



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) 118-5762 (boundary increase)
118-5049 (individual property)

1. General Information

District name(s): Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District 2025 Boundary Increase

Main Streets and/or Routes: 812 Main Street

City or Town: Lynchburg

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Lynchburg (Ind. City)

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 0.17 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 Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District 2025 Boundary Increase proposes expanding the district boundary to the northeast to include one resource on the 800 block of Main Street. This resource, located at 812 Main Street (118-5049) is contiguous to the historic district's boundary. The adjacent buildings on this side of the 800 block were built in the 1970s and 1980s. They are inconsistent with the district’s architectural character in size, scale, design, and materials.

The Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District is in the heart of the city of Lynchburg, situated on a promontory overlooking the south bank of the James River. A dramatic grade change separates Court House Hill from Downtown. The historic district is bordered to the east by the Lower Basin Historic District (118-0211) and to the south by the Diamond Hill Historic District (118-0060).

The boundaries of the original Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District encompass 25 blocks along Clay, Court, Church, and Main streets between the cross streets of 5th and 13th. In 2002, a Boundary Increase Nomination expanded the district to include a residential area between Madison and Federal streets. In 2016, a Nomination Update and Boundary Increase Nomination comprehensively reviewed the district boundaries again. Several boundary expansion areas were identified to the northeast and southwest of the district, including blocks of Main, Commerce, 12th, and Court streets. These contiguous resources were consistent with the historic and architectural character of the historic district. Other resources that were examined as part of this process but were not included in the 2016 Boundary Increase Nomination had not reached the 50-year threshold, were found to have insensitive alterations, or lacked physical continuity with the district.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): Main Street Commercial

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. 1889; 1913

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 Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District 2025 Boundary Increase proposes expanding the district boundary northeast to include one ca. 1889 commercial building on the 800 block of Main Street. Situated at 812 Main Street, the resource is contiguous to the historic district boundary. The building is consistent with the district's architectural character and relates to the contributing buildings across the street, on the opposite side of Main Street, as it is comparable to them in date, size, scale, style, features, and materials. Its historic commercial use, most notably as Baldwin's Department Store, also aligns with the commercial, religious, institutional, governmental, and residential functions that have characterized the historic district since the late 19th century.

The building at 812 Main Street was constructed around 1889 in the Main Street Commercial style. Characteristic of this style, the three-story masonry building is rectangular with a flat roof. The front elevation is covered in buff-colored brick laid in a stretcher bond. Brick quoins accent the corners and center of the façade, adding visual interest. Recessed rectangular panels accentuate the parapet. The commercial storefront features a recessed central entrance, flanked by large window openings that curved towards the entrance doors. This storefront system configuration dates to when Baldwin's Department Store expanded to occupy both sides of the building in 1948. The upper floor window openings feature cast stone sills and brick arches with keystones. The second-floor openings feature jack arches, while the third-floor openings feature segmental arches. The rear elevation is red brick laid in a five-course common bond with a stone foundation. Half of the rear elevation features window openings with segmental arches, while the other half features rectangular openings.

Several historic newspaper articles suggest that the building may have been significantly reconstructed after a devastating fire in 1913 that affected the 800 block of Main Street. However, the extent of the reconstruction remains unclear. At a minimum, the façade seems to have survived, based on comparisons of pre- and post-fire photographs.

The building at 812 Main Street was not previously considered for inclusion in the historic district because a cementitious cover had been added to the front and rear elevations, obscuring the historic building. The façade was first significantly, and incompatibly, remodeled in the early 1960s, presumably so the department store could remain competitive with retailers in emerging suburban shopping centers. Scored stucco was applied over the second and third stories and a more minimal

fenestration pattern was implemented. After Baldwin's Department Store closed in 1972, the building was sold to Fidelity National Bank, which had just completed the adjacent International Style skyscraper at 828 Main Street. The building at 812 Main Street was further remodeled in 1987, with a new cementitious cover, obscuring all but the recessed entrance.

The incompatible cementitious cover was removed in 2024-2025, revealing a building that retains sufficient physical integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance as a ca. 1889 building designed in the Main Street Commercial style. The building's historic rectangular form, brick walls, brick detailing, fenestration pattern, and storefront remain substantially intact. Although the windows have been removed and their openings filled with CMU and plywood boards, the size, shape, and rhythm of openings remain, except for two openings that were altered into larger casement windows as part of the 1960s renovation. Pockets in the brick facade mark the location of the historic cornice. Although elements of the storefront are missing, including the storefront glass, framing, bulkheads, and signboard, the historic storefront configuration can still be read and understood. With the removal of the incompatible cementitious cover, the ca. 1889 commercial building at 812 Main Street retains sufficient physical integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance with its historic form, features, ornamentation, and materials intact and contributes to the Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District.



