



**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)** 121-5562

**1. General Information**

District name(s): Stuart Gardens Apartments Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: Roanoke Avenue, Garden Drive, 16th Street, Jebbs Place

City or Town: Newport News

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

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: 40.13

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban  Suburban  Town  Village  Hamlet  Rural

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

The Stuart Gardens Apartments Historic District comprises 40.13 acres on a flat, grassy site with Hampton Roads to the southeast. Many of the buildings in the complex are angled to offer water views. Between the water and the apartments is Anderson Park, a narrow, linear green space owned by the City of Newport News. Salters Creek flows into Hampton Roads northeast of Anderson Park.

The Stuart Gardens Apartments are in a residential area of Newport News. To the north and west, there are modest single-family houses. Many of these houses were built contemporaneously with the apartments as part of the larger Stuart Gardens Housing Development by the Defense Homes Corporation (DHC) to provide housing for servicemen and defense industry workers in the Hampton Roads area during World War II. Downtown Newport News and the Newport News Shipyard are roughly three miles northwest of the apartments.

The areas around the Stuart Gardens Apartments, including the single-family houses developed as part of the same housing project, are characterized by a traditional city grid pattern. In contrast, the site design of the apartment complex breaks with the grid, with angled buildings and curving streets, incorporating grassy open spaces and U-shaped courtyards with parking often in the center. A system of concrete pedestrian paths provides access to each unit and connects the units to other areas on site.

### 3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Colonial Revival

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

William N. Denton, Jr. (architect)

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

The Defense Homes Corporation

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): 1941

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.

Approximately 109 apartment buildings comprise Stuart Gardens Apartments, totaling 491 dwelling units. The complex has at least 8 different building types made up of several combinations of one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units that are one or two stories. The various building types are symmetrically arranged around U-shaped courtyards.

One of the building types consists of a central two-story section containing two two-bedroom units, with two projecting one-story side wings containing one-bedroom units. All sections of this type have gable roofs. The main entrances to the two-story units are on the front, while the entrances to the one-story units are on the sides. A variation of this type consists of a central two-story section containing two two-bedroom units, with projecting one-story side wings containing one-bedroom units. The main variations from the first type are that the one-story wings have hipped roofs and the entrances are on the front.

Another common building type consists of a wide two-story section containing two three-bedroom units and two one-bedroom units. The one-story side wing includes two one-bedroom units. Both the one- and two-story sections have hipped roofs. All main entrances are on the front elevation, except for a one-story, one-bedroom unit, which has its main entrance on the side. Other common building types include groupings of three to four one-story units. These building types feature gable roofs or hipped roofs. There is also a less common building type that combines two two-story units. This building type has a gable roof and has main entrances on the courtyard-facing and street-facing elevations.

The apartment buildings are one- to two-story, frame buildings on concrete foundations. The vernacular buildings feature modest Colonial Revival-style influences. The buildings are sheathed in horizontal and vertical vinyl siding. The buildings originally featured beveled siding, vertical boards and battens, and flush siding. Gable roofs predominate, however, there are also examples of hipped roofs on certain building types, providing some variation. Asphalt shingles cover the roofs. Triangular, louvered vents are on the front, side, and rear roof planes. The double-hung windows create a regular rhythm on the building elevations. Some of the windows are paired but most are single. The windows for the bathrooms and kitchens are on the rear elevations and are smaller than the other windows. All windows have been replaced with 1/1 aluminum sash windows. The front and side elevation windows

have shutters, which are not original features of these buildings. Each unit has a main and secondary entrance approached by brick stoops and metal handrails. The main entrances for many of the one-story units are on the side elevations of the building. The original six-panel doors have been replaced with flush metal doors. Although the original windows and doors have been replaced, the openings retain their original placement, size, and rhythm.

The interiors of the apartments retain their original floor plans. There are at least 5 basic floor plans repeated throughout the complex. The one-story apartments contain one or two bedrooms, and the two-story apartments contain one, two, or three bedrooms. Each unit includes a main and secondary entrance, a living room, a dining area, and a galley kitchen on the first floor. The one-story units also include a bathroom and one to two bedrooms on the first floor. The two-story units include a bathroom and one to three bedrooms on the second floor. Most of the apartments retain their original hardwood flooring. While carpet has been installed in some units, the wood flooring often remains intact underneath. The bathrooms have ceramic tile floors and tile around the bathtubs. The kitchens have been updated with vinyl flooring and modern cabinets and appliances. The window and door trim were replaced during the 1980s renovation. The original stairs and railings in the two-story units remain.

