

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: North Thompson Street Historic District

Other names/site number: VDHR# 127-7046

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: North Thompson Street between Broad Street and Monument Avenue

City or town: Richmond State: VA County: Independent City

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

 A B X C D

<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p><u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u></p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Title :</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution

COMMERCE/TRADE: business office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

HEALTH CARE: clinic

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution

VACANT/NOT IN USE

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; STONE; METAL; CONCRETE;
GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The North Thompson Street Historic District in Richmond, Virginia, comprises a small area, approximately 5-acres, nestled between N. Thompson Street on the east, the depressed I-195 right-of-way on the west, the commercial corridor of Broad Street on the north, and a line approximately 175 feet north of Monument Avenue on the south. Situated to the west of Richmond's central downtown business district and an earlier suburban neighborhood, it is a cohesive stretch of six small- to medium-sized mid-twentieth century office buildings and a bank all designed in the International Style. In addition to six contributing buildings within the district, there are also one non-contributing office building, three non-contributing sheds, and one non-contributing teller pod. Set back slightly from the roadways, landscaping of various degrees adorns the area in front of the buildings and the view along North Thompson Street is filled with green interspersed with breaks of interesting vignettes of the International Style buildings.

Narrative Description

Setting

The contributing buildings within the district were all constructed between 1955 and 1959, and each of the contributing buildings still clearly exhibits the International Style. This style abandoned traditional form and adornment to create a pared down, unornamented style that emphasized geometrical shapes and asymmetry. The use of modern construction techniques

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

allowed for large expanses or bands of windows often set flush with the outer wall. These buildings are generally typified by having flat roofs, asymmetrical yet balanced elevations, open plans, metal windows, smooth textures, and ornamentation typically limited to material contrasts. With its open plans, the style lent itself well to commercial and office buildings. Each of the contributing buildings within the North Thompson Street Historic District embraces these design characteristics.

The buildings were all constructed on land newly rezoned at the time as a “quiet business” district—the City of Richmond’s response to the decentralization trend occurring in mid-twentieth century as suburban lifestyles gained in popularity. The “quiet business” district formed a convenient buffer between the residential buildings of the Museum District and the sunken railroad corridor, putting distance between the homes and the corridor while still putting the land to effective use. As such, the block was filled primarily with insurance offices and banks when it opened, as opposed to “louder” or more intrusive commercial business development. Today, the buildings are still in use primarily as banks, as well as architecture studios, health clinics, mortgage lenders, and a Mason’s hall.

Reflective of its location between the more densely developed and pedestrian-oriented West of Boulevard (Museum District) neighborhood to the east and the automobile-oriented suburbs to the west, the buildings within the North Thompson Street Historic District were laid out to accommodate and blend with both patterns of development. The buildings line the street front with minimal setback, in keeping with the dense residential development to its east, and each of the buildings has an entrance on the street side of the building to serve foot traffic. The properties also have ample parking lots to the rear which are accessible via drives between the buildings and a long gravel drive that extends between Broad Street and Monument Avenue. The buildings all have entrances facing the parking lots or designated sidewalks connecting the lots to the front entrance. Additionally, the bank at the corner with Broad Street was also designed to serve those still in their vehicles with drive-through tellers.¹

Description

Anchoring the northern terminus of the North Thompson Street Historic District is the Central National Bank Building at 3501 West Broad Street, designed by Hankins and Anderson of Baskervill and Son (now Baskervill) (VDHR# 127-7046-0007 and 127-6569). Prior to construction of the bank in 1956, the property served as a used car sales lot, and was transformed by the modern structure filled with floor-to ceiling windows.² Upon completion of the building, the design won the honor award from the Virginia chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1960.³ This building exhibits the many of the defining characteristics of International Style—a large volume, topped by a flat roof, with virtually no ornamentation other than identifying signage. The walls are smooth, painted brick surfaces, interrupted only by the large, 7-bay windows that run nearly floor to ceiling on both the north and south elevations of the building—the West Broad Street pedestrian entrance and the entrance from the large parking lot, respectively. These entrances are sheltered by open-sided flat roof breezeways with slender metal pole supports. As originally designed, two cylindrical teller pods sat in the parking lot to the west of the main building. These pods were replaced by a rectangular teller pod to the south

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

of the parking lot in the 1970s or 80s. The site is minimally landscaped in keeping with the International style. Small grassy areas adorn the front and side of the building with concrete walkways leading from the sidewalk along Broad Street as well as the parking lots to the rear. The walkways leads to raised concrete stoops at each entrance. Flanking the front entry stoop are raised planting beds with additional ground-level bed beyond. Shading the side yard along North Thompson Street is a large oak tree that has been subject to extensive pruning in recent years as its branches have grown near power lines.

To the south of the Central National Bank is the district's only non-contributing building, a one-story brick building from 1979 (VDHR# 127-7046-0006).⁴ Although this resource is not from the same time period nor does it exhibit International style, it is mildly compatible with the other buildings in the district. The brick building has little to no ornamentation, hosts other "quiet" businesses, and allows for ample parking to the rear in a lot it shares with the adjacent buildings.

