This rectangular church has a front gable roof and stands on a concrete foundation. The façade is characterized by a projecting entrance bay.

The ca. 1935 building at *100 E. Lee Avenue* is an example of vernacular commercial construction in the second quarter of the 20th century, when growth in Vinton was rapidly accelerating. The large, two-story brick building is sited on a prominent corner lot at E. Lee Avenue and S. Pollard Street. The façade comprises two storefront systems with central, recessed entrances flanked by plate glass windows in aluminum frames. Arched wood pediments with keystones surmount the second-story double-hung sash window openings.

The two buildings at the north end of the district (*109 and 111 S. Pollard Street*), are well-preserved mid-century examples of the Main Street Commercial style. These one-story, masonry buildings are characterized by brick facades, parapeted roofs, recessed entrances, and plate glass storefront windows. The buildings represent the evolution of vernacular commercial construction into the second half of the 20th century.

The ca. 1965 building at *222 S. Pollard Street* is an example of commercial construction in the second half of the 20th century influenced by the Colonial Revival style. The one-story, masonry commercial building has a parapeted flat roof, brick veneer façade and a metal cornice at the roofline with detailing resembling dentils. The two single-leaf front entrances have Colonial Revival-style door surrounds. The central faux-bay window contains fixed, multi-lite, wood windows with white trim.

The ca. 1965 bank at *200 E. Lee Avenue* is a Modern example of commercial construction within the proposed district. Designed in the New Formalism style, the bank features Modern interpretation of

Classical elements with the projecting steel columns. The heavy roof slab and symmetrical facade are typical of New Formalist buildings. The incorporation of the brick planters into the design of the building also reflects the Wrightian inclination of integrating buildings into the landscape.

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

The Vinton Downtown Historic District is located in the incorporated town of Vinton. Vinton is the only town in Roanoke County, which is located in Southwest Virginia at the southern end of the Shenandoah Valley. The county lies between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the southeast and the Appalachian range to the northwest. Located in the northeast section of the county, the incorporated town limits of Vinton occupy 3.2 square miles. Vinton is bounded by Glade Creek to the north-northwest, Tinker Creek to the southwest, Roanoke River to the south, and Wolf Creek to the east. The downtown is laid out in a grid pattern. The topography along S. Pollard Street is generally flat while the side streets gradually slope down from east to west. S. Pollard Street is the main artery in the district, running north to south. Cross streets include Lee Avenue and Jackson Avenue. The district features a collection of commercial buildings that are generally sited at grade, with no setbacks, along public sidewalks, and curbs. The historic functions of these buildings included grocery stores, general stores, furniture stores, offices, restaurants, a bank, a municipal building, a church, a post office, and an automobile dealership. Although many of the specific uses of these buildings have changed over time, they continue to function as commercial buildings.

4. District's History and Significance

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

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

Statement of Significance

The Vinton Downtown Historic District appears to be eligible for National Register listing at the local level of significance, under Criterion A (Commerce) with a period of significance of 1884-1965, spanning from the incorporation date of the town through the year immediately following the 1963-1964 annexation, when the last significant development in the district within the last fifty years occurred.

Historical Background

The community known as Gish's Mill developed around the grist mill established by David Gish Jr. during the mid-19th century. As the earliest landowners, businessmen, and namesakes in Gish's Mill, the Gish family members were leaders in developing the community. After the completion of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in the area in 1852, William Gish also established a general store and a depot along the line. William Gish's sons George McHenry Gish and Griffin Gish took over their father's mercantile business after the Civil War. In 1870, the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad became consolidated under General William Mahone's new Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio Railroad. That same year, George McHenry Gish leveraged his military clout and convinced Mahone to build a new depot in Gish's Mill. Not only did he donate the land upon which the railroad built the depot, Gish also

gave the land that provided access east of the depot on what would become Washington Avenue in the town of Vinton. George McHenry Gish led efforts to build a town at Gish's Mill through sponsoring a town survey ca. 1875 and auctioning lots for development (Kagey:65).