There has been very little new construction within the original boundaries of the apartment complex. A brick building containing the management office and community center was constructed at the edge of the complex in the early 1980s.

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 Stuart Gardens Apartments historically provided rental housing for workers drawn to defense industries in the Hampton Roads area during World War II. The apartments continue to function as rental housing today. The setting of the district is residential, characterized by angled buildings arranged within U-shaped courtyards and open spaces, connected by curving streets and a system of concrete pedestrian paths.

#### 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.

The Stuart Gardens Apartments were constructed in 1941 by the Defense Homes Corporation (DHC) with funds from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) as part of the larger 280-acre, 980-unit Stuart Gardens Housing Development. The Stuart Gardens Apartments appear to be potentially eligible for NRHP listing under Criteria A and C with significance on the local level in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture as an example of federally funded World War II defense housing that furnished quality yet economical rental housing for workers and servicemen. The site design for the apartment complex is also notable for its deviation from the regular grid pattern of the surrounding area, incorporating curving streets, courtyards, and angled buildings that take advantage of waterfront views. The proposed period of significance is 1941, encompassing the construction of the apartment complex.

Beginning with the extension of the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Railroad from Richmond in 1881 by Collis P. Huntington and the establishment of the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company in 1896, the port of Newport News has served as a strategic center for shipping and shipbuilding. Established as a city in 1896, Newport News grew exponentially during World War I as a port of embarkation with numerous military encampments. One of those encampments was Camp Stuart, a World War I troop-handling facility for the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation, which then was the largest in the country.<sup>1</sup> Around two decades later, the Defense Homes Corporation would lay out the Stuart Gardens Housing Development on the former Camp Stuart site.

As Newport News continued to serve as a major center for military contracts, shipbuilding, and military mobilization, the population increased exponentially again during World War II. Employment at Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company more than tripled from 10,000 to approximately 32,000 between 1939 and 1941. The Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation was also reactivated from 1942 to 1946, and more than 7,000 civilians were employed at the headquarters in Newport News. During the war, approximately 1.5 million people and 15 million tons of freight passed through the port of Newport News.<sup>2</sup> Due to this escalation of wartime production and mobilization, the population of the Newport News area increased by 77.2 percent between 1940 and 1943.<sup>3</sup>

The local and federal housing authorities, initially established in the 1930s as part of New Deal efforts to clear slums and provide affordable worker housing, refocused their resources to address the need for emergency housing during the war.<sup>4</sup> In response to the sudden surge in population, at least 34 housing developments, many of which were intended to be temporary, were constructed in Newport News and the

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<sup>1</sup> Bethel Chapter, UDC, "Camp Stuart," (Historical Marker, Newport News, VA, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth Preservation Group, Architectural Survey of the Newport News Redevelopment & Housing Authority – Marshall Court, February 2023, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Annie Lash Jester, et al., *Newport News During the Second World War*, (History Commission, World War II, of Newport News, Newport News, VA: 1948), p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth Preservation Group, Architectural Survey of the Newport News..., p. 7.

Peninsula between 1940 and 1945.<sup>5</sup> These projects represented an investment of nearly \$40 million with funding provided by the Federal Public Housing Authority, the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and the Defense Housing Corporation, as well as FHA-insured mortgage loans for private developments. With many of these developments totaling less than 350 units, the 980-unit Stuart Gardens was the third largest of the wartime housing developments in the area for white residents after the 3195 units at Copeland Park, and 1200 units at Ferguson Park.<sup>6</sup> Unlike other defense housing developments for non-commissioned military and civilian workers supporting wartime production in the area, the Stuart Gardens Housing Development also provided housing for military officers.<sup>7</sup>

At the time of its construction, the Stuart Gardens Housing Development was one of the larger projects of the Defense Homes Corporation (DHC), which was incorporated on October 23, 1940, under the administration of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). DHC built twenty-six housing projects in the nation, twenty-one of which were family-dwelling projects that included individual homes and apartments.<sup>8</sup> Stuart Gardens appears to have been the only DHC project in Newport News.

