



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) 118-0225

1. General Information

District name(s): Diamond Hill South Historic District

Main Streets and/or Routes: Federal to Kemper streets between 12th Street and
Lynchburg Expressway (US 29 Bus)
City or Town: Lynchburg

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

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: ±193

Setting (choose only one of the following):

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

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

The Diamond Hill South Historic District sits southwest of Lynchburg's downtown. Lynchburg was considered a city of seven hills and historically, as depicted on a map provided by the Lynchburg Visitors Center, the present-day Diamond Hill South neighborhood was formed by Diamond Hill, Federal Hill, and College Hill. The neighborhood's topography clearly reflects these hills and is a notable landscape feature. As proposed, the Diamond Hill South Historic District is bound on the east by the Diamond Hill Historic District (118-0060) and Twelfth Street Industrial Historic District (118-5498), on the north by the Federal Hill Historic District (118-0056) and College Hill Historic District (118-0226), on the west by Kemper Street and the Kemper Street Industrial Historic District (118-5292), and on the south and southeast by the Lynchburg Expressway (US 29 Bus). The neighborhood also completely encompasses the Pierce Street Renaissance Historic District (118-5238).

When the Diamond Hill NRHP district was created in 1979 its boundaries followed the Diamond Hill Historic District limits as determined by the City of Lynchburg.¹ When the Federal Hill Historic District was listed in 1980, the district used the transportation corridor of 12th Street as its southern boundary. The College Hill neighborhood has not been listed in the NRHP, however, its proposed southern boundary in a 1991 PIF is also along 12th Street. Though historically the neighborhoods were more intertwined, the growth of 12th Street as a major traffic corridor featuring buildings of commercial and educational use, has naturally formed a barrier to the largely residential neighborhoods between College Hill and Federal Hill, and Diamond Hill South. Buildings set along 12th Street, and Kemper Street, are typically community oriented, whether they are commercial or educational in use. The vast bulk of the Diamond Hill South Historic District, however, is residential in character.

¹ The boundaries followed those determined by the city with the exception of one parcel. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff, "Diamond Hill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places, April 1979.

The Diamond Hill South Historic District includes more than 60 urban blocks that vary in shape, size, and boundary characteristics. Streets that run northwest-southeast, some of which are named for US Presidents, terminate at US 29 Business at their southern ends. Numbered streets (12th Street through 19th Street) extend northeast-southwest, creating a traditional city grid.² The variation of topography, with its drastic declines and rises, disrupts the continuation of some streets. The grid changes at the eastern end of the district, east of Grace and Knight streets, as the alignment shifts in the Diamond Hill neighborhood and at the northern end of the district due to the presence of a large educational campus and low-lying area along Dunbar Drive. The narrow roads through the neighborhood are paved and are often, though not always, lined with sidewalks of concrete or pressed brick. Some blocks are also lined with trees and mature trees often fill the interior of blocks, particularly near the southern end of the Historic District as the topography declines towards US 29 Business.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Commercial, Victorian, Queen Anne, Italianate, Greek Revival, Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, Vernacular, Craftsman, American Foursquare, Minimal Traditional

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Edward G. Frye, Stanhope Johnson, Pendleton Clark

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

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate): 19th century – 21st century

Are there any known threats to this district? None Known

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.

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 Diamond Hill South Historic District is overwhelmingly residential in character with houses dating from the early 1800s to the present though the majority of houses date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when this area was developed intensively as a suburb to Lynchburg's downtown.³ These one- and two-story single-dwellings are typically set back from the road 20 to 40 feet and residential lots generally vary in size from 0.04 acres to 0.25 acres. The predominantly frame buildings exhibit a broad range of architectural styles which exemplifies the neighborhood's development over time. Such styles include the Victorian, Queen Anne, Italianate, and Greek Revival of the nineteenth century and the American Foursquare, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Minimal Traditional of the twentieth century. The monotony

² Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc. "Historic Architectural Survey Diamond Hill South, Lynchburg, Virginia," April 1994, Report on file, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, #CP-042, 162.

³ Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., 162.

of streets lined by residential buildings is broken by the different architectural styles, roof lines, and detailing assigned to each dwelling. While maintenance and condition of such buildings vary throughout the district, the lack of major renovations and additions create a neighborhood with a high degree of architectural integrity. Likewise, modern construction does not deviate from the scale of the existing housing stock.