In 1867, the grist mill was sold to Isaac W. Vinyard. The Vinyards were another prominent family in the community. It is widely believed, although not proven, that the name "Vinton" derives from the combination of Vinyard and Preston (another distinguished local family). The name is also said to come from combining "Vinyard" with "town" as the Vinyards owned land and several businesses in the community. They also sold a large amount of land to the town on January 26, 1876 (Coulson:11).

In the early 1880s an influx of people moved to the area of Big Lick (later to become the City of Roanoke) to work at the newly established Norfolk & Western Railroad's machine repair and shops. Located just a mile to the west of Gish's Mill, this new industry increased its population as well. The Crozer Steel and Iron Company was also located just west of Tinker Creek in 1882 (Coulson:13). This significant influx of industry and associated jobs created a population boom in Gish's Mill as well as Big Lick. Following the charter of Big Lick as the City of Roanoke in 1882, the residents of Gish's Mill sought to retain their own identity as a separate community. The General Assembly incorporated the 1.5-square mile Town of Vinton on March 17, 1884. By this time, the population of Gish's Mill had increased from 96 in 1880 to 584 in 1884 (Coulson:14). This boom continued with the population reaching 1,057 in 1890 (Coulson:17). The 1893-1894 Chaitaigne's Virginia Gazetteer, a statewide business directory, listed three land companies, eight carpenters (or builders), one iron foundry and one insurance agent operating in Vinton. As the town continued to grow, subsequent editions included an attorney, a butcher, a druggist, a dentist, several doctors, two sawmills, two saloons, a coal agent, and a weekly newspaper named the Vinton Dispatch (Coulson:15).

In the first decades of the 20th century, the town of Vinton continued to grow as a commercial and industrial center for the northeast area of Roanoke County. Between 1900 and 1910, the population increased from 1,438 to 1,928. The downtown featured general stores, grocery stores, restaurants, and the People's Bank of Vinton, which opened in 1910. Two resources in the proposed district date to this period, including the ca. 1900 furniture store at 131 E. Lee Avenue and the ca. 1910 office building at 125 E. Lee Avenue. The first electric streetcar connected Vinton to Roanoke in 1920 and provided transportation for Vinton residents to jobs in the city. However, industries established in Vinton by 1920 included a knitting mill, enamel factory, and a canning company that provided local employment (Coulson:16-17). The former Gish's Mill was reorganized following a fire in 1924 as the Vinton Milling Company and continued as a major employer. The success of the Vinton Milling Co., which operated under various owners until ca. 1980, inspired other mills to launch various industrial operations in Vinton in the 1930s. Burlington Mills constructed a weaving plant in 1936 on Tinker Creek. In 1937, Southern States Cooperative also established a mill along Tinker Creek. These mills provided employment to hundreds of people in Vinton, bringing new residents to town and continued growth in the commercial district. Three buildings in the proposed district date to the 1920s with an additional seven buildings constructed in the 1930s.

The 1920s and 1930s also saw the establishment of a number of churches in Vinton. The earliest churches included Vinton Baptist, Campbell Memorial Presbyterian, St. James Lutheran, and Reed Street Baptist Church. followed by Vinton Church of the Brethren, First Christian, First Church of God, and Midland Baptist Church. The only one of these churches to be located in the proposed district is the ca. 1922 First Baptist Church. The church is located at 111 W. Jackson Avenue on the site of the original 1899 church built by a Black congregation that formed in 1883. The construction of new and larger schools on the outskirts of downtown also reflects the growth of the town. In 1915, the Vinton School, later renamed Roland E. Cook School (NRHP 2017) replaced the smaller schools from the turn of the century to serve first through eighth grades. By 1924, the school had doubled in

size with a large addition. In 1927, a new high school was constructed. In 1933, the larger William Byrd High School replaced the Vinton High School, which became the junior high school, and the former Vinton School became Roland E. Cook Elementary School.

