



## PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS

### Purpose of Evaluation

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

This application has been submitted due to proposed redevelopment in the historic district area.

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

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

### 1. General Information

District name(s): Toano Commercial Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: Located along SR 60

City or Town: unincorporated town of Toano

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

### 2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 13.5 acres (approximate)

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban        Suburban        Town        Village   X   Hamlet        Rural       

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

The Toano Commercial Historic District is located within the unincorporated area of Toano in James City County, Virginia. Overall, Toano is composed of late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century residential and commercial buildings, concentrated along Richmond Road (State Route 60). The proposed commercial district contains 11 buildings built between c. 1900 and 1970. There are two non-contributing buildings. 9 of the properties are contributing under a proposed Period of Significance: 1900-1966.

### 3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Commercial Style; Boomtown; Italianate; Colonial Revival

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

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

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Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): c. 1900 – c. 1960

Are there any known threats to this district? No

#### **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..

Richmond Road (State Route 60) is a four-lane highway with commercial and residential properties on either side. The north side of Richmond Road is primarily industrial/commercials with an excellent set of early 20<sup>th</sup> century stores. The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad is located to the north of this early linear commercial development. The south side of Richmond Road is typified by light commercial and residential development and is comprised of a number of buildings that were constructed after 1966 when the Richmond Road was expanded into its current width.

In the proposed historic district, there are seven buildings that were originally stores, one building was designed as a gas stations and one vernacular building was used as a funeral parlor and later a residence. The two non-contributing buildings are a 1960s one-story US Post Office and a Verizon telephone utility building.

The commercial buildings of Toano, fronting on Richmond Road and backing on the C&O rail line, are tightly grouped, brick or frame buildings, mostly with Italianate-style facades. The north sides of the 7800 and 7900 blocks form the core of the commercial area, with some buildings actually attached to adjacent buildings forming rows. Parapets are a common feature. Typical of the commercial buildings is the Old Bank Building (DHR# 047-5147-0012), circa 1903, at 7884 Richmond Road. The bank building is a two-story, three-bay, central-entrance, Italianate brick building with a gable roof behind a stepped-front parapet. The windows have arched lintels and stone sills. The rectangular stepped parapet has a modillioned cornice and brick foliate brackets. The wood frame entrance is recessed under a Roman-arched foyer and has a transom and sidelights. To west side of the bank is the two-story brick Masonic lodge (047-5147-0013), originally built as the W.R. Branch store. The two-story, brick Martin-Farinholt Store is the most intact early commercial building in the district, built in 1906. Other striking elements are the semi-circular parapet of the Toano General Gun Store at 7960 Richmond Road (047-5147-0006), and the 1933 gas station with the port cochere bay at 7894 Richmond Road (047-5147-0008).

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.

This line of up of commercial buildings once faced a row of comparable commercial buildings on the south side of Richmond Road. When the road was widened in the 1960s, the group of older commercial buildings were demolished, but the north side of the street maintains a high degree of physical integrity, providing the core of a village setting.

#### 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.

Toano, originally known as Burnt Ordinary, traces its origins to the seventeenth century when taverns and ordinaries were common markers of place throughout the region. The earliest record of the ordinary, later known as Burnt Ordinary, appears to be an advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* in the 1760s. John Lewis, the owner of Fox's and Rhodes ordinaries, was residing at Fox's Ordinary while receiving inquiries for the sale of Hickory Neck Plantation, on behalf of the late Mary Holdcroft. In January 1780, the *Virginia Gazette* reported that Fox's Ordinary had burned to the ground.

During the Revolutionary War in August 1781, General George Washington and Comte de Rochambeau's armies moved south to Virginia. A lack of adequate vessels to transport the French Army's horses and wagons forced them to travel overland along the route known today as Virginia State Route 60. In October 1781, Alexander Berthier, assistant quartermasters-general, recorded the route of the French wagon train from Annapolis to Williamsburg. He recorded that the road to Williamsburg was good and after passing a meetinghouse on the left (Hickory Neck Church) and emerging from the woods, there were two old chimneys marking the former location of Fox's Ordinary. In 1789, Christopher Colles, tasked with establishing a postal route, retraced the French wagon train's route and recommended the route for future postal service. Colles' map of the route identified the site of the two old chimneys as "Burnt brick Orny."