The November 1941 issue of the *Architectural Record* described Stuart Gardens as “an exemplification of FHA standards for defense housing.”<sup>9</sup> The standards for defense housing emphasized economy, standardization, and speed of construction.<sup>10</sup> Washington, D.C. Architect William N. Denton Jr., whose portfolio included several FHA-insured housing projects, designed the approximately \$5 million development that included single-family houses and around 500 rental apartment units. The project, built to house the families of white defense workers and servicemen, began in March 1941 with units occupied by July 1941.<sup>11</sup>

It appears Denton employed the principles of the Federal Housing Administration’s (FHA) garden apartment model for the rental housing in the development with groups of low-density one- and two-story buildings arranged around courtyards and green spaces, allowing for natural light and air circulation. The building forms and five basic floor plans are repeated throughout the apartment complex and generally feature limited ornament and detailing, resulting in an economical design. Variations were achieved through different combinations of exterior siding types and color combinations. The site plan for the apartment complex deviates from the regular grid pattern of the lots for the single-family houses with the angled orientations of the buildings, curving streets and pedestrian paths, courtyards, and open spaces. This site design takes advantage of the site’s location along Hampton Roads, providing waterfront views for 60 percent of the apartment units.<sup>12</sup>

In 1944, the Defense Housing Corporation sold Stuart Gardens to a local private corporation for approximately \$3 million.<sup>13</sup> Purchased by a group of Jewish businessmen, it quickly became a Jewish community after the war.<sup>14</sup> In the early 1980s, Virginia Beach developer, Robert Collins, sold the complex to the Virginia Federal Savings and Loan Association with management provided by the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The complex was renovated at that time with guaranteed rent

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<sup>5</sup> “9,473 Units Give Housing for 37,982,” *Daily Press*, October 10, 1942, p. 2; “40 Millions Spent Here on War Housing,” *Daily Press*, May 10, 1945, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Annie Lash Jester, et al., *Newport News During the Second World War*, (History Commission, World War II, of Newport News, Newport News, VA: 1948), p. 72-73.

<sup>7</sup> “Housing Projects, 9,473 Units Give Housing for 37,982 Persons Here,” *Times Herald*, October 9, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Gail H. Baker, “Fairlington Apartments National Register Nomination,” (DHR File No. 000-5772, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, September 1998), section 8. p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> “An RFC-FHA Collaboration,” (*Architectural Record*, Volume 90, Number 5, [November 1941]), pp. 88-89.

<sup>10</sup> “Plan Standards for Defense Housing,” (*Architectural Record*, Volume 90, Number 5, [November 1941]), p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> “Housing Projects, 9,473 Units Give Housing...,” p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> “An RFC-FHA Collaboration,” (*Architectural Record*, Volume 90, Number 5, [November 1941]), pp. 88-89.

<sup>13</sup> “40 Millions Spent Here...,” p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> “Stuart Gardens Once Popular Place to Live,” *Daily Press*, April 7, 1979, p. 3.

subsidies for tenants.<sup>15</sup> The Stuart Gardens Apartments are currently owned by Vitus, an affordable housing provider that intends to renovate the property by pairing the historic rehabilitation tax credits with other incentive programs.