Further south in the block at 1010 North Thompson Street is the current Health Brigade building, formerly the Fan Free Clinic and originally built for the U.S. Fidelity and Guaranty Company in 1955 (VDHR# 127-7046-0005).⁵ Built by Daniel Construction Company, the two-story structure was designed by J. Henley Walker, a prolific architect in the Richmond area.

The U.S. Fidelity and Guaranty Company building, like its contributing neighbors in the district and many of Walker's other designs, exhibits the contemporary simplicity of the International style. At the time, the building was the largest in the city built of prestressed and precast concrete units.⁶ According to Walker, the use of this technology versus traditional steel frame shaved roughly three months off the construction process.⁷ This building exhibits all the hallmarks of International Style, scaled to a two-story office building. The 18,000 square structure is a simple, rectangular box with a flat roof, spanning 65'4" across the front elevation and extending to the rear 112'2" and resting on a reinforced concrete foundation.⁸ The north and south elevations are almost entirely clad with windows, with the large, fixed panes at each story interspersed by blind panels in between. The front and rear elevations, conversely, have no fenestration other than the first-story glazing that surrounds the entrances. Otherwise, those elevations are covered in large, square lightly-textured and colored stone. The flat roof that shelters the entrance extends to the north side of the building, forming a porte-cochere over the alley that runs parallel to that side of the structure. This porte-cochere adds an asymmetry to otherwise predictable massing of the building. The building has no applied ornamentation other than street numbers, with all contrasts between building elements created by changes in the materials palette.

Continuing south along the block, the George B. Tyler Building at 1004 North Thompson Street was designed by John H. Graham and built in 1955 (VDHR# 127-7046-0004). The Tyler Building exhibits a very practical interpretation of the International Style as applied to a utilitarian office building. At the time of its construction, it was lauded as "of modern design and air-conditioned."⁹ Built by Thorington Construction Company, the three-story, rectangular building has a flat roof, to which a small penthouse was added circa 1963. Fronting 93 feet on Thompson Street and extending 74 feet into the lot, the building contained over 21,000 square feet of space as originally built. The brick walls are laid in a 6:1 American bond. Ribbons of

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

windows span the front and rear elevations at each story. On the front elevation, these bands are interspersed with courses of limestone tiles, creating the signature banding common to the International Style. The side walls project slightly beyond both the front and rear elevations. These side elevations have smaller groupings of windows within the brick expanse. The offset main entrance is currently covered in plywood, but presumably was also glazed. Brick planter beds flank the stone steps that approach the entry. This area is sheltered by a flat, cantilevered porch roof. The building has no ornamentation other than its identifying street numbers and emphasis is leant to different parts of the structure through changes in materials palette.

Next door to 1004 is 1000 North Thompson Street. Newspaper reports from 1955 cite Virginius Goodman as the architect of 1000 North Thompson Street, but the 1956 building permit records David Warren Hardwicke as the responsible designer.¹⁰ The construction firm Andrews and Parrish built the structure. As it stands today, the long building at 1000 North Thompson is two stories at the street elevation, drops to a one-story block, raises again to two stories, before terminating at a final one-story story block at the western end of the structure. The newspaper report announcing the construction said it would originally be built as one-story, implying that a second story could be added on easily later.¹¹ Here too, the building permit states a discrepancy and records the building as two stories.¹² The building rests on a continuous concrete foundation and the masonry structural system is clad in narrow bricks set in a stretcher bond. The building is topped by a flat roof surrounded by a low parapet with metal coping. One brick chimney flue rises high above the central interior of the structure from the second-story pop-up towards the rear of the building. The main entrance is offset and consists of replacement glazed double doors with sidelights and a transom. The entry is approached by concrete steps and a ramp. A concrete landing stretches along the rest of the building's street-front facade. The front elevation is slightly inset from the side walls, framed by painted white brick volumes set in stack bond. To the south end, this brick pillar rises higher than the rest of the structure, creating an asymmetry while simultaneously identifying that end of the façade as holding the entrance. Along the front elevation, fenestration dominates the façade and consists of bands of fixed vinyl windows along the first and second stories with blank panels underneath. Along the building's sides, fenestration is primarily one-by-one sliding windows with concrete sills. Although the majority of the fenestration has been replaced, as have the blank panels along the front elevation, this building still conveys its International Style through its lack of ornamentation, flat roof, smooth textures, asymmetrical elevations, and ribbon windows.

The office building at 908 North Thompson Street was constructed in 1959 and is currently home to an architect's studio (VDHR#127-7046-0002). It was designed by William K. Briley and J. Robert Carlton, built by Kayhoe Construction Company and originally housed three insurance companies.¹³ The two-story building is clad in slender bricks set in a stretcher bond. It rests on a concrete foundation with reinforced grade beams. It is topped by a flat roof surrounded by a low parapet with a metal cap. One brick chimney flue pierces the interior end of the roof. There appear to be two primary entrances, one on the first story and another on the second, each consisting of glazed double doors. Both entrances are within a recessed atrium offset on the front

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

elevation. This atrium area has an open stairwell and a central skylight. Fenestration along the front elevation includes two bands of fixed windows along the first and second stories interspersed by blank panels. Windows on the side elevations are fixed panes with hoppers and panels below. These windows create vertical stripes along the building's sides, forming continuous bands that stretch from the first to the second story and accentuating the building's height. To the rear, windows have three horizontally configured lights. Additional detailing includes a stone-veneer planter box within the atrium, decorative square cut outs accented with cast concrete trim on the south wall of the atrium, and a slight angle in the projecting roof as it transitions from running parallel to the building's front elevation to sweep in front of the atrium's open front. 908 North Thompson Street embodies the International Style with its unusual entry sequence, flat roof, smooth textures, and lack of ornament.