By 1940, the town of Vinton was fully established with utilities including electricity, water and sewer service, natural gas, and telephone service (Coulson:18). A total of seven commercial buildings in the proposed district were constructed in the 1940s including five stores, two restaurants, and an automobile dealership. Most notably, in 1941 Otto Goode opened the Goode Department Store at 113 E. Lee Avenue, which he would continue operating until 1970 (Kagey:531).

Following World War II, the town invested in recreational facilities on the outskirts of downtown such as the Vinton War Memorial and a public swimming pool. Building construction continued within the proposed district during the 1950s and several new businesses opened, including the H & H Supermarket (which continued operating into the mid-1970s and now is the location of the post office), DeLong's Department Store, and McCarty's Paint and Supply at 121 W. Lee Avenue (Kagey:530). In 1956, Otto Goode and Dr. Herman L. Horne initiated the annual Vinton Dogwood Festival, which continues to draw large crowds downtown every spring for music, games, food, local vendors, a parade, and other festivities (Kagey:534).

The 1960s marked a period of tremendous growth for Vinton with the 1963-1964 annexation that expanded the town limits from 1.1 to 3.2 square miles with an immediate increase of 1,500 town residents (Kagey:529). Between 1960 and 1970, census records show an 84.9 percent increase in the town population from 3,432 to 6,347. By 1980, an additional 1,700 residents increased the population to 8,027 (Kagey:570). While most of this growth occurred within the areas of annexation, two buildings within the proposed district were constructed ca. 1965 and demonstrate that the downtown continued to serve as the commercial center of Vinton. In particular, the ca. 1965 bank building at 200 E. Lee Avenue designed in the New Formalism style represents the traditional commercial role of the downtown in an updated mid-century aesthetic.

Bibliography

Blanton, Alison and Kate Kronau. "Gish Mill, National Register Nomination." Virginia Department of Historic Resources: Richmond, VA, 2020.

Coulson, Darlene. *Reconnaissance Survey of Architectural and Historical Resources in the Town of Vinton*. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA, August 1992.

Kagey, Deedie Dent. *When Past is Prologue: A History of Roanoke County*. Roanoke County Sesquicentennial Committee, Roanoke, VA, 1988.

Lee, Amanda. "Vinton Downtown Historic District." Virginia Cultural Resource Information System, 2013.

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

Private: X Public\Local X Public\State Public\Federal

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

name/title: Richard "Pete" Peters, Asst. Town Manager/Director of Economic Development