Small-scale commercial and industrial buildings are situated along the main thoroughfares of 12th Street and Kemper Street, as well as 19th Street, and a nursing home occupies the Guggenheimer Memorial Hospital at Grace and Miller streets. Two public schools are located in the historic district. Robert S. Payne Elementary School sits on 12th Street between Floyd and Fillmore streets, while Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School for Innovation has a large campus on 12th Street between Federal and Monroe streets. Buildings along the edges of the district would have served those living both within and outside of the neighborhood. Sprinkled throughout the district are churches, city government buildings, and buildings for non-profit entities. Despite the different uses of some buildings throughout the district and along its edges, their architecture harmonizes in terms of scale, with no building rising more than three stories, while being differentiated by material with non-residential buildings commonly being of masonry or metal construction.

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.

Study of the Diamond Hill South neighborhood began in 1984 when Kay Nichols conducted a reconnaissance-level survey. In May 1992, graduate students of the University of Virginia's Department of Urban and Environmental Planning carried out an intensive study of the Diamond Hill South neighborhood at the behest of the Lynchburg Department of Community Planning and Development. In November of 1992, the VDHR contracted Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc. to conduct an architectural survey of the historic district. The survey was completed with assistance from Preservation Associates of Virginia, and the boundaries of the proposed historic district were determined by Lynchburg Department of Planning and Community Development in consultation with the VDHR.⁴ The VDHR determined the Diamond Hill South Historic District to be eligible for listing in the NRHP for its local significance in the areas of architecture and ethnic history in 1994. Given the lapse since this original determination, the current PIF builds upon the previous work and provides the reviewer with an update of existing conditions within the neighborhood.

According to local records, development in what is now the Diamond Hill South neighborhood began in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁵ By the mid-century, Lynchburg's reputation as a major manufacturing center and its increased population led to residential development on its surrounding hills including a small number within the Diamond Hill South Historic District that were built prior to the Civil War. As Lynchburg grew, it annexed a large portion of Campbell County in 1870 and the nearby Diamond Hill neighborhood grew as some of the city's wealthiest moved into new glamorous homes.⁶ Meanwhile,

⁴ The boundaries for the Diamond Hill South Historic District as proposed in the 1990s have been adjusted slightly here to remove those buildings at the northern end that now lie within the Twelfth Street Industrial Historic District (118-5498) which was listed in the NRHP in 2018. Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., 159

⁵ Development in this context refers to buildings that are extant today.

⁶ Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., 22, 37.

the Diamond Hill South neighborhood also grew, albeit at a slower pace and with smaller homes that housed lower and middle-class residents.

While author Orra Langhorne wrote in 1890 of the development in Lynchburg – “Our usually quiet suburb has been kept in commotion in regard to the great changes in progress in ‘West Lynchburg’ and ‘South Lynchburg,’ [and] ‘boom towns’ in the vicinity” – it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that construction in the Diamond Hill South neighborhood exploded with more than 200 buildings constructed in that decade alone.⁷ Part of this may have been related to the division of the Lacy Grove Tract of land and donation of some land to the city for the continuation of roads and sewers.⁸ As residential development occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the neighborhood, businesses, industries, religious centers, and schools were also erected, particularly along the outer edges of the neighborhood on the major thoroughfares.

As the Diamond Hill South neighborhood became established, a hierarchy formed, though it was by no means absolute. The neighborhood’s streets and topography both dictated and reflected the wealth of families. Middle-class families, both Black and White, lived on the flatter portions of the neighborhood on streets named after Presidents (e.g. Buchanan, Pierce, and Taylor) while low-income Black families lived on the slopes of the hills, particularly on streets named after vegetation and trees (e.g. Vine, Ivy, and Locust) on the east side of Grace Street.⁹ Though the neighborhood began as mixed-race, it slowly transitioned so that by the World War I and II era it was predominantly inhabited by Black families which is exemplified by the churches and schools that opened during segregation.

While each building in the neighborhood fits together to form a cohesive district, there are some homes and buildings that stand out for various reasons: for their association with specific individuals, as well as for their use in education, religion, medicine, and travel.

Notable Buildings – People

Notable individuals associated with the district include Anne Spencer, Chauncey Spencer, Sr., Dr. R. Walter Johnson, C.W. Seay, and Frank Trigg. These homes are also listed in the NRHP in the Pierce Street Renaissance Historic District.