Forming the south end of the North Thompson Street Historic District is 906 North Thompson Street (VDHR#127-7046-0001). This office building was designed by Ben R. Johns, Jr. for the Shadwell Corporation and constructed in 1956 by Thorington Construction. It is currently in use as a Mason's Grand Lodge. The two-story, International style structure rests on a continuous concrete foundation. The masonry structural system is clad in cast stone panels on the front elevation and brick laid in a 5:1 American bond on the remaining three sides. The front wall is slightly inset from the side brick walls that project beyond it. The building is topped by a flat roof surrounded by a brick parapet edged with cast stone. One corbeled brick chimney pierces the rear interior roof. The main entrance is offset and consists of glazed double doors with sidelights and a transom approached by brick steps. This entrance and the ramp on the southwest corner of the building are sheltered by a wrap-around porch supported by cylindrical metal posts. A portion of the roof has skylights, allowing for maximum rain and sun on the shrubbery planted in the brick beds below. Fenestration includes vinyl double-hung-sash replacement windows in a one-over-one configuration. Along the front elevation, two continuous banks of these windows run along the first and second stories. Elsewhere on the building, windows are single or paired and have brick sills. A secondary, subterranean entrance is to the rear and is also sheltered by a flat-roof porch. Similar to the adjacent buildings, 906 North Thompson Street remains in good condition and still clearly conveys the International Style with its lack of ornamentation, ribbon windows, smooth surfaces, and flat roof.

Inventory

The following inventory identifies the buildings within the historic district. The contributing status was determined based upon each resource's date of construction, retention of historic integrity, and its ability to convey historic significance.

The following inventory of resources is arranged numerically by street address. The resources are keyed to the attached Sketch Map by street address.

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Broad Street

West 3501 Broad Street **127-6569** *Other DHR Id#: 127-7046-0007*
Primary Resource: Bank (Building), Stories 1, Style: International Style, 1956
Contributing Total: 1
Secondary Resource : Bank (Building) Total: 1
Non-contributing Total: 1

Thompson Street

North 906 Thompson Street **127-7046-0001** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, 1956
Contributing Total: 1

North 908 Thompson Street **127-7046-0002** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, 1959
Contributing Total: 1

North 1000 Thompson Street **127-7046-0003** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, 1956
Contributing Total: 1

North 1004 Thompson Street **127-7046-0004** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 3, Style: International Style, 1955
Contributing Total: 1

North 1010 Thompson Street **127-7046-0005** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 2, Style: International Style, 1955
Contributing Total: 1

North 1100 Thompson Street **127-7046-0006** *Other DHR Id#:*
Primary Resource: Office/Office Building (Building), Stories 1, Style: Contemporary, 1979
Non-contributing Total: 1

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1955-1959

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Graham, John H.

Johns, Ben R., Jr.

Goodman, Virginius

Hardwicke, David Warren

Hankins & Anderson of Baskervill & Son

Walker, J. Henley

Briley, William K.

Carlton, J. Robert

Thorington Construction Company

Kayhoe Construction Company

Andrews & Parrish

Daniel Construction Company

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The North Thompson Street Historic District is significant under Criteria C (Architecture) at the local level with a period of significance from 1955-1959. The period of significance coincides with the first and last contributing buildings to be constructed within the district. The North Thompson Street Historic District is a cohesive collection of five International Style office buildings and one bank. Each contributing building within the district clearly conveys many of the defining characteristics of the International Style, including lack of ornamentation, smooth textures, flat roofs, ribbons of windows or glass curtain walls, and asymmetrical elevations. Further, all of the buildings were architect-designed, many by local architects who would go on to greater recognition and appreciation within Richmond and Virginia.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historic Background

By the early twentieth century, Richmond, Virginia, had recovered from the physical destruction and economic strife caused by the Civil War, and growth and development in the city were flourishing. The expanding central downtown business district, which consumed adjacent residential neighborhoods, coupled with the introduction of the automobile and electric streetcar prompted outward growth of the city into its rural outskirts, particularly to the north and west. One such new residential suburb developed after 1895 to the west of Boulevard, an ornamental corridor that connected Broad Street and a number of other neighborhoods to Byrd Park (West of Boulevard Historic District, VDHR #127-0742). Construction began along Boulevard and pushed west; however, the continued development of this neighborhood west was hampered by the presence of the Forbes estate, which stretched from Park Avenue to the south, Broad Street to the north, Roseneath Street to the east and Hamilton Street to the west, and ultimately, the Richmond, Fredericksburg, & Potomac Railroad (RF&P) corridor west of Thompson Street between Cary and Broad Streets.¹⁴

