

Manchester Trucking and Commercial Historic District (127-6519)

Staff Contact: C. Jones

Location and Current National Register Status: The proposed Manchester Trucking and Commercial Historic District encompasses roughly 50 acres and portions of four urban blocks. The district is situated along both sides of Commerce Road generally between Dinwiddie and Ingram Avenues. Because many of the properties in the historic district were purpose-built to serve the shipping industry, the area is characterized by commercial and industrial buildings, some of which are fairly large in order to accommodate large quantities of goods for distribution. Architecturally, the buildings are generally utilitarian in design, with warehouses featuring multiple loading bays and docks and office buildings. Many of the buildings are set on large paved or graveled properties left open to accommodate tractor-trailer circulation, where the trucking fleets could park, load/unload, or be serviced. The property is not currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

History and Significance: The nomination states that the proposed Manchester Trucking and Commercial Historic District is eligible for listing in the State and National Registers under Criterion A for its representation of important evolutionary trends in Richmond's trucking and motor freight industry during the mid-twentieth century as well as its intact collection of buildings and structures that convey the area's function as a trucking and distribution center. As such, it qualifies for listing at the local level in the area of Commerce and Transportation with a period of significance ranging from 1947-1968. The period of significance begins with the construction of the Acme Fixture factory, the first building constructed in the district, and ends in 1968, coinciding with the fifty-year threshold for NRHP eligibility, as the important associations of the district to the trucking industry continue. The buildings in the district remain in fair to good condition with a moderate to high retention of historical integrity.

Staff Recommendations and Comments: Staff have reviewed the nomination and on February 5, 2019 met with representatives from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. During the meeting staff expressed concerns with the content of the nomination and the proposed boundaries. Specifically staff identified sections of the nomination where buildings are associated with individual business that utilized the surrounding transportation network versus those that were transportation-related businesses which constructed purpose-built buildings to support this industry. Staff recommended removing the following properties from the nomination, mostly because they were not built to serve the shipping and motor freight industry: 1003 Commerce Road (1947), Acme Fixture Company; 1005 Commerce Road (1947) OK Foundry Company; 1011 Commerce Road (1947) W T Holt warehouse, which is listed as noncontributing in the nomination; 906-1000 Dinwiddie (1960) Topcrafters, manufacturers of wood, plastics and cabinetry, and the large parking lot at 710 Commerce Road.

Removing these properties would result in a new boundary that ends at Gordon Avenue and a revised period of significance of 1954-1968. Staff also recommended that the nomination include a comparative analysis of the buildings in the proposed district with other buildings identified in the nomination form, that the nomination form include a discussion that strengthens the connection between this area and the major transportation corridors of Route 360 (not 460 as mentioned in the nomination form), Route 1, and Interstate 95, and the nomination authors add an explanation of improvements to Commerce Road during this time and how it relates to the transportation industry in Richmond. Staff also suggested the buildings are not International Style as identified in the nomination and that Stripped Classicism might be more appropriate.

Staff recommends the boundary of the proposed Manchester Trucking and Commercial Historic District include three properties on either side of Commerce Road between Gordon Avenue and Ingram Avenue: Overnite Transportation/Estes Express (1959), 1100 Commerce Road; Blue and Grey Transportation Company (1959), 1111 Commerce Road; and the Richmond Container Corporation (1954), 1125 Commerce Road. Staff also recommends a period of significance from 1954, starting with the earliest building in the revised boundary, and ending in 1968, the standard 50-year threshold for NRHP-eligibility.

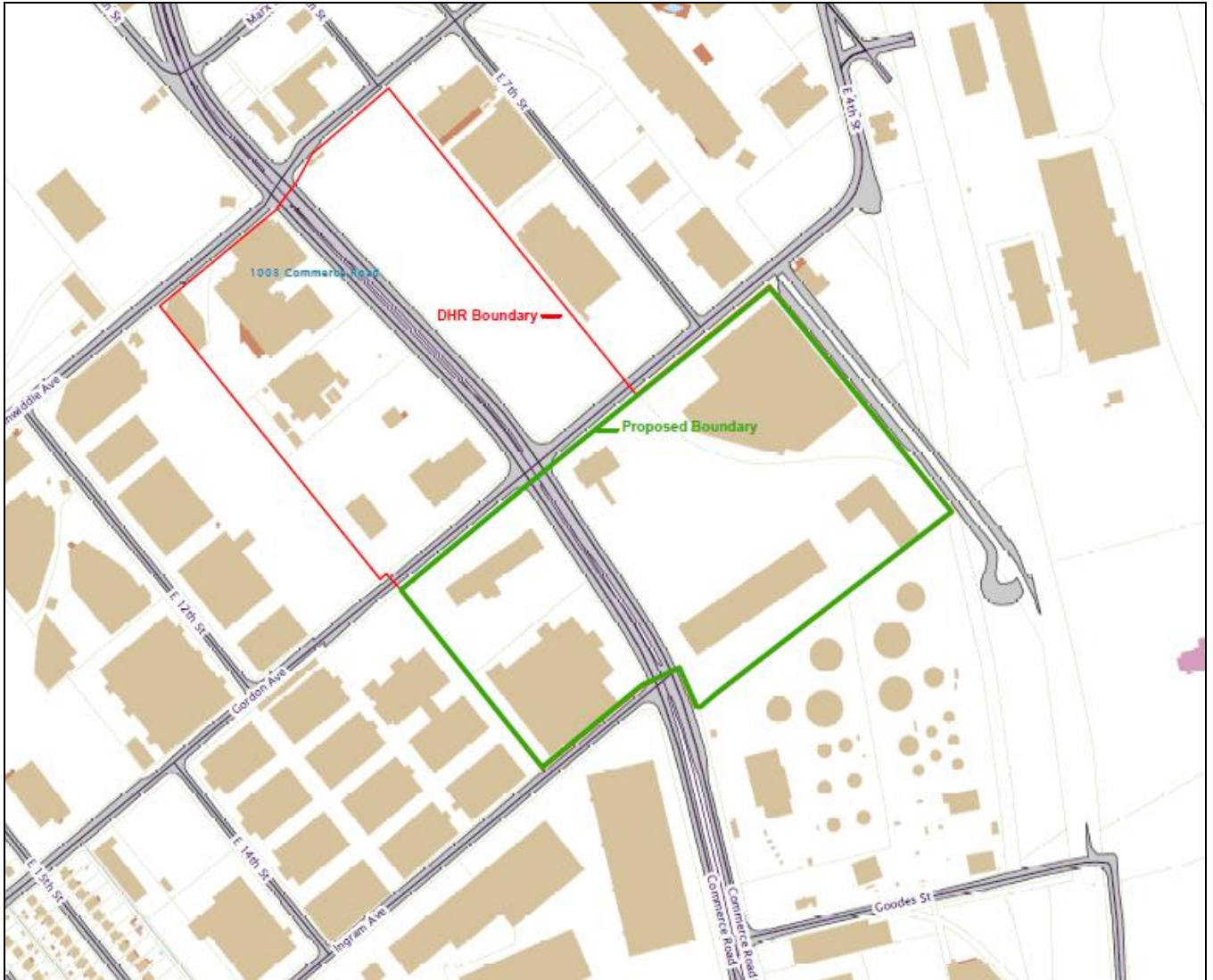


Figure 1. Existing and Proposed Manchester Trucking and Commercial Historic District Boundaries.