

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: Roanoke Downtown Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: VIRGINIA, Roanoke

DATE RECEIVED: 5/28/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/14/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 02000978

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Additional Documentation Approved

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept
REVIEWER Edson Beall DISCIPLINE History
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 7-14-14

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Roanoke Downtown Historic District
(2014 Update)

Name of Property
City of Roanoke, Virginia

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 1

Prepared by:

name/title: Alison S. Blanton & Katherine V. Coffield

organization: Hill Studio, PC

street & number: 120 Campbell Avenue SW

city or town: Roanoke state: Virginia zip code: 24011

e-mail: ablanton@hillstudio.com

telephone: 540-342-5263

date: February 2014

Additional Documentation, February 2014

The Roanoke Downtown Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. The district is located in the southwest quadrant of the greater downtown area, which continues to serve as the business and governmental center of the City of Roanoke. South Jefferson Street serves as the central thoroughfare of downtown, dividing east and west. The historic district boasts an intact collection of commercial, social, and governmental resources that range in date from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. The period of significance and boundaries of the district were revised in 2013, at which time the original period of significance (1882 to 1952) was extended to 1961. The boundaries were expanded several blocks south along South Jefferson Street, and several blocks west along Church and Luck Avenues. The expansion areas include the 1950s International-style Roanoke Public Library on South Jefferson Street and the YMCA on Church Avenue.

Subsequent to the 2013 nomination update, it was discovered that the historic district's last major post-World War II general-purpose office building, the Seven-O-Seven Building, was constructed in 1964. No further major construction took place within the historic district until redevelopment efforts of the 1970s, and this later development was of a different character than earlier design trends. Archival and field investigations have demonstrated the Seven-O-Seven Building supports the context of the downtown historic district, and it is warranted to extend the district's period of significance to 1964 to capture this most recent example of International Style architecture in the district.

This additional documentation includes an analysis of the architectural design of the Seven-O-Seven Building in Section 7; an explanation of the building's significant historical associations with the areas of commerce and architecture in Section 8; additional bibliographic references in Section 9; a location map and photo key for the Seven-O-Seven Building; and labeled photographic prints of the building.

Section 7

The Seven-O-Seven Building is located at 707 South Jefferson Street, within the existing boundaries of the Roanoke Downtown Historic District. The International-style five-story office building was constructed in 1964. It is rectilinear in form and is six bays wide and twelve bays deep with terraces over the first floor on either side. The steel-frame structural system is clad with a curtain wall of cream-colored brick. Precast-concrete spandrels fill the spaces between the vertical pivot windows. The lobby entrance is recessed to reveal the outermost row of granite-clad steel columns. The ground floor is faced with granite and is entered via an aluminum-and-plate-glass storefront. Simple stylized lettering that

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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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reads "707" is located at the top of each elevation. The ground floor features an attractive lobby, with terrazzo floors, marble paneled walls, and two passenger elevators. The building was constructed with a dual-duct space conditioning system, which allowed each office to control its own temperature. It was the first use of this more technologically advanced heating and air conditioning system in an office building in the Roanoke area. Furthermore, the building's foundation, structural system, massing, and aesthetics were designed so that additional stories could eventually be added, although to date no additions have been made to the building.¹

Inventory

The following inventory lists the newly contributing resource within the district. The entry provides the address, date of construction, architectural style, current building use, VDHR File number, and the contributing status within the district. The contributing status of the building was determined based on the integrity of the building as it supports Criteria A (Commerce) and C (Architecture) during the period of significance (1881-1964).

Jefferson Street

707 Jefferson Street 128-5236

Other DHR Id #: 128-5761-0171

Primary Resource Information: **Office/Office Building, Stories 5.00, Style: International Style, 1964**

Individual Resource Status: **Office/Office Building**

Contributing

Total: 1

Section 8

The Roanoke Downtown Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce, Politics/Government, Religion, and Entertainment/Recreation and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, with a period of significance of 1882-1961. This 2014 nomination update establishes the district's period of significance as 1882 to 1964, ending with the construction of the Seven-O-Seven Building, the last major general-purpose office building to be built downtown, prior to the revitalization efforts of the 1970s. The Seven-O-Seven Building contributes to the historic functions and architectural character of the Roanoke Downtown Historic District. As a whole, the district encompasses resources that represent the commercial, institutional, social, religious, and governmental development of downtown. A wide range of styles from different periods is represented, including the Italianate, High Victorian Gothic, Neoclassical, Craftsman, Moderne, Art Deco, and International. The Seven-O-Seven Building's individual design and history are reflective of the larger patterns identified for the district as a whole.