The well-known poet and figure of the Harlem Renaissance, Anne Spencer, lived at 1313 Pierce Street, in a home known as Edankraal, designed by her husband, Edward. In addition to her poetry, Spencer was an active participant in improving the legal, social, and economic conditions of Black residents of Lynchburg. Opposite Anne and Edward Spencer’s house lived their son, Chauncey Spencer, Sr. Like his mother, Spencer worked to better the segregated country. As a pilot, he was instrumental in achieving the inclusion of Blacks in the Army Air Corps.¹⁰

Dr. R. Walter Johnson, whose house sits at 15th and Pierce streets, practiced medicine on 5th Street and, with his sister Eldorado, led the movement to integrate Lynchburg’s existing hospitals. He was also well known as a tennis coach, working with some of the great Black players of his time including Arthur Ashe, Althea Gibson, and Juan Farrow.¹¹ Beside his house on Pierce Street are a tennis court and a memorial and highway

⁷ S. Allen Chambers, *Lynchburg: An Architectural History*. (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1981), 295.

⁸ “Open Valuable Property,” *The News and Advance* (Lynchburg). June 7, 1905. www.newspapers.com.

⁹ Gerbracht, Richard, Tamara Green, and Preston Smith. “Diamond Hill South: Historical Analysis for National Register Eligibility.” Department of Urban and Environmental Planning, University of Virginia, Spring Semester 1992. Report on file, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 8-9.

¹⁰ *The Anne Spencer House & Garden Museum*. <https://www.annespencermuseum.org/who-is-anne-spencer>. April 22, 2026; Smith, W. Scott Breckinridge. “Pierce Street Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. January 5, 2014; Gerbracht et al., 11.

¹¹ Greenhorne & O’Mara, Inc., 22, 56; Gerbracht, et al., 11.

marker dedicated to him.

At the corner of 13th and Pierce streets lived C.W. Seay, who spent a large portion of his career as principal of Dunbar High School, as well as teaching at Lynchburg College, serving as Lynchburg's first Black city council member since the 1880s, and as the first Black vice mayor.¹² Professor Frank Trigg lived at 15th and Pierce streets in the later years of his life. He had worked as a teacher and principal at Lynchburg's Jackson Street High School and as the first Black supervisor of Lynchburg's Black public schools. He was also co-founder of the Virginia Teachers Association and principals of schools in Maryland and Virginia, and as president of a college in North Carolina.¹³

Notable Buildings – Education

The Robert S. Payne Elementary School on 12th Street between Floyd and Fillmore streets was constructed as the Robert E. Lee School in 1926. Its construction followed the national trend instituting junior high curriculum and schools; this was the first junior high school in the city.¹⁴

Dunbar High School was constructed at 12th and Polk streets in 1923. Additional associated buildings were built in the 1940s and 1950s. A portion of the Dunbar School also sits on land that had previously been occupied the original Payne Public School, built in 1885 for Black students. Though the original buildings of the Payne and Dunbar schools were demolished as the Dunbar School was enlarged, later portions of the school remain. Dunbar remained a high school for Black students until 1970. Throughout its existence, Dunbar High School “was the heart and soul of the black community.” The school is now the Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School for Innovation.¹⁵

Notable Buildings – Religion

There are a few churches within the district. Episcopal Chapel of the Good Shephard (now Good Samaritan Church) at 1401 Wise St. was established in the early 1900s as a mission church by St. Paul's Episcopal Church to minister to Black members of its congregation. As important centers of Black spiritual and social life, many of the churches in the neighborhood formed the moral nucleus of the Civil Rights Movement in Lynchburg after World War II. The chapel became well known in the early 1960s when its rector, John H. Teeter, became one of Lynchburg's most outspoken advocates of racial integration and civil rights.¹⁶

A group of tobacco workers formed the Peaceful Mission in 1912 which became the Peaceful Baptist Church and a church was built at 1309 Pierce Street. In 1983, trustees of the church purchased a new property and the church on Pierce Street was taken over by Wayside Gospel Mission.¹⁷

In 1964, the Greater Peaceful Zion Baptist Church became established at 16th and Fillmore streets, and the Christ Temple Apostolic Church sits at 15th and Wise streets.

