



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) 247-5011

1. General Information

District name(s): Kenbridge Commercial Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: Broad Street (Route 40), Fifth Avenue, and Sixth Avenue

City or Town: Kenbridge

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

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: approximately 13 acres

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 proposed Kenbridge Commercial Historic District is centrally located within the incorporated town of Kenbridge in Lunenburg County, Virginia. Encompassing approximately 13 acres, the commercial district extends about four blocks along Broad Street (Route 40), which serves as the spine of this linear district. The district contains approximately forty resources constructed between ca. 1910 and ca. 1971. Most of the buildings front Broad Street (Route 40), while several additional resources are situated along the intersecting Fifth and Sixth avenues. The district is characterized by curbs and sidewalks featuring antique-style metal streetlights. The gently sloping topography reaches a peak at the prominent intersection of Broad Street (Route 40) and Fifth Avenue. The district is bordered by residential neighborhoods, including the Fifth Avenue Historic District (NRHP 2006), to the north and east, modern commercial development to the south, and a historic industrial area to the west.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Commercial Style, Colonial Revival

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. 1910 – ca. 1971

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 Kenbridge Commercial Historic District is a predominantly commercial area representative of a Southside Virginia town that developed in conjunction with the arrival of the railroad. Encompassing approximately 13 acres, the district includes about forty buildings constructed between the early 20th century and the early 1970s. Most resources are located along Broad Street (Route 40), the town's primary transportation corridor and commercial spine. The district is characterized by one- and two-story buildings of brick or concrete block construction that reflect a range of locally interpreted early to mid-20th century commercial architectural styles. Common architectural features include corbelled brickwork, recessed brick panels, decorative pressed metal cornices, large plate glass storefront windows, and angled storefronts. Although some alterations have occurred over time, these changes are generally limited to storefront remodeling, the addition of non-historic awnings, and the replacement of historic windows.

One of the earliest buildings in the district, the ca. 1910 *Ferguson and Allan Department Store* (247-5007) at 201 S. Broad Street, is a good example of an early 20th century commercial building in Kenbridge. This two-story masonry building features a stepped parapet and an ornate metal cornice with prominent corner blocks and stamped floral motifs. The rockface block walls are painted and laid in a pattern resembling stretcher bond. A decorative metal cornice extends above the storefront, which features a recessed entrance flanked by storefront windows with transoms. Another early two-story building in the district stands at *114 N. Broad Street*. The painted brick walls are laid in six-course common bond. The second-story window openings feature rusticated masonry sills. The date of the building, 1912, is stamped on the corner blocks of bracketed metal cornice defining the roofline.

The ca. 1950 building at *121 S. Broad Street* is a well-preserved mid-century example of the Main Street Commercial style. The one-story building is constructed of concrete block with a brick veneer facade. The asymmetrical storefront features a recessed entrance and plate glass windows set in aluminum frames. A flat metal awning extends above the storefront, reflecting the streamlined sensibility of the Moderne style.

The rise of the automobile in the second quarter of the 20th century introduced new building types to the district, including automobile dealerships, repair shops, and service stations. Located at prominent intersections, the buildings at *106 N. Broad Street* (ca. 1940), *101 N. Broad Street* (ca. 1945), and *130 S. Broad Street* (ca. 1965) incorporate features such as plate glass display windows, repair bays, and

industrial steel-sash windows. The service station at *101 N. Broad Street* also includes a porte-cochere to shelter the gas pumps.

The ca. 1971 *Fidelity American Bank* at 204 S. Broad Street represents the latest commercial construction in the district. Typical of bank branches constructed in the second half of the 20th century, the building fronts the public sidewalk, with a large, paved parking lot at the rear reflecting the widespread reliance on the automobile in the 1970s. Influenced by the Colonial Revival style, the building features a hipped roof and red brick walls with white trim. Additional features include brick quoins defining the building's corners, a denticulated cornice wrapping around the building, and multi-light windows resting on masonry panels. A porte-cochere at the rear of the building shelters the drive-up window.

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 proposed Kenbridge Commercial Historic District is located within the incorporated town of Kenbridge in Lunenburg County, Virginia. The linear commercial district is bordered by residential neighborhoods, vacant industrial buildings, and areas of modern commercial development. The approximately forty commercial resources within the district reflect the town's growth and development from the early 20th century through the early 1970s. Buildings are generally constructed with little to no setback from the public sidewalks that line both sides of Broad Street (Route 40) and the intersecting cross streets of Fifth and Sixth avenues. Only two non-commercial resources—a church and a dwelling—are located within the district, both situated at its north end. The district appears to retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It continues to convey its historic significance as a Southside Virginia town that developed following the arrival of the railroad and emerged as a regional hub for the tobacco trade and for commercial activities serving the surrounding rural community.