organization: Town of Vinton

street & number: 311 South Pollard Street

city or town: Vinton state: VA zip code: 24179

e-mail: rpeters@vintonva.gov telephone: 540-343-1508

Applicant's Signature: Richard W Peters Jr
Date: 8/18/23

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

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

Contact person: Richard "Pete" Peters

Daytime Telephone: 540-343-1508

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

name/title: Kate Kronau, Preservation Associate

organization: Hill Studio

street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW

city or town: Roanoke state: VA zip code: 24011

e-mail: kkronau@hillstudio.com telephone: (540) 342-5263

Date: August 9, 2023

7. Notification

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

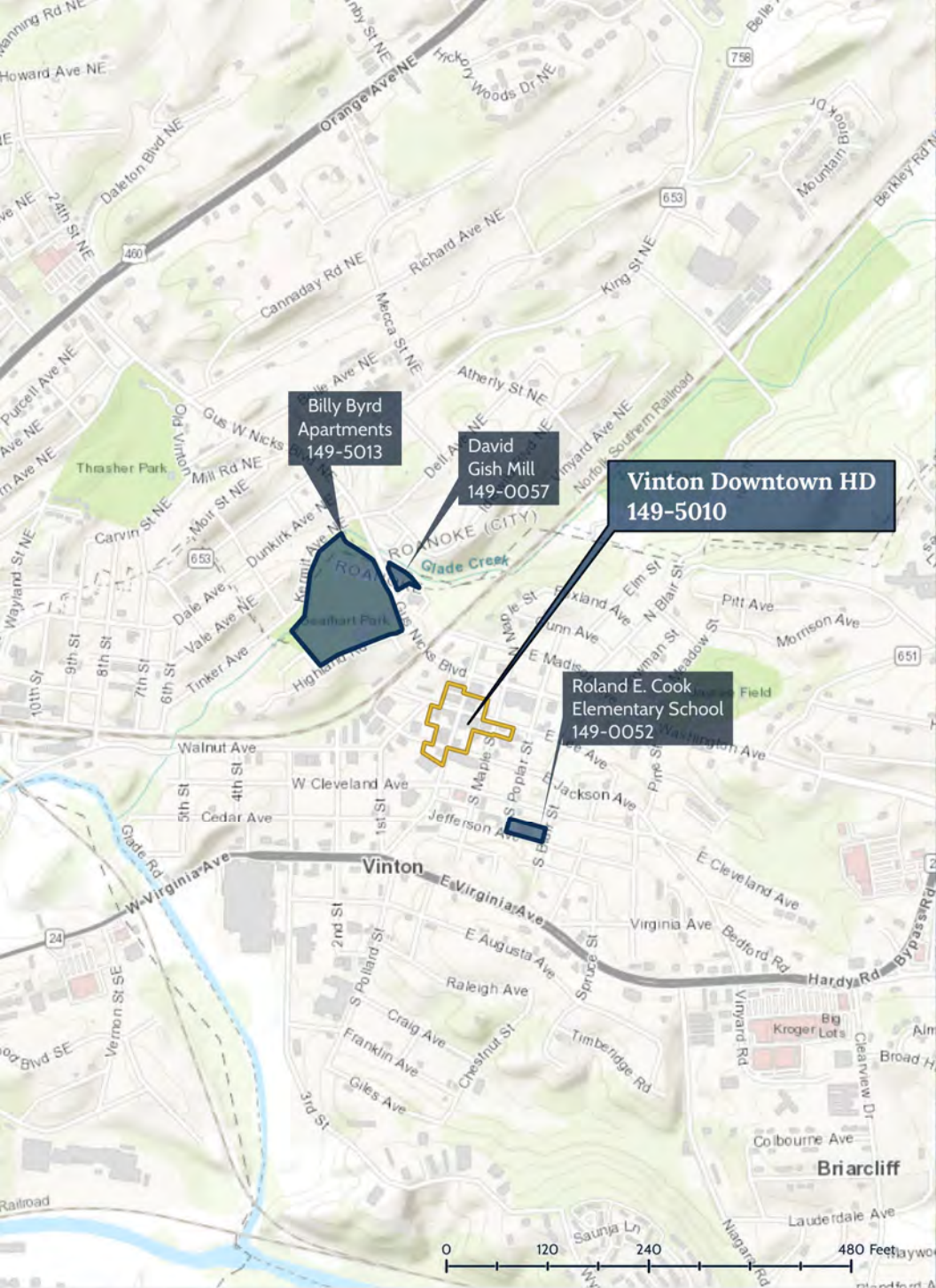
name/title: Richard "Pete" Peters, Asst. Town Manager/Director of Economic Development