Notable Buildings – Travel

During segregation in the South, Black travelers were limited in what accommodations they could use. At 1803 Taylor Street, the Kidd family operated a hotel for this purpose known as the Kidd's Tourist Home.¹⁸

¹² Virginia Department of Historic Resources. C.W. Seay (1900-1982). Historic highway marker, 2013.

¹³ Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Professor Frank Trigg (1850-1933). Historic highway marker, 2011; “African American Educators,” *Old City Cemetery Museums & Arboretum*. <https://www.gravegarden.org/african-american-educators/>. April 22, 2026.

¹⁴ Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., 61.

¹⁵ “R.S. Payne Elementary School.” <https://www.lcsedu.net/schools/rsp/about>. April 22, 2026; Dunbar Collection. Lynchburg Museum & Visitor Center. <https://lynchburgmuseum.org/dunbar/>. April 22, 2026.

¹⁶ Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., 81, 168; Gerbracht et al., 12.

¹⁷ Smith, 20.

¹⁸ Gerbracht, et al., 12.

Notable Buildings – Medical

The Guggenheimer Memorial Hospital (now Guggenheimer Health & Rehab Center) at 1902 Grace Street began operation in 1931 on Guggenheimer family land. The original portions of the building were demolished in 1969, but the Classical Revival wing designed in the late 1920s by Pendleton Clark still remains.¹⁹

Significance

The Diamond Hill South Historic District is locally significant under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the historic district is significant for its community planning as a district that formed from three historically separate neighborhoods (Diamond Hill, Federal Hill, and College Hill) as a result from the city's topography and which coalesced as a matter of the growth of transportation corridors and the population which lived there. The historic district is also significant under Criterion A for ethnic heritage as an initially lower- and middle-class mixed-race neighborhood that grew into a predominantly Black neighborhood. Under Criterion C, the neighborhood provides a good and cohesive example of dwellings exhibiting a wide range of architectural styles which reflect the economic standing of occupants and the development of the neighborhood over time.

As stated by Gerbracht et al. in 1992, the Diamond Hill South Historic District “represents patterns of settlement important to the development of Lynchburg...Different sections represent homes of servants and laborers, and middle-class citizens. The settlement patterns are also depicted through topography, street names, and existence of curbs and gutters. Diamond Hill South also represents an association with the significant persons Anne Spencer, Chauncey Spencer, and Walter Johnson. Lastly, Diamond Hill represents significance in architecture through the frame vernacular structures that characterize the area, and remain intact.”²⁰ The proposed period of significance for the Diamond Hill South Historic District extends from the construction of its earliest buildings in the first half of the nineteenth century to 1977 which corresponds with the construction of the Diamond Hill Center, a community center which would have served residents of both the Diamond Hill and Diamond Hill South neighborhoods, and the National Park Service's traditional cutoff date of 50 years for nominations.

¹⁹ Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., 53.

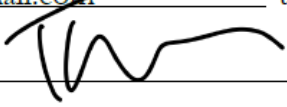
²⁰ Gerbracht et al., 18.

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 West, owner
organization: Lynchburg Services, LLC
street & number: 2600 Memorial Avenue, Suite LL1
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24501
e-mail: westtony131@gmail.com telephone: 434-401-4962

Applicant's Signature: 
Date: 05/21/2026

•• 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: Same as above
Daytime Telephone:

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

name/title: Dara Friedberg
organization: Dutton + Associates, a Timmons Group company
street & number: 1001 Boulders Parkway
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23225
e-mail: dfriedberg@dutton-associates.com telephone: 804-897-1960
Date: April 28, 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: Wynter C. Benda / City Manager
Locality: Lynchburg
street & number: 900 Church Street
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24504
telephone: 434-455-3990

Photolog

Name of Resource: Diamond Hill South Historic District

City or Vicinity: Lynchburg

County: Independent City

State: Virginia

Photographer: Anna White

Date Photographed: April 15, 2026

Photo 1 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view southwest on 14th St. between Wise and Floyd Sts.

Photo 2 of 17: Representative streetscape of district towards Anne Spencer's House, view northwest at 14th and Pierce and Sts.

Photo 3 of 17: Representative of district towards Dr. R. Walter Johnson's House, view north at 15th and Pierce Sts.

Photo 4 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view southeast on Pierce St. at 15th St.

Photo 5 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view NW on Buchanan St. at 16th St.

Photo 6 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view northeast on 15th St. at Kemper St.