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 proposed Kenbridge Commercial Historic District appears to be eligible for National Register listing at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Comprising commercial buildings along Broad Street (Route 40), the proposed district is significant in the area of Commerce as representative of a Southside Virginia town that developed following the arrival of the railroad in the early 20th century and subsequently emerged as an important tobacco market and commercial center serving the surrounding rural area. The district reflects Kenbridge's role as a hub of trade, services and economic activity during the period of its greatest growth. The proposed district is also significant in the area of Architecture as a cohesive collection of buildings that embodies the distinctive characteristics of early to mid-20th century commercial design. Together, these one- and two-story brick and concrete block buildings reflect evolving trends in commerce, architectural style, construction techniques, and materials over the first three quarters of the 20th century. Primarily reflecting the Main Street Commercial and Colonial Revival styles, the buildings display a hybrid palette of stylistic influences reflective of their functions and periods of construction. Common features include corbelled brickwork, recessed brick panels, decorative pressed metal cornices, large plate glass storefront windows, and angled storefronts. The proposed period of significance extends from ca. 1910 – 1971, corresponding to the construction of the earliest extant building within the district and the most recent historic resource that contributes to its significance.

Historical Background

The town of Kenbridge is in northeast Lunenburg County in Southside Virginia. Lunenburg County was formed in 1746 from Brunswick County. Over time, ten additional counties were carved from Lunenburg, earning it the nickname "The Mother of Counties." Located in the lower Piedmont region, the county features rolling topography and a variety of soils. The primary two watersheds dividing the county are the Nottoway River Basin and the South Meherrin River Basin. Typical of eastern Southside counties, tobacco farming shaped Lunenburg County's economy and daily life from the second half of the 18th century into the 20th century.

After the Civil War, agricultural production declined throughout Southside Virginia. However, in the early 20th century prospects improved when planning began for the Tidewater Railroad, the Virginia half of the rail line connecting the West Virginia coalfields to Norfolk's port. In 1904, grading of the Virginian rail line began in northeast Lunenburg County, followed by the laying of the tracks. Located along this new rail corridor, the community of Kenbridge, originally known as Tinkling, emerged in 1906 with the establishment of Kennedy's store, which also contained the post office, and Blackwell's store at the intersection of Route 40 (Broad Street) and Route 137 (Fifth Avenue). The Bank of Lunenburg organized the same year. Industrial development expanded rapidly with the establishment of a quarry supplying stone for the railroad bed and a factory producing hickory handles for axes and sledgehammers.¹

¹ Kimberly M. Chen & Associates, Inc., *An Architectural Survey of Lunenburg County, Virginia*, (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA, February 2005), p. 12.

The railroad and its associated industries drew people to the area, spurring rapid population growth. In 1908, the citizens petitioned the General Assembly to change the name of the town, and Kenbridge was officially incorporated on March 14th of that year. The name “Kenbridge” was formed by combining the surnames of Kennedy and Bridgforth, two of the town’s most prominent citizens. These two men, W.F. Kennedy and Willie Bridgforth provided most of the town’s land and worked tirelessly towards its development.² Kennedy, along with John Walker, another notable landholder, organized the Kennedy-Walker Land & Development Co. to plan and develop the new town. This effort produced rapid results. By 1908, in addition to the bank and general stores, a growing collection of commercial and retail buildings lined Broad Street and Sixth Avenue, including a “wholesale and retail feed store, an up-to-date hardware store, a clothing store of equal proportions, besides dry goods and groceries. Also, a millinery store. Drug store, barber shop, etc.” Additionally, the establishment of a brick and tile plant reflected the town’s continuing industrial growth.³

Around this time, planning began to establish a tobacco market in town. By 1910, several companies had formed and built tobacco warehouses along Sixth Avenue, close to the rail line. Prizeries and storage buildings were also built for the processing and storage of the tobacco plants before they were shipped by rail to larger markets. The tobacco market continued to prosper into the second half of the 20th century and by 1958, Kenbridge ranked fourth in Virginia in tobacco sales. Over the years, additional industrial enterprises associated with agriculture opened in Kenbridge near the rail line.