Figure 1: Circa 1905 photo on the northeast side of 800 block of Main Street.
Courtesy of the Lynchburg Museum System.



Figure 2: Northeast side of the 800 block of Main Street, likely at the end of World War I.
Courtesy of Jones Memorial Library

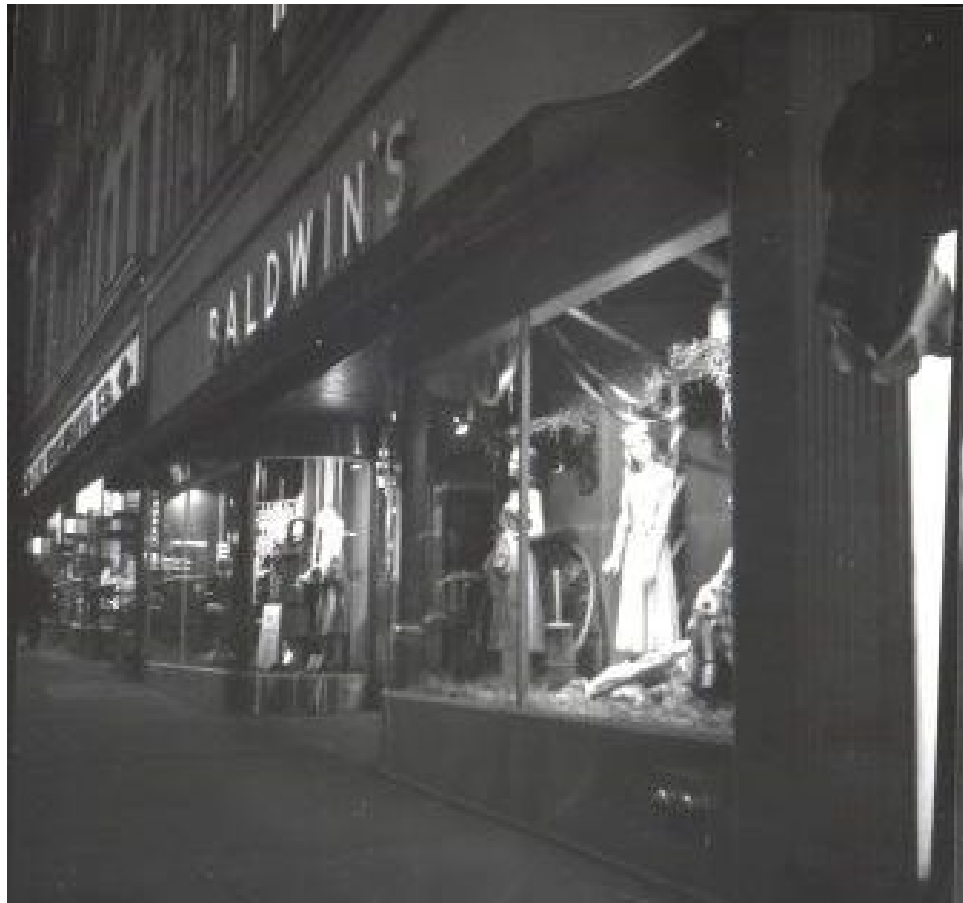


Figure 3: 1948 photo of Baldwin's.
Source: Unknown.



Figure 4: 1950s photo of the 800 Block of Main Street.
Source: Lynchburg News and Advance.



Figure 5: Illustration of 812 Main Street from the June 30, 1960 issue of *The Daily Advance*.
Source: Jones Memorial Library.



Figure 6: 1980 Architectural Survey Photo of 812 Main Street.
Source: VCRIS.



Figure 5: 812 Main Street, 1987 Incompatible Façade Renovation.
Source: City of Lynchburg Parcel Viewer

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 circa 1889 commercial building at 812 Main Street aligns with the resources of the Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District, representing the commercial, religious, institutional, governmental, and residential development of Lynchburg from the early 19th century to the mid-20th century. The building shares similarities in date, size, scale, and style with the buildings directly across the street in the 800 block of Main Street and is consistent with the overall character of the district.