### Statement of Integrity

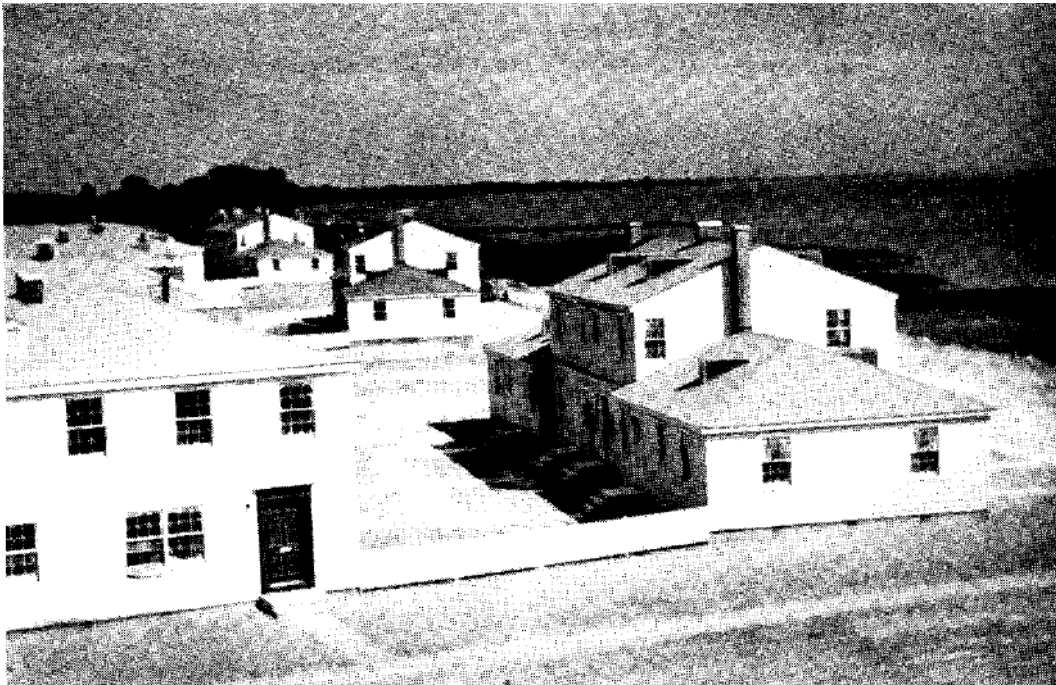
The Stuart Gardens Apartments Historic District reflects the history of this distinct section of the greater Stuart Gardens Housing Development, which was built to provide economical defense housing during World War II. The district retains its integrity of location as the proposed boundary encompasses the physical area originally associated with the rental housing units of Stuart Gardens, which were laid out in an angular pattern that is distinctly different from the grid pattern of the single-family houses in the development. The district also retains its original siting and layout. The Newport News Shipyard and other defense housing developments from the same period also remain proximate to the district. Therefore, the district retains its integrity of setting, feeling, and association. Although the original wood siding, windows, and doors have been replaced, the overall form, massing, fenestration pattern, interior plans, and essential finishes remain intact to provide sufficient integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. As noted in the MPD for FHA-Insured Garden apartments in Richmond, 1942-1950, “Garden apartments are not defined by their architectural style, ornamentation, and detailing but rather by their massing, setting, landscape, and interior plan, which provides for multi-family units.” Therefore, the Stuart Gardens Apartments retain sufficient integrity overall to convey significance as a mid-20th century garden apartment complex built with federal funds to provide defense housing for servicemen and civilian wartime production workers and their families during World War II, which also typifies the FHA standards for defense housing.



**Figure 1:** A Stuart Gardens Apartment Building,  
Photo Source: *Architectural Record*, Volume 90, Number 5, November 1941.

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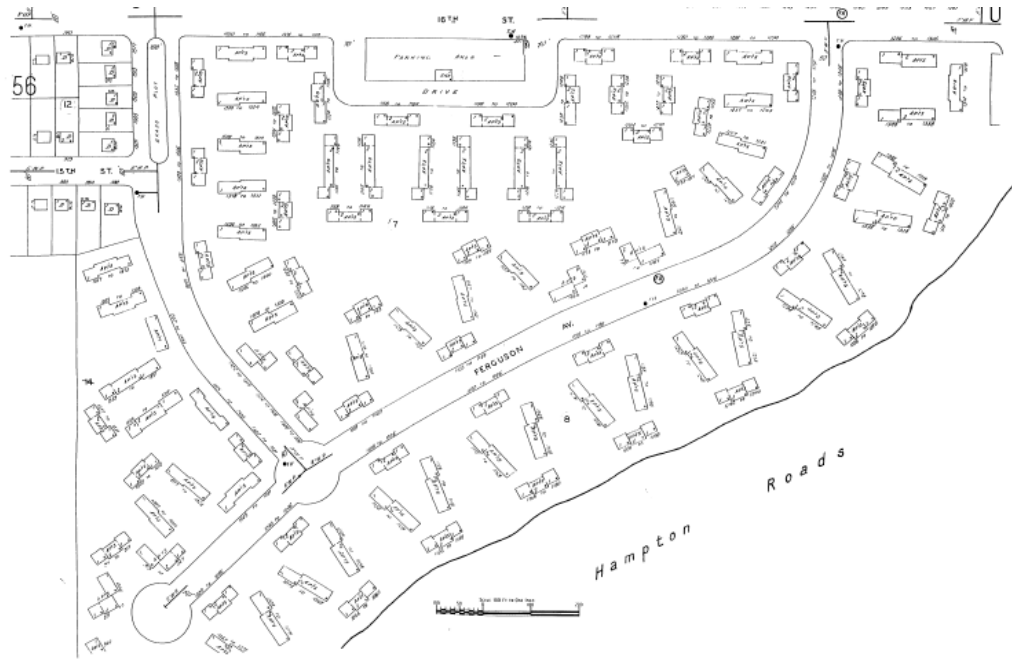
<sup>15</sup> Ralph Cornelis, “Renovation Planned for Stuart Gardens Apartment Complex,” *Daily Press*, April 7, 1979, p. 3.