Photo 7 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view north on Kemper St. at 13th St.

Photo 8 of 17: Payne Elementary School, view south on 12th St.

Photo 9 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view east on 12th St. at Floyd St.

Photo 10 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view SE on Monroe St. and 13th St.

Photo 11 of 17: Dunbar Middle School, view south from parking lot.

Photo 12 of 17: Representative streetscape of district toward Dunbar Middle School, view northwest on Jackson St. north of 15th St.

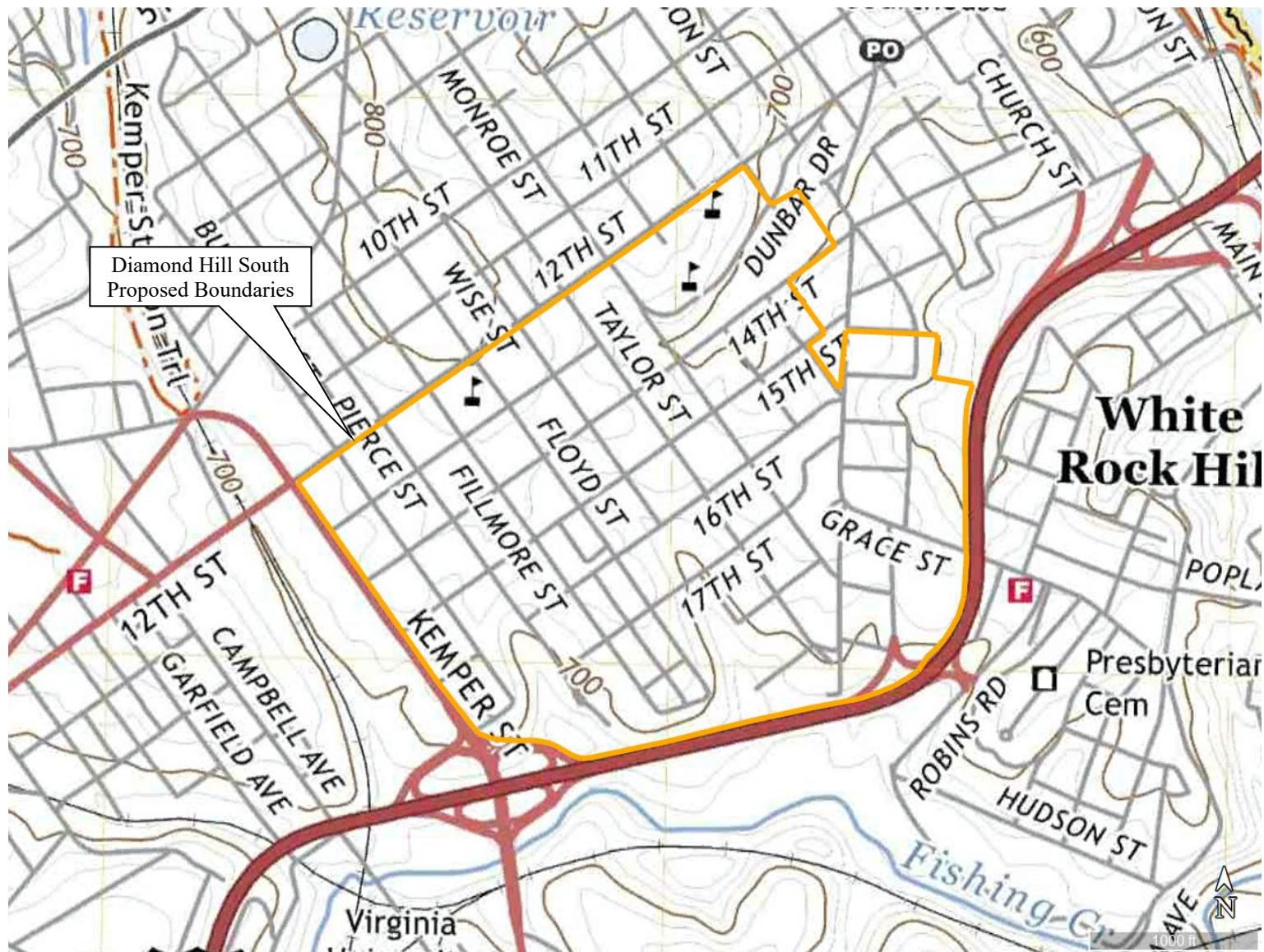
Photo 13 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view southwest at 17th and Grace Sts.