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 Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in December 2000 and the National Register of Historic Places in August 2001. Lynchburg served as the major transportation, industrial, and commercial hub of the Lower Piedmont Region of Virginia from the early 19th century through the mid-20th century due to its prominent location on the James River. Court House Hill was historically the location of government buildings, religious institutions, and residences, while the downtown was the center of commerce and finance. The district is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Industry, Politics/Government, and Religion. The district is also listed under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as it contains a range of traditional and modern commercial, institutional, and residential styles popular in Lynchburg from the mid-19th century through the mid-20th century.

The period of significance begins in 1786, when the General Assembly established the town of Lynchburg and the initial segments of the existing street grid system were laid. The period of significance for the district originally ended in 1950, at the 50-year threshold. A 2002 Boundary Increase Nomination, which included a residential area between Madison and Federal streets, updated the period of significance to end in 1952. A 2016 Nomination Update extended the period of significance again to 1957, to include mid-20th century resources that represent the continued growth and prosperity of downtown Lynchburg before the decentralization of commerce with the introduction of suburban shopping malls, such as the 1961 Pittman Plaza, and a shift in development patterns downtown that characterized new buildings constructed in the 1970s.

The proposed 2025 Boundary Increase includes one resource: the ca. 1889 commercial building at 812 Main Street. Although the building is currently listed under a single address, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and City Directories list the property as 812 and 814 Main Street. W.W. Tyler & Co., a dry goods company, occupied 812 Main Street from ca. 1889 to ca. 1902. In 1903, B.C. and R.L. Baldwin purchased the former Tyler & Co. store and opened a branch of their Farmville-based dry goods business, R.A. Baldwin & Sons, at 812 Main Street.¹ The Baldwin store grew quickly until a 1913 fire devastated the 800 block of Main Street. According to newspaper accounts, the store was rebuilt due to the fire. However, at minimum, the façade of 812-814 Main Street appears to have survived based on a comparison of historic photographs before and after the fire. R.A. Baldwin & Sons reopened at 812 Main Street after the rebuilding effort was completed and continued to operate there until 1972.

Several commercial enterprises occupied 814 Main Street, including W.O. Johnson, a grocery and restaurant; A.W. Hawkins & Co, Inc.; J.D. Moose & Sons, Inc.; and the Darling Shop. Around 1948, the R.A. Baldwin & Sons Department Store at 812 Main Street expanded into 814 Main Street. In addition to operating as Baldwin's Department Store, 812-814 Main Street also housed the offices of Baldwin Stores, Inc.

In 1960-61, Baldwin's was updated with a scored stucco façade with fewer windows on the upper stories to give it a more modern appearance to compete with the allure of new suburban shopping centers, such as the 1961 Pittman Plaza in Lynchburg. Despite this effort, sales declined over the next

decade, and the staff was reduced from sixty employees to eighteen. After 70 years in operation at 812 Main Street, the R.A. Baldwin & Sons Department Store closed the downtown Lynchburg store in December 1972.²

The building at 812 Main Street was not previously included in the historic district because a cementitious cover had been added to the front and rear elevations in 1987, obscuring the historic building. Now that this cementitious cover has been removed, the building should be included as a contributing resource to the district. The building retains sufficient physical integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance as a ca. 1889 building designed in the Main Street Commercial Style that represents the evolution of retail business in downtown Lynchburg.

As such, the building at 812 Main Street is potentially eligible as a Boundary Increase to the Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District with significance on the local level under Criterion A in the area of Commerce as the building represents the evolution of retail business in downtown Lynchburg from the small-scale dry goods, grocery, and specialty stores and restaurants at the turn of the 20th century to a larger, full-service branch of a regional department store chain in the mid-20th century. The building is also potentially eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the three-story brick building embodies the characteristics of the Main Street Commercial Style, which is prevalent throughout the district, with a commercial storefront on the first floor, façade bays delineated by brick quoins, a parapet articulated by recessed panels, and upper-story windows featuring jack- and segmental-arched openings with keystones. The Period of Significance for the proposed 2025 Boundary Increase generally aligns with that of the Court House Hill/Downtown Historic District, as updated in 2016, beginning ca. 1889, when the building was constructed, and ending in 1959, before the implementation of extensive alterations to the façade, reflecting efforts by the R.A. Baldwin & Sons Department Store to compete with the development of new suburban shopping centers and the decreased number of employees indicated a decline in retail business downtown.