Following World War II, like most southern cities in the United States, Richmond grew even more rapidly. Much of this growth occurred in the larger metropolitan area, prompting the city to continue annexing portions of the surrounding counties. In the late 1940s and 1950s, the population of the city grew by almost twenty percent. During that time, many working-class and middle-class families moved from central Richmond to the near western neighborhoods while more affluent residents moved to newly developed suburbs of the far West End. In 1950, total construction dollars spent in the city approached 55 million, with over 46 million of that sum devoted to new construction. Records reveal a total of 4,418 new homes were built in that year alone.¹⁵ This incredible growth continued into 1952, with another 3,798 new houses and apartments built, and commercial building on the outskirts of the city to serve all the new housing.¹⁶

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Increased use and popularity of the automobile improved the mobility of this influx of citizens and car sales rose steadily after the war. In 1955 alone, nearly eight million cars were sold in the United States.¹⁷ The increased population in newly developing suburbs led to residents venturing into the City of Richmond in their automobiles, which created seemingly unavoidable traffic congestion downtown.¹⁸ Residents preferred to have the ability to drive to their intended destination, whether it be a store, bank, or business, and park their car. Traffic congestion and limited available parking in the city's downtown discouraged this. In response, commercial businesses opened further out from the city's core to be more convenient for residents of the new suburbs. For example, Willow Lawn, the area's first regional shopping center, opened on West Broad Street in 1956.¹⁹ As fewer people ventured downtown to do business, the service and professional industry was also forced to adapt by relocating offices and corporate buildings, with more space or where parking would not be an issue. The North Thompson Street Historic District provides an example of this shift.

Historic Context: "Quiet Business"

Just as the suburbs outside the downtown core attracted new residential and commercial development, it became a prime location for professional development as well. A variety of both existing and new businesses emerged in the suburbs during this time as the area offered larger and more convenient space in contrast to the dense and limited offerings downtown. As more jobs became scattered throughout the metropolitan area, the dependence upon the personal vehicle grew more crucial than ever.²⁰

In response to the interest of so many companies to move outside of the downtown core, the City undertook a variety of zoning efforts to ensure new development in the suburbs occurred in an organized and compatible way. One such rezoning included the area that comprises the North Thompson Street Historic District in 1954. Richmond's City Council changed the zoning of approximately 20 acres in the city's West End south of Broad Street and flanking the railroad.²¹ Formerly zoned for "C Single Family" or "D Two-Family" dwellings, the area became zoned as "T Transitional District" or a so-called "quiet business" zone.²² This specifically allowed for the operation of "offices for insurance men, attorneys and other business and professional groups".²³ Through this plan, Richmond hoped to balance the line between thriving city and suburbs, allowing larger commercial development further out West Broad or in Chesterfield County and keeping quieter businesses in closer to the downtown city center.

Until that time, the area comprising the North Thompson Historic District had remained undeveloped as a residential area due to the undesirability to locate homes on the narrow block abutting the depressed railroad corridor. With this new zoning designation allowing quiet business development, plans to build in the North Thompson Street Historic District began immediately. In January 1955, Central National Bank announced that it would be building a branch at the corner of Broad and Thompson (3501 W. Broad Street) where there would be ample parking and a drive-through component.²⁴ In spring of 1955, the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company notified the public that a branch office would be opening in the new

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

quiet business zone (1010 N. Thompson Street). The advertised perks of the location included a carport entrance and an adjacent parking lot.²⁵ As insurance offices were one of the development types specifically designated for location within the area, a number of these companies also joined the Central National Bank in developing the area. The insurance industry was a growing endeavor in Richmond at this time. As noted in the 1950 Richmond City Directory, there were approximately 425 individual company and agent listings throughout the metropolitan area. Some companies made the city their headquarters, however the ability to expand into larger suburban office buildings such as in the North Thompson Street Historic District was appealing. Over the next four years, five new office buildings were built in the district.

By 1959, the six contributing buildings within the district had been constructed.²⁶ While the new office buildings were available for lease by a multitude of quiet businesses, the insurance industry filled much of the space.²⁷ By 1960, there were insurance companies leasing every building in the district other than the bank. In fact, there were multiple insurance companies leasing the same building for at least 12 insurance companies within 5 buildings.²⁸ In addition to the economic contribution they made to the city, these service and financial establishments comprised an important industrial asset.²⁹

Insurance companies were the primary occupants of these buildings up until roughly 1980. As early as the mid-1960s and increasingly into the 1970s, the insurance companies were joined by other industries including an employment agency, the corporate offices of a construction company, and a real estate management corporation, as well as professionals such as architects and lawyers. Although the specific business types changed, the quiet nature of the tenant's businesses did not.