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Name of Property City of Roanoke, Virginia
County and State N/A
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Historical Background

Virginia’s urban downtowns served as centers for commercial, government, financial, and institutional activity throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Rapid post-World War II population growth (colloquially known as the Baby Boom), accompanied by housing shortages and new mortgage lending practices, stimulated a residential building boom that lasted into the 1960s. The advent of the automobile and construction of efficient road networks allowed new homes to be built outside of traditional city limits. Retail stores, bank branches, and offices soon followed the population to the suburbs. From the 1940s through the early 1960s, most downtowns maintained their role as economic and political loci due to the unprecedented of growth and economic prosperity that occurred in the United States during this period. By the early 1960s, however, many central business districts across the country entered a period of extended decline that persisted through the late twentieth century.

Suburbanization in Roanoke

In Roanoke, the 1950s was a prosperous decade, although the growth patterns demonstrated the increasing influence of suburbanization. The population increased by 32 percent during this time, although much of it was attributable to the substantial annexation of Roanoke County that occurred in 1949. Subsequent growth took place in the suburban areas in the former Roanoke County. Williamson Road, which experienced a commercial and residential building boom after the war, was included in the annexation. The First National Exchange Bank established the first permanent branch bank in the valley on Williamson Road in 1949. Colonial American National Bank and Mountain Trust National Bank announced plans to build branches in the same area that year.²

Commercial offices and retail stores also established locations outside of downtown Roanoke to take advantage of the suburban population. In 1948, the Shenandoah Life Insurance Company moved its headquarters from downtown and built its new home office on Brambleton Avenue, two miles southwest of the central business district. Crossroads Mall opened in July 1961, as the first regional shopping center in the valley and the first enclosed shopping center in Virginia. The mall was climate controlled and boasted 39 stores. A few months later, Towers Shopping Center opened in October 1961, with 33 stores. The Roanoke-Salem Plaza opened in 1962, at the intersection of Melrose Avenue and Peters Creek Road. It featured department stores, variety stores, a supermarket, and a drug store. These suburban shopping centers became direct competition for the downtown retail stores.

Postwar Development in Downtown Roanoke

Even with the trend toward decentralization, business and government operations continued to be concentrated in downtown Roanoke through the late 1950s and early 1960s. Miller & Rhoads, a Richmond-based department store, opened its first Roanoke branch downtown in 1957, just before the advent of regional shopping centers. Although downtown Roanoke would eventually decline as a retail destination, most department stores, including Heironimus, Miller & Rhoads, Woolworth’s, and Leggett’s, retained their downtown locations into the late twentieth century.

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N/A

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In 1958, the seven-story First Federal Savings Building (now the Valley Bank Building) was constructed at the corner of First Street and Church Avenue. It was the first major general-purpose office building to be built downtown since 1928.³ Several other office and institutional buildings followed the First Federal Savings Building. Next was the Thomas B. Mason Building at 105 Franklin Road. Built in 1961, it housed the Federal District Attorney's Office for the Western District. A year later, the American Red Cross Building was built on a large lot at 352 Church Avenue. Although the building represents a major institutional use constructed in the district within the period of significance, it does not contribute to the district due to extensive alterations and additions. Its sprawling development on a large lot is also more typical of suburban development patterns.

The Seven-O-Seven Building at 707 South Jefferson Street, constructed in 1964, was the last major downtown office building of the postwar era. At five stories tall, it was touted as a "handsome, most modern office building" in a multi-page spread by the Roanoke Times. The building was constructed for Professional Properties, Incorporated in response to the need for additional medical office space in the area. Roanoke architects Guerrant and Mounfield were commissioned to design the building and J.H. Fralin and Son served as the general contractor. The \$1 million project supplied more than 200 persons with work. The building was designed with many modern amenities, as well as copious parking at the rear.⁴ Downtown Roanoke Incorporated called the Seven-O-Seven Building the "most imaginative and outstanding improvement in the downtown area."⁵ The Seven-O-Seven Building thus reflects the architectural trends of the post-World War II era, towards simpler forms and the emphasis on structural systems as the principal aesthetic rather than applied ornamentation. Its form and use of modern materials is consistent with the other buildings constructed in the district during the postwar period.