Photo 14 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view south at Knight and Grace Sts.

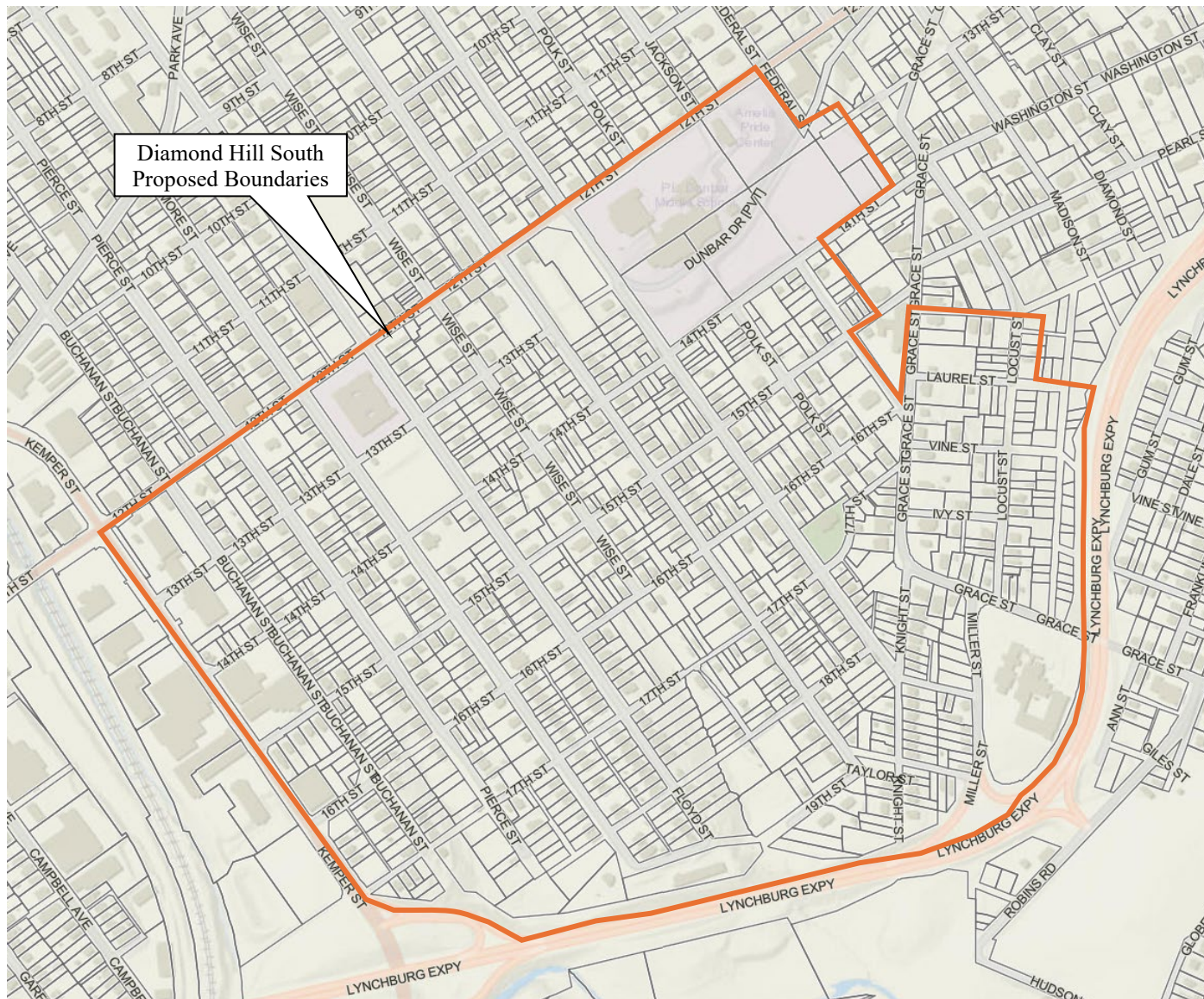
Photo 15 of 17: Guggenheimer Memorial Hospital, view south at Grace and Miller Sts.

Photo 16 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view southeast on Taylor St. at 19th St.

Photo 17 of 17: Representative streetscape of district, view northeast at Taylor and 15th Sts.