Area of Significance: Architecture

All constructed in the mid- to late 1950s, the contributing buildings within the North Thompson Street Historic District were designed in the International Style, a distinct shift from buildings in the adjacent residential neighborhood (West of Boulevard Historic District), although they do complement the larger eight-story Modern Style Seaboard Railroad Company building across from Central National Bank at 3600 W. Broad Street which was constructed in the same time frame¹. Each of the buildings are good examples of the International Style on a small-scale with flat roofs, windows set flush to outer walls, smooth unornamented wall surfaces, and asymmetrical façades. These buildings made use of the increasingly available and affordable

¹ Interestingly, an earlier apartment building located across the street- the Holly House at 1109-1111 North Thompson Street— later took a design cue from the building by the addition of International flair to the front façade. This building, constructed in 1945, was originally two simple masonry buildings with limited architectural interest. In 1960, the owner of 1109 North Thompson added the geometric concrete brise-soleil, presumably in an attempt to make his building look as modern and appealing as those new structures going up on the west side of the street. By 1975, 1109 had fallen into disrepair and the owner of 1111 converted that building to office use and then purchased 1109 to “protect [his] investment.” In 1977, the owner added a matching brise-soleil to the façade of 1111, creating a visual connectivity between the two buildings that masked its original status as two separate structures. As this building predates those on the North Thompson Street Historic District and was not actually designed as an International style building, it is not included in the district boundaries.

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

building technologies of the time, such as precast concrete and machine-made glass, and each boasted ample, easy access parking to accommodate the driving clientele.

Each of the buildings in the district was designed by known and respected architects. Many were prominent throughout Virginia, and several of them went on to greater renown among the local design community. These include Hankins and Anderson of Baskervill and Son (3501 West Broad Street), Ben R. Johns, Jr. (906 North Thompson Street), William K. Briley and J. Robert Carlton (908 North Thompson Street), Virginius Goodman of Virginius H. Goodman Associates and David Warren Hardwicke (1000 North Thompson Street), John H. Graham (1004 North Thompson Street), and J. Henley Walker (1010 North Thompson Street). These designers represent the full breadth of the design profession in 1950s Virginia, running the gamut from primarily small-scale residential to well-known prolific Virginia firms.

Ben R. Johns, Jr., designer of 906 North Thompson Street, went on to work as a primary designer of the Richmond Coliseum. Johns first worked at the Richmond design firm of E. Tucker Carlton before launching his own practice.³⁰ Johns was highly involved in the local community and, in addition to his architecture practice, also served as a Richmond city councilman.³¹ Johns' works show a range of skill, from modest office buildings like that at 906 North Thompson to the sprawling campus of Chesterfield County's Diagnostic Center for Boys. Many of his other buildings show similar International and Modernist influences, such as the East End (Chimborazo) Elementary School, Eastern Shore Citizens Bank, and Maybeury Elementary School (which he designed along with J. Henley Walker, architect of the neighboring North Thompson Street building at 1010). Featured in a portfolio of his works, the 906 North Thompson description reads, "Building contains two floors of office space. Parking area is located to the rear. Future plans call for a third floor addition."³² A third floor was never added to the Shadwell Corporation's building and today it continues to express the same International Style elements showcased in Johns' portfolio—the flat roof, ribbons of windows that span the first and second stories on the front elevation, an offset entry, and an unusual flat-roof porch. Although public opinion has largely turned against the Richmond Coliseum today, it was well-received when originally constructed and won multiple awards, including an excellence in design honor from the Virginia Chapter of the AIA and the Richmond Planning Commission.³³

J. Henley Walker, the architect of record for the U.S. Fidelity and Guaranty Company at 1010 North Thompson Street, was Ben Johns' co-designer for Maybeury Elementary, and had an equal if not greater impact on the architectural personality of Richmond. Walker worked often with area school boards and designed new buildings and additions for over 100 schools in the Richmond area, the vast majority of which were in the International style. His work can be still be seen today at Maybeury Elementary (901 Maybeury Drive), Southside Day Nursery (325 West 15th Street), and 2913 Park Avenue. Over the years, he worked on Varina High School, King and Queen High School, a reconstruction of Essex County Courthouse, and Battlefield Park High School. While these often utilitarian structures do not often garner great praise, Walker created spaces that most citizens of Richmond passed through as they grew up, perhaps spending almost as much time in the classrooms as they did at home. His contribution to the architectural

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

fabric of Richmond lives on today in solid, practical buildings that operate just as they were designed to do.