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

Private: X 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: William Cook, President
organization: Jamerson Lewis Construction
street & number: 1306 Stephenson Avenue
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24501
e-mail: wcook@jamersonlewis.com telephone: 434-845-3468

Applicant's Signature: 
Date: 4/28/2025

• • *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: William Cook
Daytime Telephone: 434-660-2155

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

name/title: Katie Gutshall, Alison Blanton, Kate Kronau
organization: Hill Studio, PC
street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW
city or town: Roanoke state: VA zip code: 24011
e-mail: kgutshall@hillstudio.com telephone: (540) 342-5263
Date: 4/24/2025

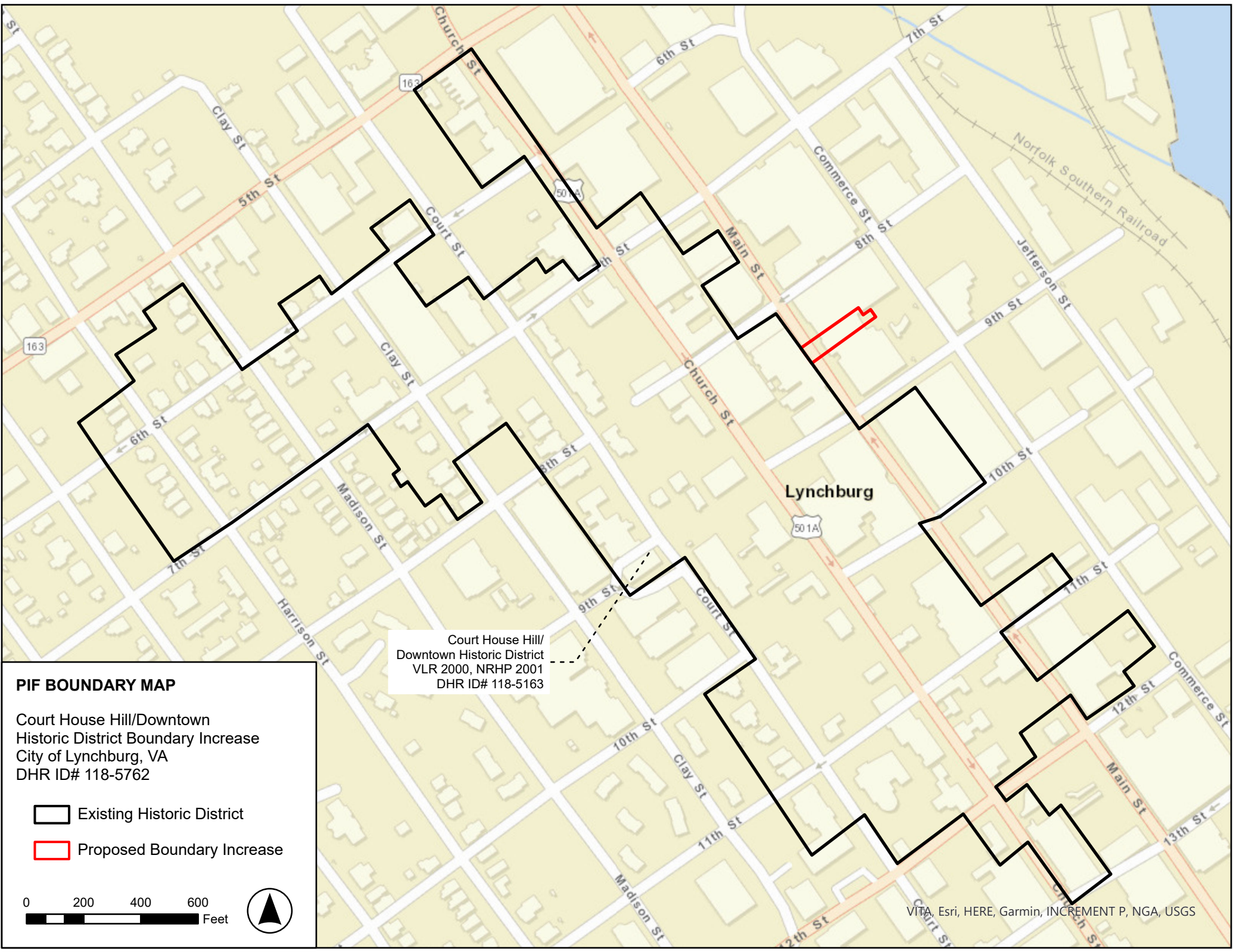
7. Notification

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
locality: City of Lynchburg
street & number: 900 Church Street
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24504
telephone: (434) 455-3990



¹ "Two Brothers Were Builders of Baldwin's," *The Daily Advance*, March 22, 1954.

