

St. Luke Building 2017 Update and Boundary Increase (127-0352)

Staff Contact: C. Jeffries

Location and Current National Register Status: The St. Luke Building is located in northern Jackson Ward near the corner of West Baker Street and St. James Street. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 as an individual resource. This nomination extends the boundary of the listing to include a two-unit row house located adjacent to the St. Luke Building.

History and Significance: The nomination states that the St. Luke Building 2017 Update and Boundary Increase is eligible for listing under Criteria A and C, with a period of significance of 1877-1967. The St. Luke Building was built in 1903 and expanded in 1918. It served as the national headquarters of the Independent Order of St. Luke, an African American fraternal organization with a mission to foster African American economic independence. The adjacent two-unit row house, 902-904 St. James Street, was built as early as 1877 in a vernacular Italianate style and was acquired by the Order for residential rental property in the 1920s. The row house, along with other properties on the block (now demolished), provided a source of income for the Order and as such was historically and functionally associated with the organization until its sale in 1946. The row house is a rare surviving example of historic housing stock in this area of Jackson Ward, and is the only surviving residential property once owned by the Order on this block.

Staff Recommendations and Comments: The St. Luke Building was previously listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource. The expansion of the boundary to include 902-904 St. James Street, a surviving residential property historically and functionally associated with the Independent Order of St. Luke, is eligible for listing under Criteria A and C. Though the row house has lost historic fabric and is in poor condition, it is a rare surviving example of the historic housing stock in this area of Jackson Ward and is the only remaining building once owned and rented out by the Order.

Staff recommends that the Commission support the listing of this property on the State and Federal Historic Registers, under National Register Criteria A and C.