Commercial construction continued along Broad Street, primarily between Fifth and Seventh avenues, over the course of the following decades. By the 1940s, most of the commercial buildings were built and housed a variety of businesses, including restaurants, professional offices, department stores, drug stores, grocers, hardware stores, and other specialty stores. By the mid-20th century, the town was fully established with utilities including telephone service, water and sewer service, and electricity.⁴ The area north of Fifth Avenue served as the business district for Kenbridge’s Black citizens.

As the automobile grew in popularity during the second quarter of the 20th century, several new automobile-related businesses were established along Broad Street, primarily towards the northern end of the district. Among them was the Southside Motor Co., a Ford dealership operated by John Cordle and Ed Terrell, which opened in the 1930s on N. Broad Street. The business is significant as Lunenburg County’s oldest automobile dealership.⁵

Rail service to Kenbridge declined in the mid-1950s, when the Virginian Railway replaced steam locomotives with diesel engines in 1954. As diesel engines were more efficient, trains no longer needed to stop as frequently along the line, rendering small-town stops between larger cities increasingly obsolete. Several years later, in 1959, the Virginian Railway merged with Norfolk & Western, which favored the use of its main lines over smaller branch routes. Although the shipment of tobacco by rail declined, the tobacco market in Kenbridge remained strong, as truck transportation continued to facilitate the movement of tobacco. In 1987, rail service was completely terminated and the tracks throughout Lunenburg County were removed.⁶ Despite the loss of rail service, Kenbridge continued to function as a commercial center, adapting to changes in transportation and sustaining its role as a hub of trade and services for the surrounding rural communities—a role it continues to maintain today.

² E. S. Roby, Jr., “A Brief History of the Town of Kenbridge, Va,” (*The Courier Record*, October 16, 1958).

³ Sallie Ann Mahaney, “Kenbridge, Virginia – When Dreams Come True,” (*The Courier Record*, May 8, 1908).

⁴ Roby, “A Brief History...”

⁵ Edward J. Silverman, “Around Kenbridge’s Business Section Today – My Home Town,” (*The Courier Record*, October 16, 1958).

⁶ Adam Burns, “Virginian Railway: Map, Rosters, History, Electrification,” (*American-Rails.com*, August 23, 2024),

<https://www.american-rails.com/virginian.html>; Overton McGehee, “Money brought railroad, could take it away,” (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 27, 1988).

Bibliography

Burns, Adam. "Virginian Railway: Map, Rosters, History, Electrification." *American-Rails.com*, August 23, 2024, <https://www.american-rails.com/virginian.html>.

Kimberly M. Chen & Associates, Inc. *An Architectural Survey of Lunenburg County, Virginia*. Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA, February 2005.

Mahaney, Sallie Ann. "Kenbridge, Virginia – When Dreams Come True." *The Courier Record*, May 8, 1908.

McGehee, Overton. "Money brought railroad, could take it away." *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 27, 1988.

Roby, E. S., Jr. "A Brief History of the Town of Kenbridge, Va" *The Courier Record*, October 16, 1958.

Silverman, Edward J. "Around Kenbridge's Business Section Today – My Home Town." *The Courier Record*, October 16, 1958.

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: Tony Matthews, Town Manager
organization: Town of Kenbridge
street & number: 511 E. Fifth Avenue
city or town: Kenbridge state: VA zip code: 23944
e-mail: tonymatthews@kenbridgeva.net telephone: 434-676-2452

Applicant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

•• 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: Tony Matthews
Daytime Telephone: 434-676-2452

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

name/title: Katie Gutshall/Kate Kronau
organization: Hill Studio
street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW
city or town: Roanoke state: VA zip code: 24011
e-mail: kgutshall@hillstudio.com/kkronau@hillstudio.com telephone: (540) 342-5263
Date: February 9, 2026

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: Tony Matthews, Town Manager
locality: Town of Kenbridge
street & number: 511 E. Fifth Avenue
city or town: Kenbridge state: VA zip code: 23944
telephone: 434-676-2452