According to the Roanoke Times, the office building was a forerunner of the medical complex that was coalescing in downtown Roanoke.⁶ The Seven-O-Seven Building offered custom facilities for both businesses and medical practices. Established next to the 1926 Gill Memorial Eye, Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital, it was connected by a door cut between the walls of the two buildings. In 1967, Community Hospital was constructed nearby on Elm Avenue, on the fringe of the central business district.

The earliest occupants of the Seven-O-Seven Building were dentists and insurance agencies. Travelers Insurance Company was one of the first and largest tenants, occupying the entire first floor, and at times portions of the second floor, until the early 1970s. The United Insurance Company of America and the Life Insurance Company of Virginia also occupied office suites in the building. Over the years, the building would accommodate a variety of tenants, although most were associated with the fields of medicine and dentistry. The fifth floor was almost exclusively occupied by dentists, including a couple of dental laboratories. By 1980, clinic overflow and the credit department of Gill Memorial Hospital had expanded into the first floor of the building.

The Seven-O-Seven Building was the last major general-purpose office building to be constructed downtown until the 1970s, when urban revitalization efforts transpired. By the time of its construction, there was a clear trend toward the location of office parks in areas outside of downtown, where large sites could be devoted entirely to office buildings and their parking and landscaped areas.⁷ Downtown Roanoke suffered a major blow in 1966, when the main U.S. Post Office was moved to a new location

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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 5

on redevelopment land in northeast Roanoke. The loss of a major government institution further signaled the trend of divestment in downtown.

A new era of downtown growth and development began in the 1970s. The City government affirmed its commitment to downtown with a large addition to City Hall in 1970 and the federal government built the fourteen-story Poff Federal Building in 1974. The Downtown East urban renewal project cleared 17.5 acres east of Jefferson Street for new development in 1972. The project later resulted in several high-rise buildings on the eastern edge of downtown. In 1973, the thirteen-story Crestar Bank Building (now BB&T) and sixteen-story First National Exchange Bank Building (now Carilion Administrative Services Building) were built. These generally high-rise buildings of concrete construction have minimal exterior ornamentation. Some of the buildings associated with the Downtown East project are set back from the street and are markedly different in appearance from the downtown buildings that preceded them. Almost all of these buildings are located on sites that required the demolition of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings, further changing the resource composition of the downtown district.

Section 9

A Development Plan for Roanoke. Roanoke, Virginia: City of Roanoke, 1964.

Blanton, Alison S. *Roanoke Downtown Historic District Update and Boundary Adjustment 2013 126-5761.* Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia, 2013.

Hill Directory Company's Roanoke, Virginia City Directory. Richmond, Virginia: Hill Directory Company, Inc., 1964, 1965, 1966, 1970, 1975, 1980.

White, Clare. *Roanoke: 1740-1982.* Roanoke, Virginia: Roanoke Valley Historical Society, 1982.

"You Are Invited to Attend the Opening of Roanoke's Magnificent New 707 South Jefferson Street Building." *The Roanoke Times*, 21 March 1965.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Roanoke Downtown Historic District Period of Significance Expansion

City or Vicinity: Roanoke (City)

County: State: Virginia

Photographer: Katie Coffield

Date Photographed: January 2014

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Roanoke Downtown Historic District
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Name of Property

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 4: 707 South Jefferson Street, east (front) elevation