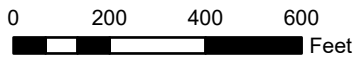
² "Baldwin's Closing at End of Year" *The News*, October 6, 1972, Sec. B, p. 17.



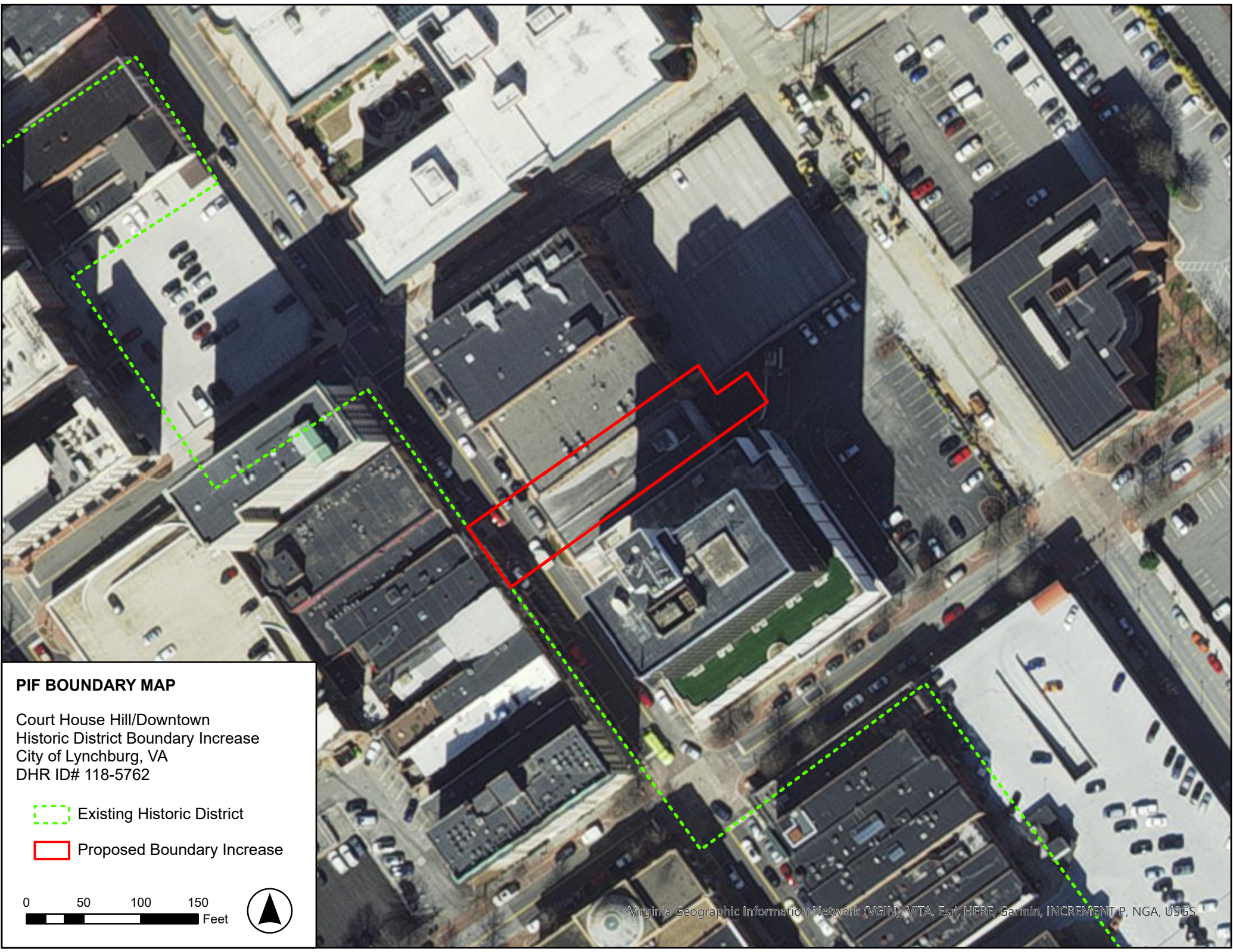
PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Court House Hill/Downtown
Historic District Boundary Increase
City of Lynchburg, VA
DHR ID# 118-5762

-  Existing Historic District
-  Proposed Boundary Increase





Court House Hill/
Downtown Historic District
VLR 2000, NRHP 2001
DHR ID# 118-5163



PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Court House Hill/Downtown
Historic District Boundary Increase
City of Lynchburg, VA
DHR ID# 118-5762

-  Existing Historic District
-  Proposed Boundary Increase

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Feet













