

Hickory Hill School (127-0434)

Staff Contact: K. Chen

Location: Hickory Hill School (127-0434) is located at 3000 Belt Boulevard on a 6.98-acre parcel. The school is situated on the west side of Belt Boulevard just south of its intersection with Terminal Avenue in south Richmond, formerly Chesterfield County.

History and Significance: The nomination states that Hickory Hill School is eligible for listing at the local level under Criteria A, B, and C, with a period of significance of 1938-1969. The period of significance begins with the construction of the extant building in 1938 and ends in 1969 with the closure of the school upon the racial desegregation of schools in Chesterfield County.

The school is eligible under Criterion A for its association with African American education in Chesterfield County. The property is the site of three earlier African American school buildings including a school built nearby or on this site in 1869, a 1915 frame building, and a 1925 Rosenwald school. The 1938 building was the first brick school building for African American students in Chesterfield County.

The building is eligible under Criterion B for its association with James Preston Spencer. James Spencer retired in 1958 after serving as the principal at Hickory Hill school for nearly 30 years. He was a tireless champion for the education of African American children in Chesterfield County and is credited with leading the movement for the equalization of teachers' salaries in the monumental federal lawsuit of *Freeman v. Chesterfield County School Board*.

The one-story, brick Colonial Revival building is eligible under Criterion C for architecture. It represents the work of the centralized facility and curriculum planning of the Virginia State Department of Education under the direction of Raymond V. Long, AIA. The firm of Dixon and Norman designed the 1958, 1961 and 1963 additions to the building. Both Washington Dixon and Macon Norman worked on the design of the 1938 school building while with the Department of Education. This familiarity likely contributes to the compatible and sympathetic additions.

Staff Recommendations and Comments: Hickory Hill School possess a high level of integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association and clearly conveys its significance in the fight for fair and equitable education of African American children in Chesterfield County.

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