Photo 2 of 4: 707 South Jefferson Street, north (side) elevation

Photo 3 of 4: 707 South Jefferson Street, west (rear) elevation

Photo 4 of 4: 707 South Jefferson Street, south (side) elevation detail

ENDNOTES

¹ The Roanoke Times

² White, 109

³ White, 118

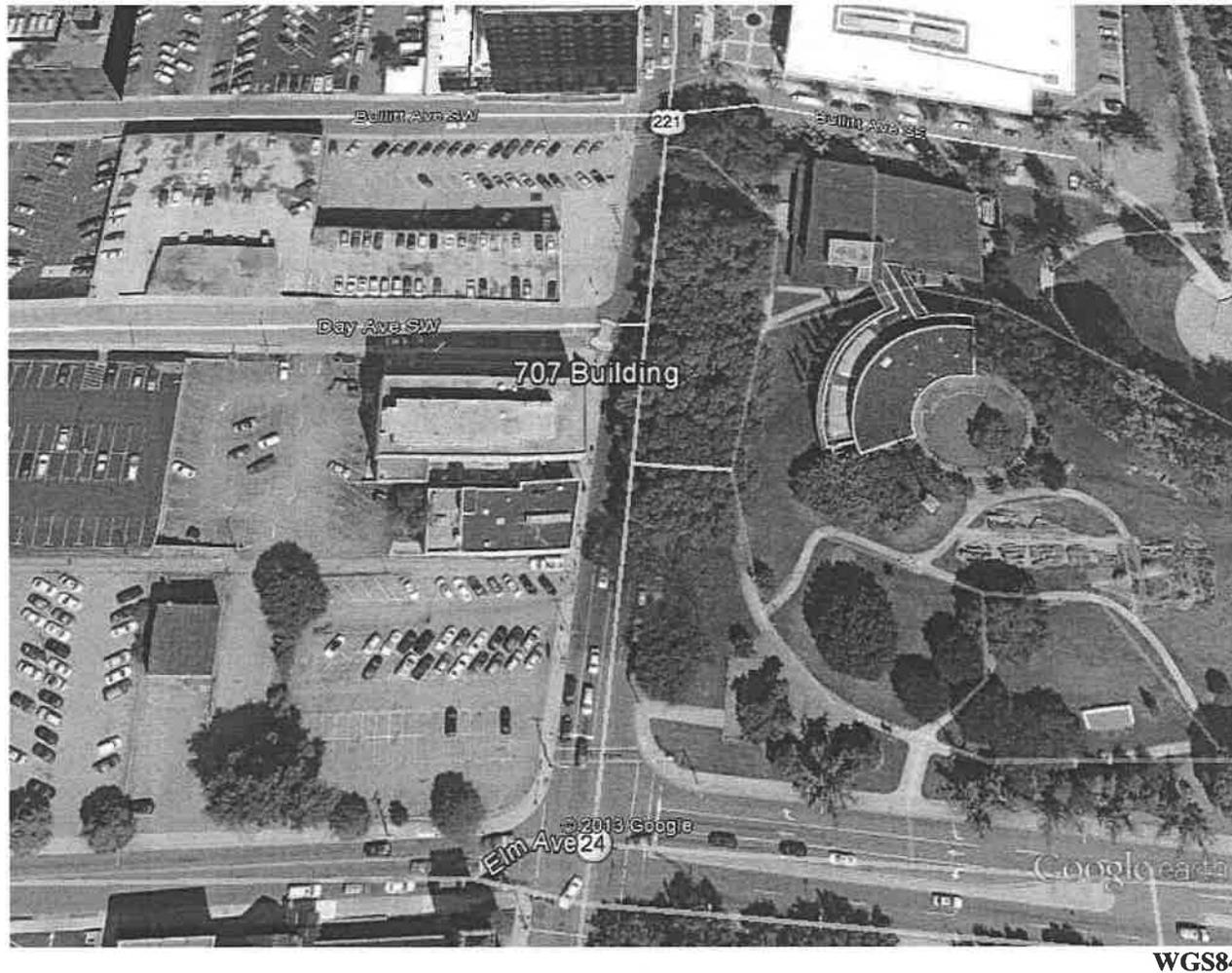
⁴ The Roanoke Times

⁵ The Roanoke Times

⁶ The Roanoke Times

⁷ A Development Plan for Roanoke

Roanoke Downtown Historic District (2014 Update)
Roanoke, Virginia **DHR #128-5761**
Location Map for the Seven-O-Seven Building