US Topographic Quadrangle, Lynchburg, VA 2022
Diamond Hill South Historic District, 118-0225



City of Lynchburg Parcel Viewer
Diamond Hill South Historic District, 118-0225



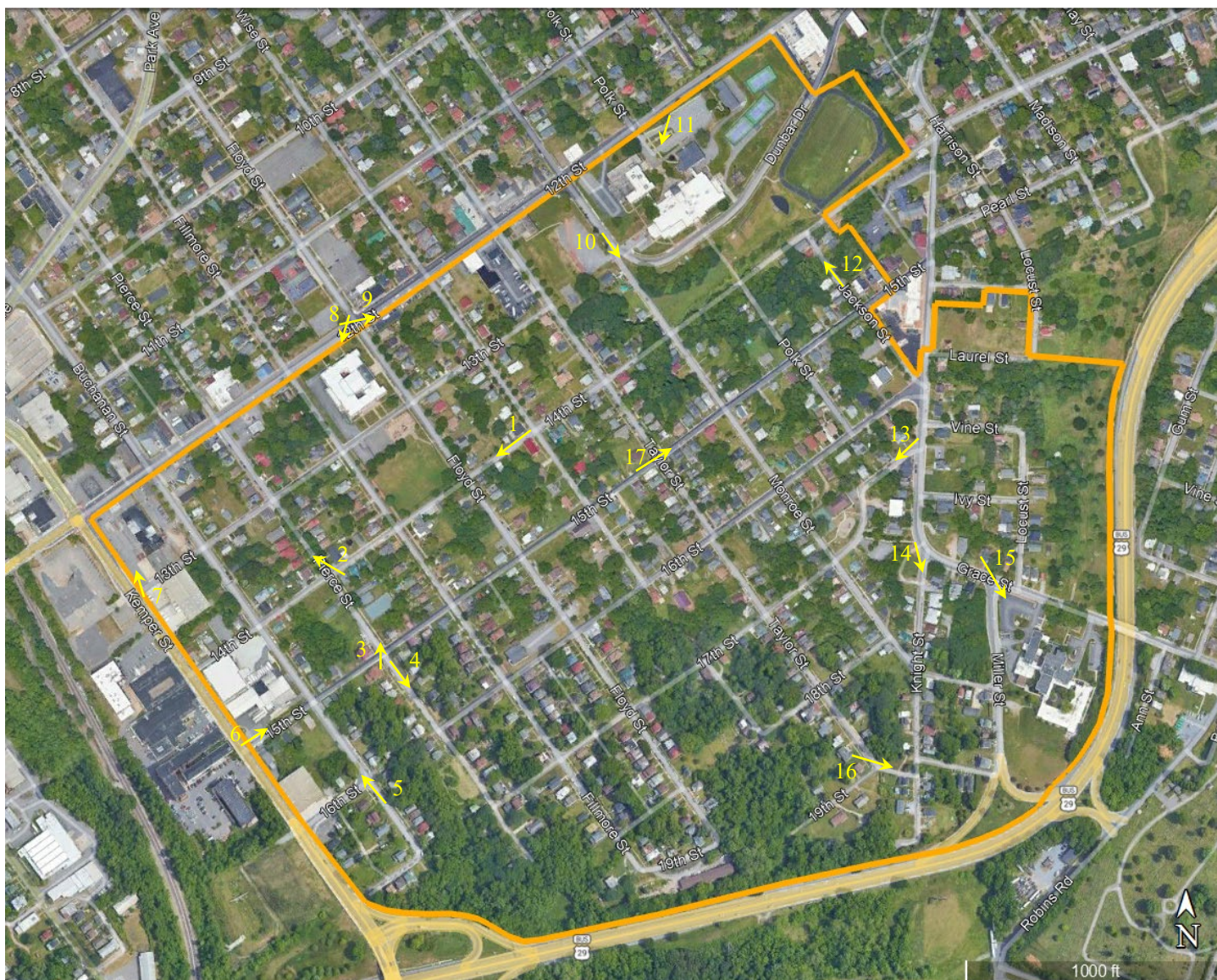
Google Earth, 2025

Diamond Hill South Historic District, 118-0225



VCRIS

Diamond Hill South Historic District, 118-0225, in relation to surrounding historic districts



Google Earth, 2021

Photo Locations, Diamond Hill South Historic District, 118-0225

