Newspaper articles at the time cite Virginius Goodman as the designer for the Seay Building at 1000 North Thompson, although the building permit lists David Warren Hardwicke in the “responsible designer” field.³⁴ Limited information is available about Goodman’s design work, but a 1944 advertisement reads, “Plan your postwar home now- Virginius H. Goodman, residential designer and builder.”³⁵ In 1948, he offered “advertising displays, booths, sales rooms...custom designed and built.”³⁶ In 1950, both he and his wife declared bankruptcy, but had recovered by 1953 and Goodman earned a real estate license.³⁷ Based on advertisements and permit notices in local papers, Goodman specialized more in residential housing, but he did build other office buildings and churches as well as provide blueprints and specifications. Hardwicke had a larger practice with a wider scope of expertise and recognition. From a promotional portfolio, “Our objective is to create architecture that serves the client, the public and the environment—the client’s needs, his budget limitations, and the environment of his building must be brought together into a comprehensive whole with structural integrity and unity of design. The professional staff of David Warren Hardwicke and Partners has varied experience in all phases of architectural practice, including commercial, institutional, religious, and residential building.”³⁸ Hardwicke designed several buildings quite close to the North Thompson Street Historic District, including The Daniel Building, just to the west across the I-195 corridor at 3805 Cutshaw Avenue and the First Federal Savings and Loan Association building just outside the district at 3407 West Broad Street. Both of these buildings were received the Honor Award from the Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.³⁹ The Daniel Building is a five-story, International Style structure topped by a flat roof. The building is wrapped in horizontal layers of blind panels and ribbon windows, each strata stacked upon the next. The first story is slightly smaller than those above it, lending a disjointed lightness to the upper stories, similar in effect to that of The Tower Building (discussed below). The First Federal Savings and Loan Association building dates to a slightly later era and expresses a more contemporary style and is thus not included in the North Thompson Street Historic District.⁴⁰ Hardwicke also designed the Tower Building at 3212 Cutshaw Avenue, to the southeast of the district, another International style structure (VDHR# 127-6136-0004). As described in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, “this is basically a three-story building whose ground floor simply has no walls...Although it looks like a spectacular structural device, it is actually an ingenious and economical way to conform to the city’s zoning law regarding parking space without using and wasting valuable extra land.”⁴¹ The top two stories of this building are cloaked in a brick solar screen, “made of traditional Virginia soft molded brick, laid in a pattern that is a variant of an 18th century garden wall.”⁴² Other notable buildings from Hardwicke’s resume are on VDHR’s list of “Notable Modern Architecture in Virginia”: the North Wing and Sculpture Garden of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Woodlands at Colonial Williamsburg’s Visitor Center.⁴³ Hardwicke also received an AIA Merit award for the First Mortgage Corporation building, pictured in his portfolio as a more sophisticated version of the Tower Building, at 1512 Willow

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Lawn Drive. Again, the structure is three stories with an open first story that appears to perch on stilts. Rather than the full envelope of the brick screen, the façade of this flat-roof building is composed of six bays. Each bay has a centered brick panel that spans the second and third stories. To either side of the brick panel is a narrow fixed window. The second and third story windows are separated by a small blind panel. The building sits on top of square columns which continue to the roof line, separating each bay. Hardwicke's efforts, along with those of Virginius Goodman, at the Seay Building are slightly less dramatic, but they express the International Style nonetheless in the ribbons of windows, austere materials palette, and asymmetrical pillars on the front elevation.

The Central National Bank at 3501 West Broad was designed by Hankins and Anderson of Baskervill & Son (now simply Baskervill), a Richmond firm that was founded in 1897 and is still designing today. This firm designed and built projects throughout the twentieth century in all of the prevailing styles, from residential homes on Richmond's premiere Monument Avenue to an addition to the state capital, to the West Hospital for the Medical College of Virginia (VCU Health System). As a larger practice, the catalogue of Baskervill truly reflects all styles and periods and types of architectural design. Another example of their International Style architecture built during this time period is the Robertshaw building just west of Willow Lawn (VDHR# 043-5257). Declared "the showpiece of the neighborhood," the Robertshaw building sits around the corner from Hardwicke's First Mortgage Corporation Building and received the Virginia AIA's Merit award. One of several new buildings in the Willow Lawn area built in the early 1960s, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* raved, "outstanding are the tall white columns that surround the structure on every side and rise from the terrace to the broad-eaved roof. These 44 columns actually enclose the beams that support the roof. The second story literally hangs from this roof on slender steel rods hidden in the window mullions, a system that eliminates the need for internal supports and allows unbroken sections of windows in the walls from ground floor to roof...Although daring in its structural system, the design of the building suggests a classical inspiration, a simplicity of forms and a logic in their elaboration."⁴⁴ The Central National Bank building, while different in form, shows a similar competence with form, massing, and volume, applying classical proportions in stripped-down manner.

John H. Graham, architect of the George B. Tyler Building at 1004 North Thompson Street, practiced primarily in northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. Many of his buildings have been demolished in the on-going evolution of that area and 1004 North Thompson is his only building able to be confirmed as extant during the course of this project. However, contemporary newspaper articles show other designs similar to the Tyler Building--multi-story, rectangular, International Style buildings with ribbons of windows delineating each story of the building.⁴⁵ Graham designed buildings as diverse as an Arthur Murray Dance Studio to housing in a beachside community. In a rendering of his "Modern Beach Home," a one-story house is shown wrapped in glass curtain walls and topped by a flat roof that flares dramatically over the projecting corner of the building.⁴⁶ Graham practiced broadly and is also the architect of record on northern Virginia schools, curb service restaurants, and small scale apartment complexes. In 1955, in tandem with local builders, realtors, and rehabilitation specialists, he founded a

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

redevelopment firm christened Rebuilding, Inc., with the aim of revitalizing Washington neighborhoods.⁴⁷

1004 North Thompson just one of many medium-scale International Style office buildings designed by Graham. It exhibits the defining characteristics of the style, as interpreted by a versatile, prolific architect of the time.