The character of Burnt Ordinary in the mid-nineteenth century is known from several sources. In 1845, Robert Morris, a local schoolteacher, indicated in his diary that he did most of his shopping in the store at Burnt Ordinary. Morris also stated that he attended militia musters there and went there to catch the stage coach to Richmond and Williamsburg and to vote. Clearly Morris' diary entries suggest Burnt Ordinary was an active rural community.

Historian Martha W. McCartney has identified references to Burnt Ordinary in the *Virginia Gazette* describing the town (in 1854) as 'a healthy, prosperous community' with a post office, churches, and stores." McCartney later quotes William Barton Rogers, in a letter dated April 1859, describing Burnt Ordinary as a "hamlet of neat white houses." Following the Battle of Williamsburg May 2, 1862, the Confederate Army withdrew from Williamsburg and set up camp at Hickory Neck Academy just west of Burnt Ordinary.

By 1881, The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad (C&O) built a rail line connecting Richmond to Newport News establishing regular freight and passenger service to Burnt Ordinary by 1882. This spurred economic development for Toano. By 1896, Burnt Ordinary had become known as Toano (probably as a result of the

construction of the train station), and was a focal point of commercial activity and contained a post office, law offices, train depot, freight station, a hotel, stores, and a bank. Toano also had a barrel factory, and when potato production was at its peak, it was the largest revenue-producing freight-stop on the C&O route between Newport News and Richmond. Toano was also described as a great trucking center from which many boxcar loads of melons, sweet and Irish potatoes, peas, and other vegetables were sent to northern and western markets. At a canning factory in Toano, local farmers' green beans, peas, and tomatoes were processed and their cucumbers were made into pickles. Walter Martin's general store in Toano carried everything from custom-made suits and shoes to groceries and baked goods. Toano also had a barbershop equipped with billiard tables. Near the intersection of what became Old Forge Road and Richmond Road was Toano's public well. At the turn of the twentieth century, Toano had two hotels and nearly 20 business establishments.

The history of Toano's school system is linked with the history of Blisland Parish's Lower Church, Hickory Neck, which was established and constructed in 1734 at Hickory Neck Plantation, to the northwest of the District. Money from the sale of the parish glebe was used in 1824 to convert the old Hickory Neck Church into a primary school for local inhabitants. Hickory Neck Academy remained the main school for area residents until September 1908 when Toano High School opened. According to local historian Fred Bolt, the Hickory Neck School is now located on a farm (outside the district) and is used as an agricultural outbuilding.

The community saw a slow decline in the twentieth century. In the 1910s, Toano experienced three disastrous fires. The Toano School, completed in 1908, was razed and a modern fire station was built on the site in 1965-1966. Route 60 was expanded from two lanes to four lanes in the mid- 1960s and caused additional architectural destruction and decline of the historic setting. In the next decade, the construction of Interstate 64 parallel to Route 60 to the north caused Toano to be by-passed by most travelers between Richmond and Williamsburg. These factors have diminished the nineteenth and early twentieth century role of Toano as a bustling market community, but as a result of the economic decline, a unique collection of commercial buildings has been preserved without the alterations of modernity. Similarly, to this day, the area has been relatively free from modern residential subdivisions, with most residences pre-dating the Second World War and the area surrounding the commercial core retaining an agricultural feel.

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

Private:  X  Public\Local   Public\State   Public\Federal  X (post office)

**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:  Jack and Jeff Wray   
organization:  Coleman-Elder LLC   
street & number:  2153 Richmond Rd.   
city or town:  Charlottesville  state:  VA  zip code:  22911   
e-mail:  jewray75@gmail.com  telephone:  434-531-3479   
Applicant's Signature:   Date:  6/11/2018