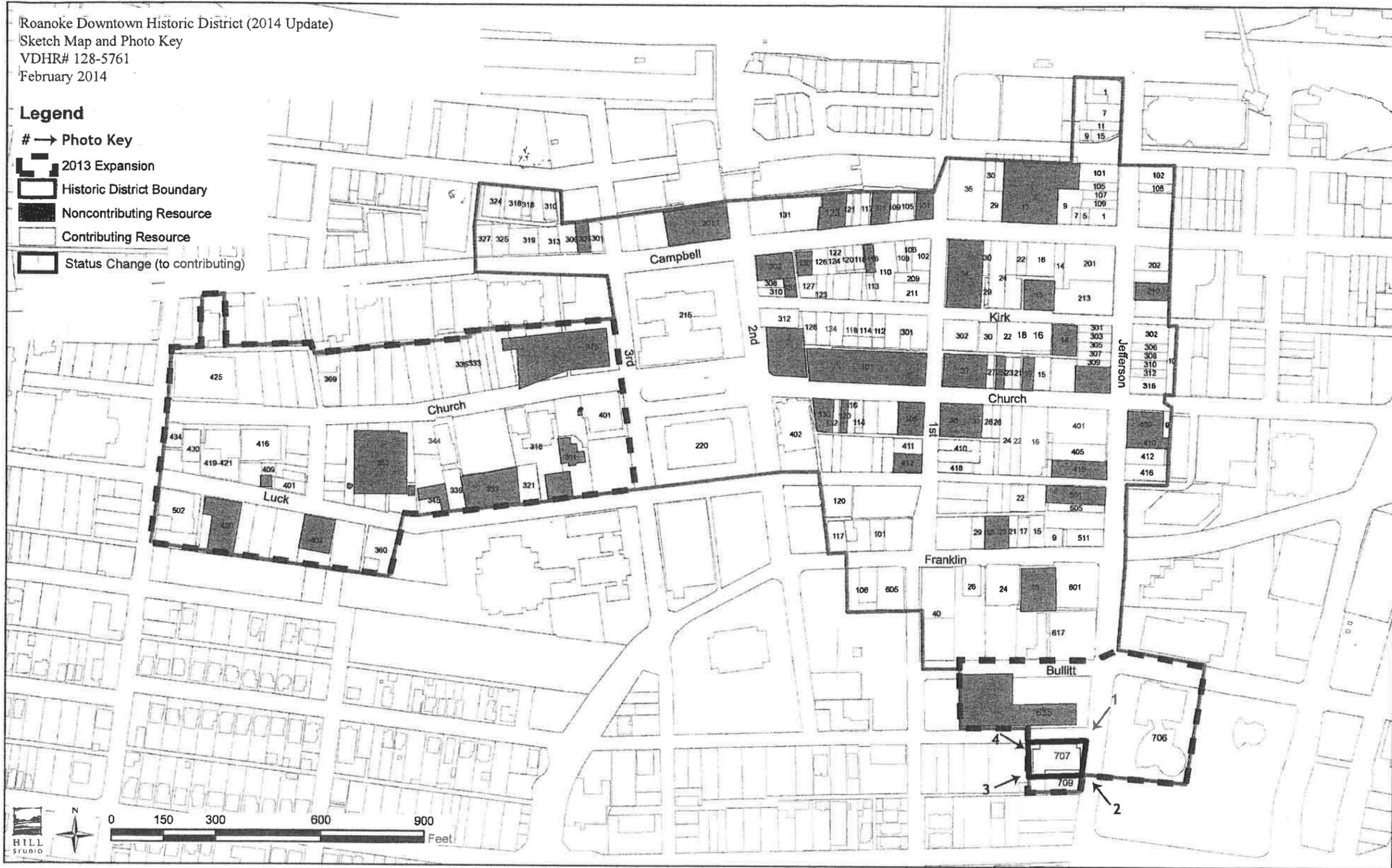
Latitude: 37.267687

Longitude: - 79.941087

Roanoke Downtown Historic District (2014 Update)
Sketch Map and Photo Key
VDHR# 128-5761
February 2014

Legend

- # → Photo Key
-  2013 Expansion
-  Historic District Boundary
-  Noncontributing Resource
-  Contributing Resource
-  Status Change (to contributing)





The City of
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707



707

Wesley Chapel
Medical Center
Building 707

VISTAR
PATIENT
PARKING
ONLY
ALL OTHERS TOWED
AT OWNER'S EXPENSE

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