**Figure 2:** Stuart Gardens Apartments with a view of Hampton Roads,  
Photo Source: *Architectural Record*, Volume 90, Number 5, November 1941.



**Figure 3:** Stuart Gardens Apartments, 1353 Roanoke Avenue in September 1963,  
Photo Source: <httpswww.angelfire.com/va/365nnhssstuart-gardens.html>



**Figure 4:** Stuart Gardens Apartments, 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Excerpt



## Bibliography

“40 Millions Spent Here on War Housing,” *Daily Press*, May 10, 1945

“9,473 Units Give Housing for 37,982,” *Daily Press*, October 10, 1942

“An RFC-FHA Collaboration.” *Architectural Record*, Volume 90, Number 5, (November 1941).

Baker, Gail H. “Fairlington Apartments National Register Nomination.” DHR File No. 000-5772, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, September 1998.

Bethel Chapter, UDC. “Camp Stuart.” Historical Marker, Newport News, VA, 1969.

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Cornelis, Ralph. “Renovation Planned for Stuart Gardens Apartment Complex.” *Daily Press*, April 7, 1979.

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Jester, Annie Lash, et al. *Newport News During the Second World War*. History Commission, World War II, of Newport News, Newport News, VA: 1948.

“Plan Standards for Defense Housing.” *Architectural Record*, Volume 90, Number 5, (November 1941).

“Stuart Gardens Once Popular Place to Live,” *Daily Press*, April 7, 1979

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

Private:  Public\Local \_\_\_\_\_ 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: Mr. Scott Langan, Vice President  
organization: Vitus  
street & number: 2607 2nd Avenue, Suite 300  
city or town: Seattle state: WA zip code: 98121  
e-mail: ethan.forecki@vitus.com telephone: 253-365-9773

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: 11/19/24

•• *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: Mr. Scott Langan, Vice President  
Daytime Telephone: 253-365-9773

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

name/title: Katie Gutshall, Director of Historic Preservation & Alison Blanton  
organization: Hill Studio  
street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW  
city or town: Roanoke state: VA zip code: 24011  
e-mail: kgutshall@hillstudio.com telephone: 540-342-5263