**• • 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:  Jack Wray   
Daytime Telephone:  434-531-3479

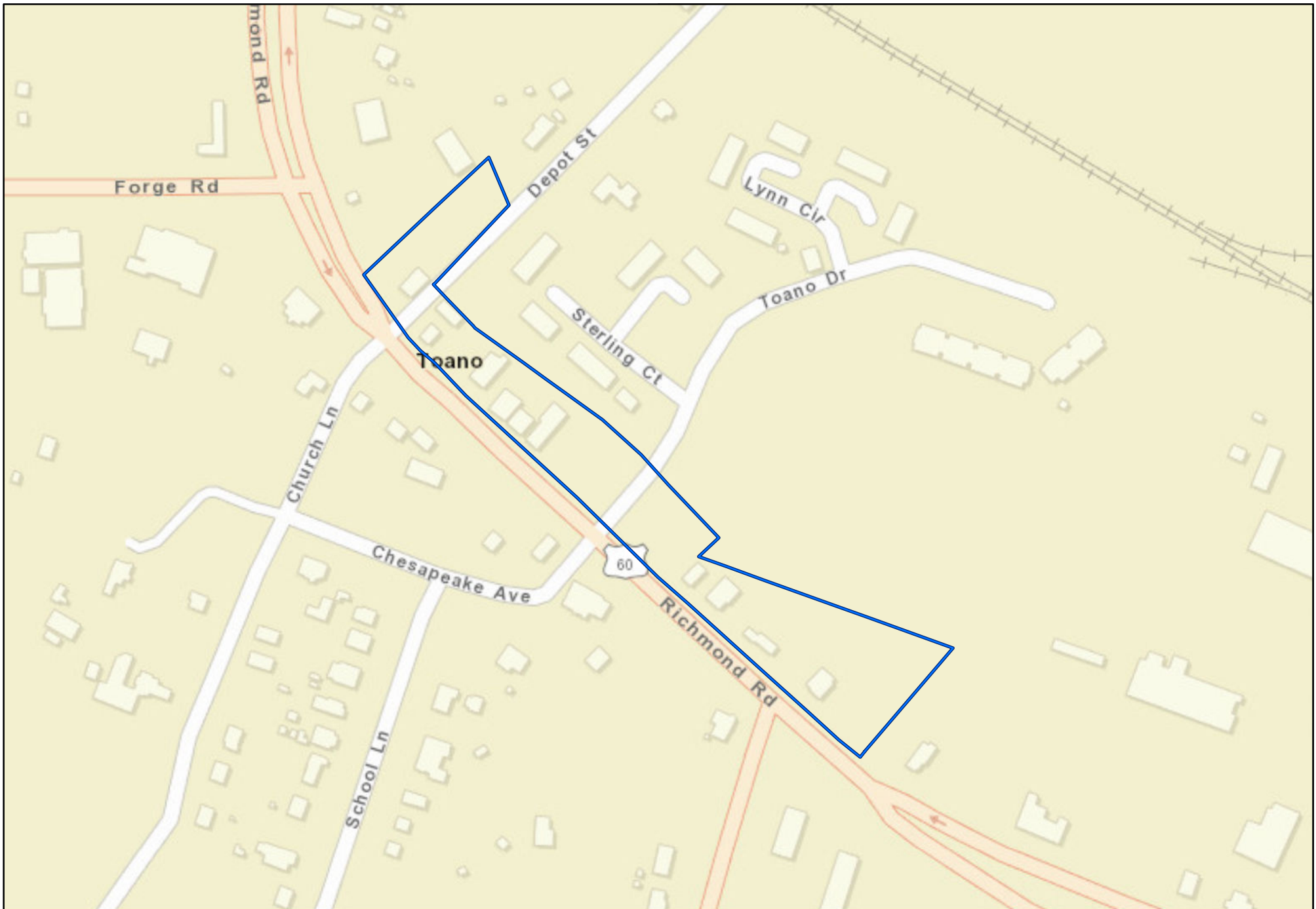
**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title:  Marc Wagner   
organization:  Department of Historic Resources   
street & number:  2801 Kensington Avenue   
city or town:  Richmond  state:  VA  zip code:  23221   
e-mail:   telephone:


**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:  Bill Porter, Interim County Administrator   
locality:  James City County   
street & number:  101 Mounts Bay Rd., Building D   
city or town:  Williamsburg  state:  VA  zip code:  23185   
telephone:  757-253-6602



**Toano Commercial Historic District**  
**James City County, Toano Quad**  
**DHR ID: 047-5458**

 047-5458



Created By: D. Bascone June 12, 2018  
Sources: VDHR 2018, ESRI 2018, VDOT 2018, VGIN 2018  
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**DHR**  
Department of Historic Resources