William K. Briley and J. Robert Carlton are listed as designers of 908 North Thompson Street. “J. Robert Carlton and Associates” appears in contemporary newspapers and help wanted ads, although Briley’s name remains elusive.⁴⁸ The bulk of the Carlton firm’s work was warehousing or manufacturing space, designing space steadily throughout the 1960s and Virginia for the Crump Company, Publisher’s Envelope, McLean Trucking Company, Kingsberry Homes, Smith Storage and Moving, Stackpole Components Company, the Staunton Manufacturing Company, the Baltimore Box Company, and the John H. Harland Company. In 1965 they won a contract to design an urban renewal master plan for the city of Memphis.⁴⁹ Carlton diversified his businesses in the mid-1960s, acquiring a Midwest chain of warehouses and went on to found a chain of Carlton Inns in the 1970s. He also designed for Richmond’s Commonwealth Ford and Hyman Brothers Pontiac and was involved with the renovation of Parker Field. Interestingly, the smaller office building at 908 North Thompson Street appears to be a bit of an anomaly within this time period of Carlton’s career; however the building is perhaps the most imaginative application of the International Style within the block, with its recessed entry sequence, angled roofline, and decorative square voids in the southern wall of the building.

Together, the contributing buildings with the North Thompson Street Historic District reflect an intact and representative collection of the International Style as applied to medium-scale office buildings from 1955-1959 in Richmond, Virginia. The district is a snapshot in time of the works of several Virginia architects who would go on to gain larger recognition within the local design community. All of the buildings retain a high degree of historic physical integrity and continue to convey the characteristic design features and aspects intended by their architects.

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

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North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

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“Wins Award,” Richmond Times-Dispatch, 30 October 1960.

“Zone Voted For ‘Quiet’ Businesses,” Richmond Times-Dispatch, 11 May 1954, Page 7.

“Zoning Ordinance Notice,” Richmond Times-Dispatch, 20 April 1954, Page 32.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR# 127-7046

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.75 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.568889 | Longitude: -77.478333 |
| 2. Latitude: 37.568334 | Longitude: -77.477778 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.566389 | Longitude: -77.480000 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.566945 | Longitude: -77.480556 |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic district is composed of eight separate property tax parcels (identified as W0001665022, W0001665023, W0001665024, W0001665025, W0001665026, W0001665027, W0001665030, W0001665031 by the City of Richmond) and contains approximately 4.75 acres of land. The district is located along North Thompson Street and is generally bound by North Thompson Street to the east, Broad Street to the north, and the sunken I-195 corridor to the west. The southern boundary sits roughly 175 feet to the north of Monument Avenue.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the historic district are drawn to include the extant buildings within the North Thompson Street Historic District. The boundary includes the full parcel for each building, as the available parking to the rear was of crucial appeal to potential customers at the time of construction. The historic setting and all known historic resources associated with the district are captured within the historic boundaries.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Blythe Rowe and Robert J. Taylor, Jr., Architectural Historians

organization: Dutton + Associates

street & number: 1115 Crowder Drive

city or town: Midlothian state: VA zip code: 23113

e-mail: rtaylor@dutton-associates.com

telephone: 804-897-1960

date: February 21, 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: North Thompson Street Historic District

City or Vicinity: Richmond

County: Independent City

State: Virginia

Photographer: Blythe Rowe

Date: November 22, 2016

Photo 1 of 16: Contributing Resource- 906 North Thompson Street
Front Façade and South Elevation, Facing Northwest

Photo 2 of 16: Contributing Resource- 908 North Thompson Street
Front Facade, Facing West

Photo 3 of 16: Contributing Resource- 908 North Thompson Street
Front Façade and North Elevation, Facing Southwest

Photo 4 of 16: Contributing Resource- 908 North Thompson Street
Front Façade Details, Facing North

Photo 5 of 16: Contributing Resource- 1000 North Thompson Street
Front Façade, Facing West

Photo 6 of 16: Contributing Resource- 1004 North Thompson Street
Front Façade, Facing West

Photo 7 of 16: Contributing Resource- 1004 North Thompson Street
Entry Details, Facing Southwest

Photo 8 of 16: Contributing Resource- 1010 North Thompson Street
Front Façade and North Elevation, Facing Southwest

Photo 9 of 16: Contributing Resource- 1010 North Thompson Street

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Front Façade, Facing West

Photo 10 of 16: Contributing Resource- 3501 West Broad Street
Front Facade, Facing Southeast

Photo 11 of 16: Contributing Resource- 3501 West Broad Street
Rear Façade, Facing Northwest

Photo 12 of 16: Contributing Resource- 3501 West Broad Street
Entry Details, Facing Southeast

Photo 13 of 16: Noncontributing Resource- 110 North Thompson Street
Front Façade and South Elevation, Facing Northwest

Photo 14 of 16: Representative Streetscape
1000-1004 North Thompson Street, Facing Northwest

Photo 15 of 16: Contributing Resource- 3501 West Broad Street
906-908 North Thompson Street, Facing Southwest

Photo 16 of 16: Contributing Resource- 3501 West Broad Street
906-1000 North Thompson Street, Facing Northwest

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

ENDNOTES

¹ "Central National to Open Thompson Branch April 8," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 28 March 1957, Page 22.