locality: Town of Vinton

street & number: 311 South Pollard Street

city or town: Vinton state: VA zip code: 24179

telephone: 540-343-1508



Vinton Downtown HD
Roanoke County, Roanoke Quad
DHR ID: 149-5010


- Listed Resources
- 149-5010

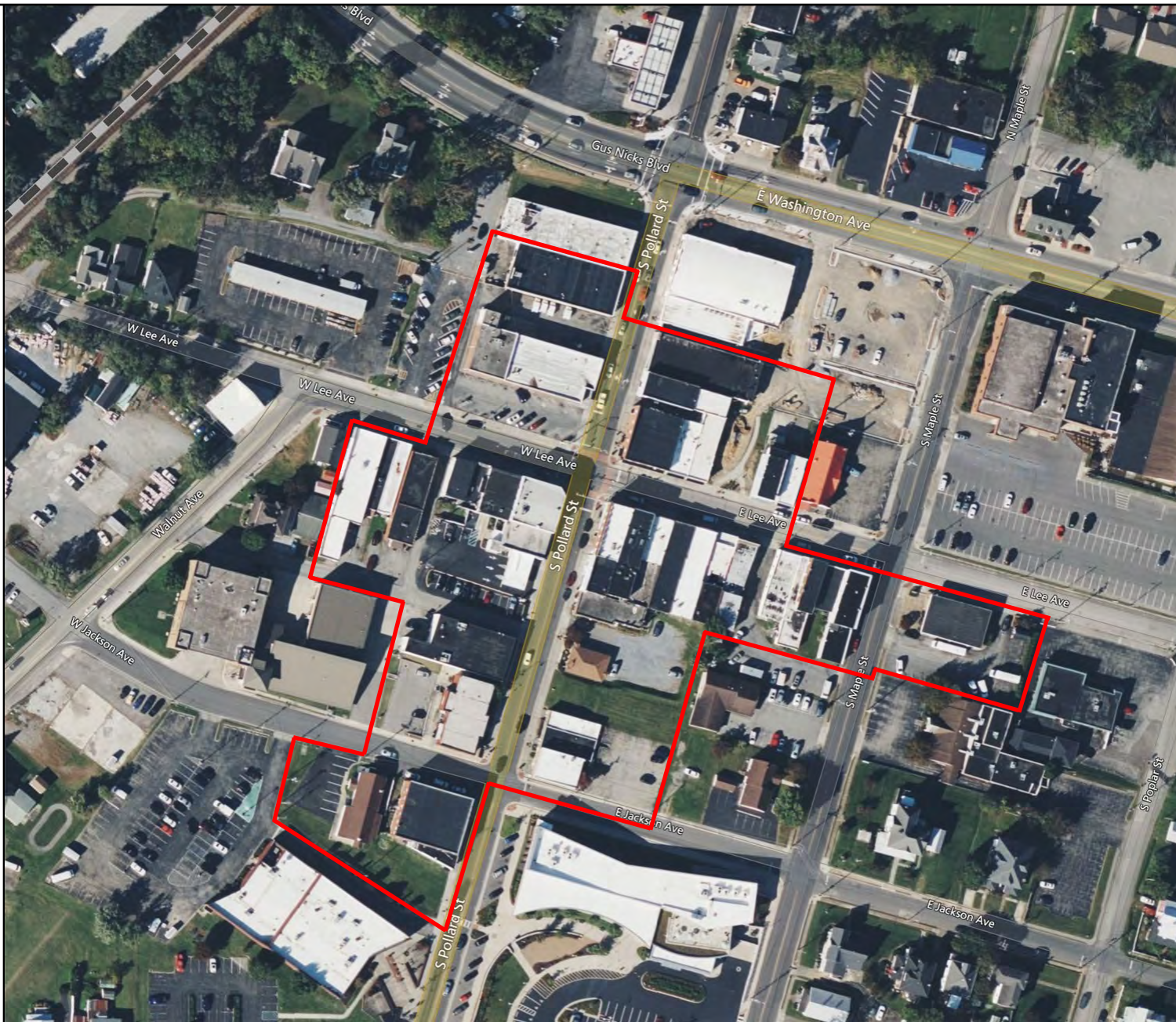
Created By: D. Bascone 8/25/2023
 Sources: VDHHR 2023, ESRI 2023, VDOT 2023, VGIN 2023
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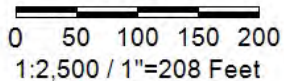


Legend

-  Vinton Downtown Historic District PIF (149-5010)



Feet



Title: Vinton Downtown Historic District

Date: 8/10/2023

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.

Sketch Map

Vinton Downtown Historic
District
149-5010