**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.

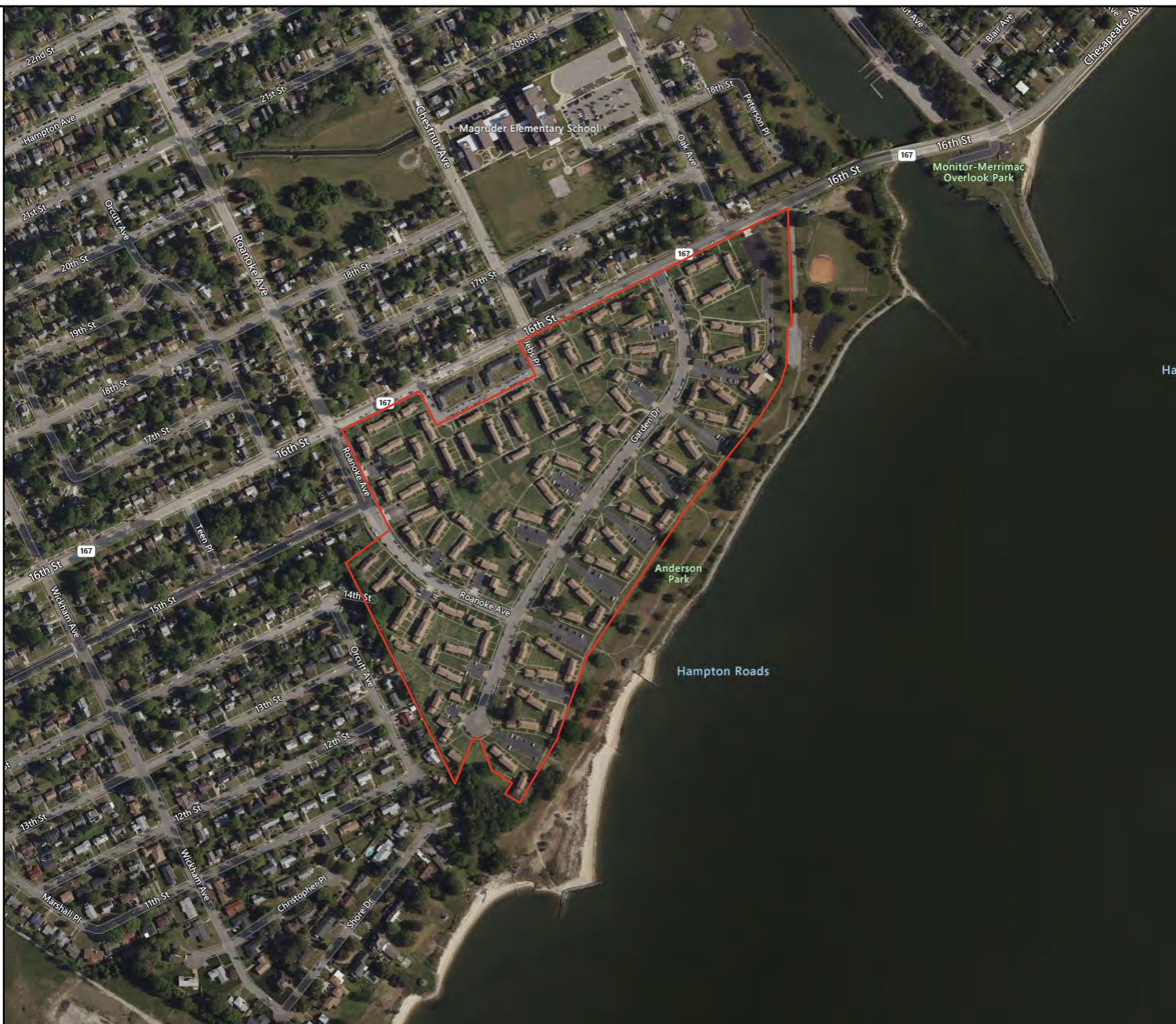
name/title: Alan Archer, City Manager  
locality: City of Newport News  
street & number: 2400 Washington Avenue  
city or town: Newport News state: VA zip code: 23607  
telephone: 757-926-8411



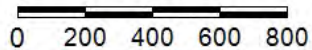
**Legend**



Stuart Gardens Historic District PIF



Feet



1:9,028 / 1"=752 Feet

**Title: Stuart Gardens Historic District - 2024 PIF Boundary 121-5562 Date: 10/22/2024**


*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.*

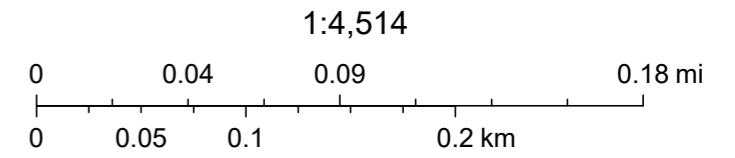
# City of Newport News



**Sketch Map**

 Stuart Gardens Historic District PIF

**Title: Stuart Gardens Historic District - 2024 PIF Boundary 121-5562**



City of Newport News, VA



