² McGovern Buick. Advertisement. *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 2 May 1954, Page B-7.

³ "Wins Award," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 October 1960, Page B-11.

⁴ City of Richmond, Property Assessors Card.

⁵ "U.S. Fidelity Company to Open Branch Here in Late Summer," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 5 April 1955, Page 37.

⁶ "There is a Difference: U.S. Fidelity Building to be Finished Soon," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 10 July 1955.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ City of Richmond, Building Permit Application, 8 March 1955.

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

- ⁹ "Construction to Start Soon on \$300,000 Office Unit Here on Thompson Street," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 5 May 1955, Page 29.
- ¹⁰ "Insurance Firm to Get New Offices," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 December 1955 and City of Richmond, Building Permit Application, 29 March 1956.
- ¹¹ "Insurance Firm to Get New Offices," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 December 1955.
- ¹² City of Richmond, Building Permit Application, 29 March 1956.
- ¹³ City of Richmond, Building Permit Application, 10 April 1959 and "New Thompson St. Office to Open," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, 29 November 1959, page B-11.
- ¹⁴ David A. Edwards, "West of Boulevard Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, October 12, 1993, 142; and D.F. LaPrade, Papers written for Richmond's Department of Public Works. On file at Richmond's Department of City Planning and Development Review, 1949.
- ¹⁵ James K. Sanford, *Richmond: her Triumphs, Tragedies, & Growth*. (Richmond, VA: Metropolitan Richmond Chamber of Commerce) 193.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, 194.
- ¹⁷ Marie Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia, and Its People* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 277.
- ¹⁸ The electric streetcar ceased operations in 1949.
- ¹⁹ James K. Sanford, *Richmond: her Triumphs, Tragedies, & Growth*. (Richmond, VA: Metropolitan Richmond Chamber of Commerce) 206.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, 194-197.
- ²¹ "Zone Voted For 'Quiet' Businesses," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 May 1954, Page 7.
- ²² "Zoning Ordinance Notice," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Page 32, 20 April 1954; "Zone Voted For 'Quiet' Businesses," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 May 1954, Page 7.
- ²³ "Zone Voted For 'Quiet' Businesses," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 May 1954, Page 7.
- ²⁴ "Branch Banks Going Up At Fast Rate as Answer To the Parking Problem," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 2 January 1955, D-7.
- ²⁵ "U.S. Fidelity Company To Open Branch Office Here in Late Summer," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 April 1955, Page 37.
- ²⁶ The building at 1100 N. Thompson Street was not constructed until 1979.
- ²⁷ United States Fidelity & Guaranty Co. and Central National Bank owned their buildings. In fact, by the end of 1956 the newly zoned area as a whole (between Thompson Street and Malvern Avenue) had 11 large insurance companies, whether they were the owners of the buildings or simply occupants.
- ²⁸ *Hill's Richmond City Directory 1960* (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc.).
- ²⁹ *Hill's Richmond City Directory 1950* (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc.).
- ³⁰ "Plans Reviewed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 December 1953, Page 4.
- ³¹ "Problems of Youth Discussed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 21 October 1960, Page 5.
- ³² "Ben R. Johns, Jr., Architect," Portfolio. Available at Library of Virginia, call number 43427, Box 1, Folder 37.
- ³³ Jessica Tyree, "We Can't All Age Gracefully," Library of Virginia http://www.virginiamemory.com/blogs/out_of_the_box/2010/09/01/we-cant-all-age-gracefully/ Accessed 12/14/2016 and "Coliseum Gets Award," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 October 1974, Page B-6.
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- ³⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁴⁰ City of Richmond, Property Card, W Section, Block 1629, Card 1.
- ⁴¹ "Daring Design in Buildings," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 August 1962, Page 44.
- ⁴² *Ibid*.
- ⁴³ DHR "Notable Modern Architecture in Virginia"

North Thompson Street Historic District
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

⁴⁴ "Daring Design in Buildings," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 August 1962, Page 44.

⁴⁵ "Designed for Offices," *The Evening Star*, Page B-4, 1 May 1954 and "Office Building Almost Completed," *The Evening Star*, 27 March 1954, Page B-14.

⁴⁶ Drum Point Beach [Advertisement], *The Evening Star*, 5 June 1953, Page A-10.

⁴⁷ "District Firm Organized to Rebuild Slum Areas," *The Sunday Star*, 2 October 55, Page A-2.

⁴⁸ "Architects and Draftsmen," [help wanted advertisement] *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 10 August 1961, Page 41.

⁴⁹ "Richmond Firm to Design Memphis Commercial Area," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 September 1965, Page D1.



-  Historic District Boundary
-  Contributing
-  Noncontributing

**North Thompson Street
Historic District
VDHR # 127-7046**





**North Thompson Street
Historic District
VDHR # 127-7046**

 Historic District Boundary

 Photo Location and Direction

0 125 250 500 Feet