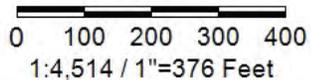


Legend

-  Kenbridge Commercial Historic District 2026 PIF
DHR ID No. 247-5011



Feet



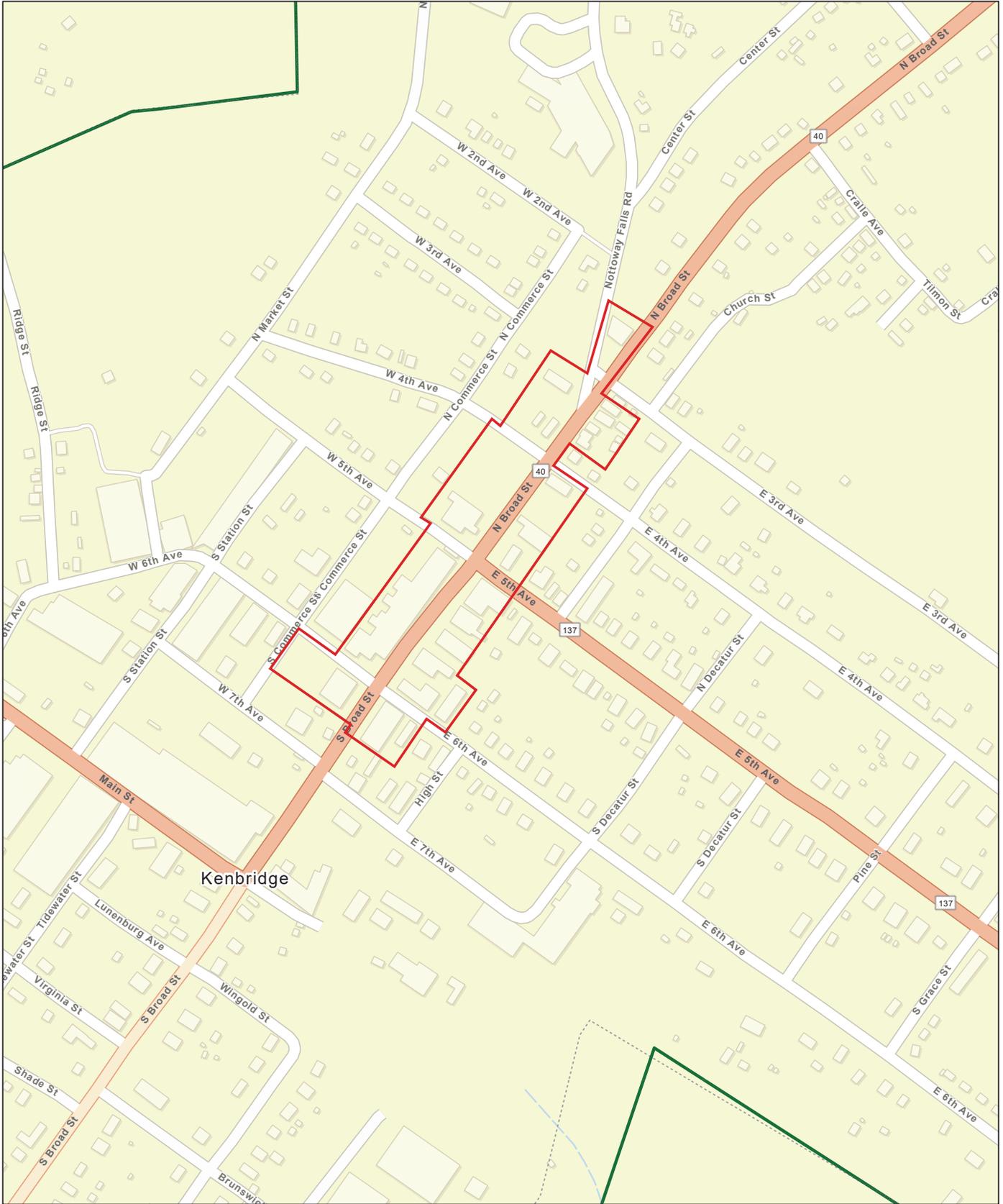
Title: Kenbridge Commercial Historic District

Date: 2/9/2026

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.

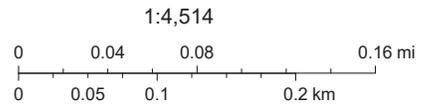
Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.

Lunenburg County Online GIS



2/9/2026, 1:51:54 PM

 Kenbridge Commercial Historic District 2026 PIF
DHR ID No. 247-5011



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community









CHARMING
Kenbridge
VIRGINIA
Established 1908

BENCHMARK
COMMUNITY BANK

BENCHMARK COMMUNITY BANK









S.P. JONES & SON
FUNERAL SERVICES
(804)676-8099

HOLIDAYS

5



